



Righteous and Wicked

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Summary

Bella is a reluctant school teacher, stuck stagnant under a looming shadow from her past. Edward is an architect striving to overcome his vices by running from them. Will they strive for a righteous path, or spiral into wicked depths?

AH/AU

Chapter 1: Wake to Sleep

A/N:

I hope you all enjoy my second journey into Twilight Fan Fiction. I look forward to hearing your comments, thank you for reading!

Thanks to my beta, Rpattzlawyer and my pre-reader, buhbeesgirl! I appreciate you sticking with me!

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"I wake to sleep and take my waking slow. I feel my fate in what I cannot fear. I learn by going where I have to go."

~Roethke

Is this some sort of sick joke? This can't really be happening. The constant exhaustion she feels never really lets her go, but she rolls over and looks out the window in an effort to identify the source of the noise that woke her. Bella rubs her eyes, almost unwilling to accept this disturbance in her precious routine. The house she lives in is the *only* house on this street, and there are *never* any noises. Eventually, her eyes catch a glimpse of the answer she is looking for. *Am I asleep or awake?*

The dense woods next to her house are occupied by what sounds like a bulldozer. It uproots trees and moves the earth. The trunks crack in protest, and stubborn boulders push back against the machine.

Thud. Slam. Sreech. Crack. It leaves a path of destruction.

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More importantly, it wakes Bella up--on a Saturday. She wonders who has purchased the neighboring plot of land. This house has stood alone and isolated for as long as she can remember.

She sighs and stretches and succumbs to the fact that her only day to sleep in is ruined. But Bella is no stranger to disappointment. She rises from her squeaky bed, dresses, and then goes downstairs to make breakfast for one.

A man steps off a plane and is greeted by familiar sights. Things that are constant and never change. It should be comforting. He looks out of place. A striking face in a sea of faceless strangers. A designer suit among flannel shirts. He wonders if the choice he has made is the right one, but will allow himself to feel no regret. He gets into a limousine and stares out the window at the endless, blurry green. *I'm not running, I'm moving on.* He lies to himself and he believes the lie.

"Rose, I don't *want* to go out. I just don't have the energy," Bella speaks softly from behind her newspaper.

"You're thirty, Bella. Not eighty. You can't stay locked in this house forever. It's not normal."

She puts down the paper. "Normal, Rosalie? Did you really just say that? Nothing is normal about me," she mumbles and returns to her reading, absentmindedly rubbing her thumb against her empty ring finger.

"You know what I mean, Bella. You need to get out of here. Meet people. This house is crumbling around you."

"This is Forks, Rose. I think I've met everyone there is to meet," she states flatly, dismissively.

"I don't know about that, Bella. A lot changed when you were away."

Bella pushes her chair from the table and tosses the paper in the trash.

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"Tell me about it."

"You're getting married? Seriously?" he asks. He is no longer in a limousine. He's wearing jeans and dragging his hand across his unshaven face. He looks more like a man who belongs in a small town.

"I know. It's hard to believe. I never thought I could be tied to just one girl, but wait 'till you meet her. She's amazing. " Emmett cracks open a beer for his friend.

A friend that he hasn't seen in ten years, and who he has barely spoken to in that time. Not because he didn't miss him, but because Edward is a failure at correspondence, and had no real desire to connect with the people from his old--now seemingly ancient--life.

Bella walks out of her father's house-- *her* house--and gets in her father's truck-- *her* truck. Sleep still has its arms around her, and she tries to shake them off as she backs down the driveway.

She looks down the street and spots it, her enemy, the bulldozer that woke her up on Saturday. It now sits quietly at the side of the road, resting. She narrows her eyes at it, revs the engine, and shifts the truck into drive.

The truck rumbles into the town gas station, as it has every morning for the past six months. Only one thought repeats through Bella's brain- *coffee coffee coffee*.

She walks toward the glass doors, and then strikes her palm against her forehead. *Wallet*.

She turns abruptly to fetch her purse, and stumbles directly in to the person behind her. She steps back and rubs the tip of her nose. It burns from banging into this man's chest. "I'm sorry, excuse me," she says.

But the man says nothing.

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She looks up at him. He has short, mussed-up hair, and a slight beard has grown across his chiseled features. His fingernails are dirty, and his eyes...

Bella is frozen in the storm of this mans eyes. A cloudy blue, like a sky that's waiting for rain to come. They cut into her, and she can't look away. Neither does he. Her heart pounds, and the moment is infinite.

He touches her arm, and she takes a sharp breath. *Am I asleep, or awake?*

She opens her mouth to speak, but she isn't given a chance. The dreamlike quality of this moment persists as he takes her elbow in his firm grip. Still silent, he gently guides her out of his path. Then, he walks right past her into the gas station.

Bella is dazed. She looks at him over her shoulder and watches him walk away. He doesn't look back. Still, she watches, as he takes an orange juice from the cooler and begins to drink it before he's paid.

Suddenly, she feels embarrassed and quickly retreats to her truck. She turns the key. Her coffee is forgotten as the truck speeds down the country road.

Edward sits, examining his blueprints. He places several calls, checking on shipments of lumber and steel. He consults with the contractor who will lay the foundation. Mundane tedium. He wants to let it permeate through him. He runs his fingers through his hair. *All of this work and it's not working.*

Deep inside of him, he feels the familiar pang. Nothing can distract him from his hunger. It's only been a day and he can't stop. He doesn't *want* to stop. He needs it.

"Good morning, ladies. Let us begin our day as the Lord would want us to: with a prayer. In the name of the Father, the Son..." Ms. Swan begins her class the way she has for the past six months.

She's an actress as she smiles at co-workers and feigns enthusiasm regarding the details of their personal lives. What *is* real is her affection for these

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children. She cares for them deeply...more than anyone knows or could understand. She guides them in their education, and tends to their young spiritual needs. The way her teachers tried to do for her in these same halls. She wonders if their smiles were fake too.

She dismisses the children to mass, knowing that she herself should attend, but she does not. She returns to her empty classroom and blankly stares out of the window until the children return.

He doesn't have to think about it. He knows where to go to find what he needs. It's easy for him, and that doesn't make it easier. The thin blonde carries Edward's items to the fitting room and hangs them on the hook. He follows behind her, watching. "Let me know if there's anything you need," she offers.

He licks his lips. "There is."

Fried chicken...meatballs. Bella takes inventory of her fridge as she contemplates what to cook. She chooses the latter and begins making dinner for one. It's the routine that she needs, not the food. She never feels hungry anymore. She methodically completes the task. Her fingers working independently from her brain as she gazes out the window.

The bulldozer is gone.

She eats alone, in silence. Upstairs, she grabs the box from under the bed. She brushes her fingers across the etched wood. She knows she shouldn't look, but she opens the lid...like she does every night.

Edward hooks the silver trailer onto the hitch of his black jeep. It reminds him of a bullet, a pill, a prison. *But it's not a prison--it's freedom.*

He pays the man in cash and he drives to the property. He turns onto the one lane road, passing through the thick green. He sees the lone house and turns just before it, onto the makeshift driveway that has been cleared.

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He makes himself busy, trampling through mud to unhook the trailer--his temporary home. He pauses when he hears a truck roar up the street. He looks to the sound for a moment, and then his attention is returned to his work.

She sleeps, she wakes, she works. She sleeps, she wakes, she works. She looks in the mirror and wonders who it is that is staring back at her, and remembers the person she once saw there. A full heart. A hand to hold. A future and a room to paint. She wakes, she works, she sleeps...alone.

It's black. Pitch black. And sounds that no human ears should hear are seeping their way through the seams of Edward's trailer to his ears. He can't sleep. Crickets chirp. A coyote howls. The wind rustles and sighs. Edward rolls over. He feels it. The pang, the need--it rises through him. He turns in his bed again, but he can't turn away from it.

On his back now, he stares at the ceiling. A new sound finds its way to his ears. *Bells? No, not bells.* It stops, and its starts again. *A gong.* It stops. He closes his eyes.

He starts to forget what he's trying not to think of. He starts to let the sounds of the forest lull him away, to pull him down into sleep...

It starts again, the sound. *A chime?*

He throws off the covers and opens the door.

She walks out onto the porch, into the sunlight. The floor boards are warped and slightly sticking up. An untrained eye might not be able to maneuver without injury the way Bella's trained feet do. Her steps beat a path that she doesn't even have to think about. But today the path is disrupted. Her feet suddenly stop. Something is different. It rests on the steps, not on its hook--her mother's wind chime.

She picks it up and puts it back, nodding at it when she's done so. Silently encouraging the wind chime to go about its business, as she does the same.

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He's on his feet all day. He watches as the backhoe clears the lot and digs. The foundation is laid in the clearing. He barks orders and beats a path in the earth, his authority is unmistakable.

His work boots are caked with mud. He likes the smell of the earth, and his work. It fills his mind and leaves no room for other things. No other thoughts, no nagging needs. He lies to himself, and he believes the lie.

It's Friday, and she's happy. As happy as she ever feels these days. It's not a true happiness, just a feeling of relief. Tomorrow's Saturday, and finally, she can sleep.

She walks through the parking lot of St. Robert's and finds Alice smoking a cigarette and waiting for her.

"My girls have been little shits lately. I swear I wish I went your route and taught the younger ones. First graders are a hell of a lot easier to handle than these tweens. I can't take the cattiness anymore. Note passing, gossiping, pariah's... girls are such bitches."

"You shouldn't talk that way Alice. They're kids. And you should really watch your mouth, we're right in front of the church for God's sake."

"Yes, *Ms. Swan*... for *God's* sake." Alice shakes her head and stamps out her cigarette. "That's it. We've been at this too long now. You are *coming* tonight. We are having a girls' night. Rosalie and I can only talk about so many things. We need you there to liven up the conversation...or at least keep us in check."

"If I go, all I hear about is your *amazing* husband, and Rosalie never stops with the sex talk. No offense, but it's just not for me...not right now."

"Then when, Bella? When are you going to wake up?"

Bella drives home, faster than she should. She pushes her truck to the limit and it roars up her street.

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She gets out, slams the door, and then stops. She buries her face in her hands and sinks to the floor. She holds her breath and tears escape...angry tears. She's angry at Alice, not for what she said, or for how she said it, but because she knows Alice is right. It feels odd, to be feeling something. Bella has felt nothing but numbness and exhaustion for a very long time. Against all of her better judgment and her desire to get into her bed and never get out again, she picks up the phone, and dials Rosalie.

It's been three days, and it's been too long. He dresses in his new clothes and smirks at the memory of the day he bought them.

I'm not going to. I can stop. I'm not going to do it.

He looks at his reflection and everything is just right. His black clothes match his jeep and he gets inside, not sure of where he's going or where he'll find it this time.

The club is crowded and Bella immediately feels regret. She isn't ready for this and she shouldn't have come.

She looks soft and feminine. Her hair is down in soft waves. Her short black dress is conservative, but it can't hide her endless creamy legs. Legs that are exaggerated by her stiletto heels. She's sexy even though she's trying not to be. She looks for a familiar face.

"Alright! This is what I like to see! Damn girl, you look hot!" Rosalie appears and takes her hand. She and Bella walk to a private table where Alice waits. Three martinis sit, untouched.

"You guys, I don't drink. You know that. I'm not drinking." Bella chants.

"Cut the goody two shoes routine for one night, will you please?" Alice asks, taking her glass in her hand.

Bella knows she will lose this battle. She sits and sips. The thumping music rattles her body; the vibration sinks into her skin. She sips. Alice and Rose

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shout whispers and laugh. The topics of conversation are just as Bella expected and she has nothing to say. She sips, and sips, and her eyes wander around the club.

She sips and her eyes stop.

A man in black rests his elbow on the bar. A feeling of recognition slides through her. She watches him watch the crowd. He does a shot, and then another.

She sips, and watches.

He begins to slowly move, his eyes on the dance floor. She watches him maneuver through the crowd. He walks in a circle, slowly descending closer to the crowd of people dancing. She sips and sees that his eyes are following a dark haired girl. The girl sways her hips and shoulders; her sequined top sparkles as she dances with a friend. The man moves slower and Bella can see his face clearly now. She remembers the face, and the eyes-- *Stormy Eyes*.

He doesn't see Bella watching him, he doesn't see anything but the girl. He continues to stalk around the dance floor, his gaze never leaving the dancing girl's body. His head begins to bob with the music and he steps toward her.

Bella sips, she watches, and she burns.

He doesn't hesitate as he approaches the dancing girl. He doesn't speak, but the girl finds his eyes. Her friend is forgotten as the girl turns toward him. She smiles at him, and he touches her hip. She sways and he moves closer to her. His whole body moves with the rhythm of the music, and then their bodies move together.

Bella sips and feels the heat between the couple, she feels ashamed for watching them. Bella looks down and away, but she can't help herself-she looks back at the now entwined pair. They intimately touch each other and she sees Stormy Eyes put his lips to the Dancing Girls' neck.

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A long forgotten feeling rises inside of Bella, and she sips her drink again. Her face is flushed and she desperately tries to break out of this trance. She finally tears herself away from watching them, and finds four eyes staring at her from across the table. Alice and Rosalie look at her quizzically.

Alice asks, "Bella? Hey, do you want to go dance?"

Music that inspired the chapter:

First breath after coma- Explosions in the sky

The song that Edward is dancing to at the club:

Until we bleed- Kleerup

Please review!

Chapter 2: In Passing

A/N:

Thanks to my beta, Rpattzlawyer and my pre-reader, buhbeesgirl. Big thanks to Rose Arcadia for pre-reading and making me a fabulous blinkie and banner! She also started a thread on Twilighted for this fic, so check it out and add the blinkie to your signature!

Thanks to Bleriana and Persistantp for pre-reading as well.

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From the pervious chapter:

Bella sips and feels the heat between them, she feels ashamed for watching. Bella looks down and away, but she can't help herself-she looks back at the now entwined couple. They intimately touch each other and she sees him put his lips to the dancing girls' neck.

A long forgotten feeling rises inside of Bella, and she sips her drink again. Her face is flushed and she desperately tries to break out of this trance. She finally tears herself away from watching them, and finds four eyes staring at her from across the table.

"Bella? Hey, do you want to go dance?"

"Ships that pass in the night, and speak each other in passing;

Only a signal shown and a distant voice in the darkness;

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So on the ocean of life we pass and speak one another, only a look and a voice; then darkness again and a silence."

~Longfellow

"What? No. No, I don't want to dance." Bella remembers the last person she danced with and feels love and regret rise up in tandem at the memory. Still, she sneaks a glance back at Stormy Eyes and the Dancing Girl. Part of her wants to be looked at the way he's looking at her, to be touched the way he's touching her...

Alice sees inside Bella's mind and reads the emotions that are passing over her friends face. "It's time to make new memories," she whispers.

Rosalie stands and offers her hand. Bella relents and takes it, and the three girls leave their now empty glasses and walk toward the dance floor. Upon standing, Bella realizes how drunk she really is. The lights dim and the club is lit with flashes of red and blue. The music changes and the different colored lights twist and swarm. Only flashes of flesh and moving limbs are discernible.

A calm smile is willed onto Bella's face, in spite of her woozy head and pounding heart. She, Alice, and Rosalie congregate in a small circle on the outskirts of the dance floor. Bella watches as her friends easily feel the rhythm of the music and begin to dance alone and with each other at the same time. Their eyes are closed and they lip sync the song that is playing. Bella moves her feet from side to side, but her eyes and her thoughts linger on the couple. The Dancing Girl runs her fingers through her hair, and the man moves his body with the music. He's confident, and it's sexy.

Bella can see that their hips are touching and rubbing together. She feels almost dizzy; she knows she shouldn't be watching this. It isn't right...but she *wants* to watch them, she *needs* to watch the way this man is making this girl feel. It has been so long since Bella felt anything, and she is slowly remembering what it felt like to want someone. What it felt like to be desired.

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She remembers the man who made her feel that way, *her* man, and for the first time in a long time, her memory of him is a good one. Bella's whole body is flushed with memories fed by the scene in front of her. She sees Stormy Eyes whisper something in the Dancing Girl's ear, and the girl nods. Bella feels a small sense of panic as the couple moves and walks off the dance floor together.

Bella doesn't want to lose this feeling. She wants to remember. She wants to feel.

She steps away from her friends, knowing that they won't notice that she's gone for some time. She feels her stomach flutter as she follows stealthily behind the couple. She is doing something she shouldn't, but that feeling is exciting, and that excitement pushes her forward. She spies on them as they walk down the hall hand in hand. They stop at the bathroom door. He looks inside, and then pulls the girl in with him.

She said yes. She wants it just as much as I do. Edward rationalizes his actions to himself as he enters the bathroom with his latest victim. She told him her name, but he doesn't remember, and he doesn't care.

Edward watches the girl's mouth fall open as he slides his hands down her body and then grips her backside. His body throbs with his need. A voice screams from inside of him to stop, but he doesn't.

Everything blurs. He closes the stall door. She speaks but he doesn't hear what she's said. His mind is focused solely on his goal, on filling his void, on feeding his hunger.

He feels her mouth licking his neck. His hands find her flesh. He can't get inside her fast enough, and when he finally feels the tight, wet warmth surround him, he knows he's close to having his need satisfied.

She moans. She likes it; she takes what he gives her. But he's the one taking. He's forceful and rough. He will stop at nothing. His hand grips her pale, slim neck. She cries out, but she never says no. She's wet and she pulls him closer.

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She likes it this way. They are a tangle of fabric and skin.

His uncontrollable fury spreads through his body and leaks from his pores. He begins to sweat and it drips on the girl's breasts. Her legs wrap around him, and her back slams against the stall door. "Oh, fuck me...fuck me..." she chants. The door creaks and threatens to burst open against the weight of Edward's violent thrusts. He reaches up and grips the top of the door for leverage, and holds tightly to the girl's thigh. He pumps even harder now. She tells him to go slow, but he doesn't. She says she's going to come and he doesn't care. He feels himself coiling up inside, and he knows the end is near. His mouth waters in anticipation of the few moments of real pleasure--the delusional bliss that comes with his release.

The only time he really feels alive.

"Fuck," he curses and groans loudly as he comes, then quickly sets her down. The girl pulls her skirt into place and he buckles his belt. They both catch their breath. She holds his face. She tries to be tender. She wants to kiss him and he pulls away. He has no more need for her. She doesn't ask for his phone number. He doesn't look at her or say goodbye as he walks out the bathroom door.

Bella fights against herself. She struggles with her desire to follow the feeling that watching this man has brought up within her. She slowly creeps down the darkened hallway. Her skin crawls with anxiety and she shivers. *I should leave.*

She hears a groan.

She stops. She grips her dress in her fists as she listens to the sounds the girl is making. She remembers those sounds, and she knows not just any man can make a woman feel that way. She closes her eyes and imagines what they are doing. *They're making love.* That description is far from what is actually going on inside the bathroom, and Bella knows it, but she won't allow herself to think the word.

Now, she imagines it's being done to her, by the man she still loves. The brown eyed man who should be occupying the vacant side of her bed. She remembers

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what it felt like to have his hands on her body.

She listens.

It's rough, what they're doing. Bella is jealous, and hates herself for feeling that way. Her mind tells her that she shouldn't feel this way; she doesn't deserve to feel this way. She doesn't deserve to feel anything.

But she lusts. She covets. She sins.

Her body feels warm when she hears the mans voice, when she listens to the profanities coming out of his mouth.

Her man never spoke that way, and she never wanted him too--but Stormy Eyes makes it sound sexy, and dirty.

Bella wants to feel dirty. She wants to feel something other than numb. Her mind diverts away from the person she is still in love with, to the man inside the bathroom--and it's *his* face she sees when she closes her eyes again. Not brown eyes, but blue.

The door opens and Bella is startled out of her fantasy. Thankfully, she is shielded in the dim light of the hallway. She stays very still and waits to see the couple emerge hand in hand, but Stormy Eyes emerges alone. He doesn't walk back into the club; he stalks straight for the emergency exit and disappears out into the night.

There is no sound from behind the bathroom door. Bella waits, but no one comes out. She lets her curiosity consume her and she slips into the bathroom.

The dancing girl is there. Her face is flushed, her neck spotted with red marks. She fixes her hair in the mirror, a quiet little smile on her face. She doesn't know that Bella knows her secret. Bella feigns interest in her own image in the mirror, but watches the girl out of the corner of her eye.

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The dancing girl reapplies lipstick to her swollen lips, throws something away, and walks back out to the dance floor.

Bella follows her, looking down to see what was discarded in the trash.
Panties.

Still high from her first journey into voyeurism, Bella rejoins her friends on the dance floor. A man is talking to them, and Bella is making judgments in her head. *They're both taken, why are they talking with a guy?*

"Oh, here she is!" Alice squeals. "We were just talking about you. Bella, this is Mike." Mike is obviously full of arrogance and low in intelligence. His arms threaten to bulge through his shirt. He's clearly very taken with himself and is not the type of man Bella would ever choose to spend her time with. Alice winks at Bella, and is disappointed to see her friend's face fall.

Rosalie sees it too and wishes Bella would allow herself to live a little. She whispers to her, "Not everyone here knows about your past."

He feels defeated, but satisfied. The craving is muted, for now. He rolls over in his bed. He should sleep soundly tonight. His body feels satiated, but his mind feels regret. The wind blows, and there's that noise again. It's meant to be soothing, but it does not soothe Edward.

Alcohol is a poison. It infects her blood and damages her cells. It bangs around in her head. It bangs and slams and...

Not again. Groggily, Bella's eyes open. Just barely. Yes, her head aches, but the banging is coming from the woods next door. *A hammer. A hammer on a Saturday.* She glares at the woods that hold the sound. *This is my punishment.*

She knows she should not have gone out. She should not have had alcohol, and she certainly should not have listened to the sexy stormy eyed man do what he did to that girl.

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Guilt and shame roll through her. She drags her hands across her face. The hammering is relentless and incessant. She gets up and knows what she has to do.

She looks at herself in the mirror. Her demure clothing and neat appearance make her look the part. Numb, bland, and pious. But she feels something different brewing beneath her skin. A little spark.

The box calls to her from under the bed. In her drunken haze last night, she abandoned her ritual. She sits and places it in her lap and runs her fingers over the initials that rest there... "*BB.*"

She makes her way down creaky steps and past peeling paint, over the warped, rotten wood of the porch. Her ritualistic path is disrupted once again. Something's missing.

The wind-chime is gone.

Edward has thrown his whole body into his work, trying to forget his weakness, trying to move on. He lifts lumber onto his shoulder and throws it down. He measures and saws. He begins to hammer and relishes the painful twinge in his shoulder that makes itself known every time he slams the hammer to the nail. He is like a machine, a robot. He kneels in the dirt as he works. This is his penance. His work is his church. He takes another nail from the box and places it between his teeth. Memories flip through his mind, and they're all bad. He wants to make new ones. Good ones. *Every day is a new day.* He lies to himself, over and over again.

"Bless me Father, for I have sinned..." Ms. Swan kneels, veiled in darkness. Father Carlisle sits behind the screen of the confessional waiting to hear what evil has been done.

"What are your sins?" He asks. He never grows tired of providing counsel to his parishioners - his compassion knows no bounds. He is a loved and respected man in this small Christian town.

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"I-I drank alcohol...I got drunk, and allowed myself to feel...envy. I was envious of another woman. And I had sexual thoughts about a man...a man other than my husband," Bella confesses.

"Well, while it is true that alcohol use is not a sin in itself, it does weaken our minds and our resolve to behave as the Lord wants us too. How often do you have these thoughts of infidelity?" he asks.

"Father, I have not thought of another man for so long. I love my husband. He's the only man I want. But he hurt me so much, and I haven't seen him. It's been so long since I've been with him..."

"My child, everyone feels desire. Jesus himself felt desire and temptation. But you must pray when you have those feelings. You must ask the Lord to give you the strength to hold true to your marital vows."

"But, Father...my husband...he left me. He left me because I..." She stops, unable to finish the sentence. "Father, I don't know where he is. I know that I'm still married in the eyes of the church..."

"Yes, that is true. In the eyes of the Lord you are still committed to your husband. You have taken a sacrament. A holy vow, and you must uphold it."

"I know that Father...but what if I can't?"

"Edward, this is my fiancée, Rosalie. Rosalie, this is Edward, my best friend from when I was kid." Emmett is overjoyed to have two people he cares for finally meet in person.

Rosalie shakes Edward's hand. She senses something off about the desperately handsome man in front of her. She doesn't like the way he looks at her, the way his hand lingers in hers for too long.

She pulls away from him while maintaining a polite smile and firmly grips Emmett's arm as the trio is guided to their table to sit down to dinner.

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"So, what do you do for a living?" she asks him, attempting to make small talk and to learn something about this inexplicably creepy friend of her future husband.

"I'm an architect," he answers directly as he scans the menu.

"And what brings you back to Forks?" she asks another seemingly benign question.

"I'm building a house here."

Another short answer. Rosalie is not daunted in her quest to learn more about Edward. "So you're here for good then?"

"No," he looks directly at her as he answers, "I'm not."

Thanks for reading, please review!

Chapter 3: The Truth Lies Somewhere

A/N:

Thanks to my beta, Rpattzlawyer and my pre-readers, buhbeesgirl and Bleriana! I really love reading reviews, everyone has such interesting theories about where this story is going! Please continue to review and feel free to PM me.

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From the previous chapter:

Rosalie shakes Edward's hand. She senses something off about the desperately handsome man in front of her. She doesn't like the way he looks at her, the way his hand lingers in hers for too long. She pulls away from him while maintaining a polite smile. She firmly grips Emmett's arm as the trio is guided to their table to sit down to dinner.

"So, what do you do for a living?" she asks him, attempting to make small talk and to learn something about this inexplicably creepy friend of her future husband.

"I'm an architect," he answers directly as he scans the menu.

"And what brings you back to Forks?" she asks another seemingly benign question.

"I'm building a house here."

Righteous and Wicked

Rosalie is not daunted in her quest to learn more about Edward. "So you're here for good then?"

"No," he looks directly at her as he answers, "I'm not."

"And differing judgements serve but to declare

That truth lies somewhere, if we knew but where."

~Cowper

Who would steal a wind chime? Bella wonders as she stares out her kitchen window at the wooden structure. She can vaguely see it growing through the woods that live between her yard and that of her new neighbor.

She's pissed. It's Monday and she's pissed, and she wants her damn wind chime. There are so few tangible things she has to cling to. Things that remind her of happier days. She slams her hand on the counter and grabs her keys.

Her truck hums and she stops at the end of the driveway to check the mail.
What the...?

The item she seeks is stuffed inside her mailbox, along with a crumpled piece of paper. She drags her mother's wind chime from the mailbox and reads:

*"Dear Neighbor,
I'm sure you are old as hell, and half deaf, and do not realize how irritating this damn thing is. I can not sleep with it clanking around all night. I'd prefer it if you didn't hang it up again. Bury it out back with your cats."*

Bella is livid.

She closes her eyes and sees red. Her hands shake. She has never been spoken to this way, and can not believe that someone who has just moved here, onto *her* street could possibly be this evil. She's enraged. She grabs a pen from the glove compartment and scrawls on the paper:

Righteous and Wicked

" *Dear Neighbor,*

You are extremely rude! For your information, your bulldozing and hammering have woken me up for the past two weeks! I am not an old woman. I work all day, and I'd like some damn peace and quiet on Saturdays ! So, I'd prefer it if you didn't wake me up! You have a lot of nerve! Don't you dare come on my property or touch my things- you jerk!"

Even in this rare state of anger, Bella can't bring herself to use profanity. She folds up the letter and stamps over to the black Jeep that's parked at the top of her new nemesis' driveway.

Alice runs her hand over silk, and listens.

"I don't know, I mean, what else can we do? You can lead the horse to water, but that's about it. We can't *make* her happy. She has to *want* it." Rosalie speaks with frustration. She looks in the mirror at the jeans she is trying on. She turns to be sure she looks good.

"I don't know, I thought maybe she'd at least flirt with the guy. He was hot." Alice takes a hanger off the sale rack, then crinkles up her face at the garment and puts it back.

"I don't think *hot* is what she's looking for, exactly," Rosalie says over her shoulder as she returns to the dressing room, unhappy with the jeans.

"Well, what then?" Alice asks.

"I think she's waiting for *him* to come and find her."

Alice shakes her head at the door between them. "How would he even know where to look?"

"Her mother knows she's here. And we all know how much Renee loved him. She pretty much took his side," she shouts so that Alice can hear her over the crappy mall music.

Righteous and Wicked

"That's terrible. I can't believe her own mother didn't support her," Alice speaks softly now, pity washing through her.

"That's why she ran. That's why she came back to us."

Bella walks past Alice's classroom and sees a substitute standing in her place. *Alice must have taken a sick day... a shopping day*, Bella thinks.

She sighs and, for once, she doesn't feel like going home. She's still distracted thinking about what happened at the club, and she's trying to shake off her anger from this morning. She can't believe that someone she has never even met could be so cruel to her.

Bella is familiar with cruelty, but she wonders when it will end. *When will the pain go away?*

It's a nice day, warm and bright. She climbs in her truck and turns the ignition, not quite sure where she's going.

Edward takes a shower in the tiny, cramped bathroom of his trailer. The uncomfortable living is the best motivation to get the house completed. He thinks that there might be a way to get into someone else's bath, but shakes that thought from his brain. He tries to think of something else. He needs a routine. *What do normal people do?* He wants to put down some roots this time. He will try.

He buttons up his clean plaid shirt, pulls on his filthy work boots, and stomps up to the top of the driveway. He unlocks his jeep and notices something under his windshield wiper.

Not a fucking parking ticket...not on this street.

He reaches his arm out the driver's side window and reads the note that was left. He smirks, then crumples it and tosses it out the window.

I'll deal with that bullshit later.

Righteous and Wicked

The door chimes as Bella enters the coffee shop. She smiles at the girl behind the counter and sits down on an old, worn sofa near the window.

The counter girl comes over and Bella notices her painted nails and shameless cleavage. "What would you like, ma'am?" she asks.

Bella cringes at the formal title. "Well, *ma'am*, I'd like a cappuccino. And a biscotti if you have it, please."

"Right away," the girl turns and reveals her firm, round backside, concealed in too-tight pants.

Bella looks at her own reflection in the window. No grays, no wrinkles. *Ma'am. Hmph.*

Beyond her reflection, through the glass, Bella sees a woman with a baby carriage. She looks like she's waiting for someone. She paces on the sidewalk. Then, the person she is waiting for approaches. He half runs to her. He picks her up as he hugs her. He bends down to look in the carriage, still holding the woman's hand. He kisses her, and the love they share is evident.

The scene causes Bella to crumple and collapse in on herself. She turns away from her pain.

The local newspaper rests on the cushion beside her and she reads to distract herself. The door chimes, and chimes again as other customers enter, but Bella doesn't look up from her paper.

Her cappuccino arrives, and to her dismay she sees Mike, the guy from the club, sitting at a nearby table. She holds her paper up higher and hopes that he doesn't notice her.

"Fuck."

Righteous and Wicked

She hears someone curse, and she knows that voice. Peeking over her newspaper, she looks toward the counter and sees him.

It's Stormy Eyes .

Bella feels chilled. Her mind flashes to the club and she crosses her legs at the erotic memory. Even though he never saw her, she feels intensely embarrassed.

She looks at him again, her eyes pass over his body and feels something else.

He's licking coffee from the back of his hand.

"Oh, no! Oh, I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to..." Cleavage Girl behind the counter apologizes profusely.

Stormy Eyes is unfazed. His tongue comes out to caress his coffee-burned hand again, and Bella feels that spark inside her flicker. The spark that she wants to extinguish. The feeling she is trying to ignore.

"It's alright. I'll live," Edward says to the hot piece of ass behind the coffee counter. He's trying not to flirt with her, and is failing miserably. All he wanted was a cup of coffee. All he wanted was a distraction from his incessant thoughts. All he wanted was some normal.

And here's this girl. Edward knows just the type of girl she is. He knows just what she'll do for him. She's an easy target. A unwitting victim of his charms.

The girl is coy and she wipes his hand with a napkin. He touches her wrist, and she doesn't pull away. He didn't think she would.

His eyes linger on her abundant breasts. The soft skin threatens to burst from the low-cut shirt she is wearing.

"What's your name?" he asks. In his mind, he is already acting out his desire. But then he hears a voice, and his attention is elsewhere...

Righteous and Wicked

"Hey. I remember you. Bella, right?"

Damn. Bella feels her stomach cramp, and lowers the paper.

"Uh, yeah. Hi."

"You left without saying good bye the other night. I was disappointed," Mike says, as he sits down without being invited to do so. He puts his arm over the back of the couch and subtly touches Bella's shoulder. He thinks he's being smooth.

Bella disagrees.

Edward turns his head toward the voice. It is like a bell. It belongs to a woman. A meek little woman who sits near the window, her space being invaded by some meathead.

She's pretty, but not what Edward would call sexy. She's dressed conservatively in a white skirt and gray blouse. She has legs for days, but she's too prim to know what to do with them.

Edward sees that she is exceptionally uncomfortable, almost scared.

Meathead is touching her. She doesn't like it. She doesn't want it.

Edward momentarily forgets about the hot piece-of-ass behind the counter and walks toward the sofa.

"I just wasn't feeling well; I mean...I don't normally drink..."

"Yeah, your friends told me you don't get out much. Just relax, sweetheart. I'm not gonna bite you. I just wanna talk."

He moves closer.

Righteous and Wicked

Bella hears the scratch of a counter stool sliding across linoleum, and looks up to find Stormy Eyes looking at her.

Finally.

He walks toward her and Bella feels the spark. She feels hot blood in her long cold veins.

"Hey man, can I speak to you please?" Stormy Eyes speaks to Mike, but looks at Bella. She recognizes that look.

It's pity.

"What's the problem, bro?" Mike asks him as he stands.

Bella watches as Stormy Eyes leans in, to Mike's ear. She watches as he exposes his long neck, and her blood gets even hotter.

She strains to hear what he's said...

Edward whispers, "*I know* what a woman looks like when she wants to fuck you, bro, and this girl is definitely *not* looking at *you* that way. You should leave her alone."

Having said his piece, Edward turns and walks away, back to the counter.

Mike is stunned. His ego is demolished.

"Hey, *fuck you* dude!" he yells after Edward.

Edward doesn't turn around or respond. He sits back down, smiles at Cleavage Girl, and returns his attention to meeting his need.

Then, he hears small footsteps and a soft "Thank you." The door chimes and Edward sees Meek Girl walk quickly out of the shop and down the street.

Righteous and Wicked

Bella arrives at home, and is unsettled by the product that the deviation from her routine has yielded.

She immediately seeks to correct that as soon as she arrives at the comfortable desolation that is her home. She changes into cotton sleep pants and a tee. She puts the dishes away. She rifles through the fridge and begins to cook. She tries to sedate her mind with minutiae.

But she sees the raw lumber of her nemesis' house through the thinned out trees. The wood looks warm and golden in the light of the sun set. She chops the vegetables and is distracted thinking about the note, and the house, and Mike, and Stormy Eyes, and... *ouch*.

She cuts her finger.

The girl locks the door to the shop and Edward waits. He leans against the Jeep and Cleavage Girl wiggles her way toward him. The girl is thrilled and stunned that this sexy stranger is paying attention to her. She can't count the times she has sat alone at work and dreamed about exactly this.

That a man she's never met would walk in the shop and *want* her.

And she wants him back. His sudden flirtation and unexpected advances have made her lightheaded, and almost high. She's going to do anything she can to keep his interest, to make him come back for more. She stands in front of him and waits for him to open the car door for her. He does not.

Instead he keeps his arms folded across his chest. He looks her up and down, from head to toe and back again. He steps toward her and her lips part. He gives her a grin, which sends a chill through her, then he walks off to the driver's side, leaving her standing there, alone. The girl doesn't know what hit her.

Edward gets in the Jeep and waits. Within seconds, the girl follows.

Righteous and Wicked

Bella sucks the blood from her fingertip. There are red splatters in the kitchen sink. She runs up the creaky stairs to the bathroom and searches for a bandage.

The sound of a car engine floats through the window, and she sees the black jeep. She scowls, remembering the note. She's had enough today. She *will* vent the frustration she's feeling. She quickly pulls on sneakers, and runs through her yard.

Bella emerges from the woods into the muddy clearing that is now her neighbor's property.

She walks with purpose and fury toward the silver trailer. She raises her hand to pound on the door, but stops when she hears a voice.

It's a woman's voice.

"So, you want me to suck your dick, baby?"

Bella claps her hand to her mouth and immediately turns to leave, but stops dead in her tracks when she hears a man speak. It sounds strangely familiar, but Bella knows that's impossible. She gingerly steps closer to the door of the trailer.

"You can suck me off, but I'm not gonna eat your pussy."

Bella gasps and her whole body flames. She shakes away the idea that she knows that voice, thinking that this scenario only reminds her of the man in the club. It can't be the same. It can't be Stormy Eyes.

"What a fucking Prince Charming," the girl teases.

"Just shut up and make those lips useful."

Bella wonders if it's the man, or the woman, or both who are building this house. She wonders which one of them removed her wind-chime and left a nasty note.

Righteous and Wicked

Something falls and breaks inside the trailer, there is movement-a scuffle-and then the low, guttural sounds of a man receiving pleasure meet her ears.

The cut on her finger throbs with its own pulse. The pain reminds her that she is once again engaging in sin.

She remembers Father Carlisle's words, "*you must pray*"...

"Oh, shit...yeah...fuck...do it faster...fuck, suck me harder..."

Bella's knees are weak, and she leans against the trailer. She has never heard anything this profane before in her life. She feels that spark inside her. It smolders.

Run.

He groans. "Fuck...yeah, that's it...shit, that feels so good..."

Pray.

Bella digs her fingernails into her palms. She is frozen. She is desperate to leave and desperate to hear more. She welcomes the lust that is coursing through her. It outshines the pain she feels. She closes her eyes and thinks, once again, of the man she misses...

"I'm gonna fucking come in your mouth. Oh, shit....fuck...fucking suck me...I'm gonna fucking come..."

In her mind, Bella sees brown eyes, soft brown eyes filled with love. She thinks of his hands on her face, in her hair.

The man in the trailer groans again and the girl whimpers.

In her mind, Bella sees brown eyes, and then those eyes turn blue...

She runs.

Righteous and Wicked

It can't be. It can't be him.

Bella gets inside her home and shuts the door. Her chest heaves with deep breaths. An uncomfortable realization is breaking in her mind.

She looks at the kitchen table and finds the answer she's looking for.

She picks up the object-the bait- and opens the front door.

If it's him , I'll find out soon enough.

She hangs the wind chime, sits on the porch, and waits.

Thanks for reading! Please review!

The next update will be Sunday 8/29.

Chapter 4: The Heaviest of Burdens

A/N:

Thanks to my beta, Rpattzlawyer and my pre-reader, Bleriana. I truly appreciate their efforts! Thanks to all who are reading this fic, I would love for you to pimp it out to your friends.

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She looks at the kitchen table and finds the answer she's looking for.

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If it's him, I'll find out soon enough.

She hangs the wind chime, sits on the porch, and waits.

"But is heaviness truly deplorable and lightness splendid?"

~Milan Kundera

What am I doing? It's not him. Even if it is him, what does it matter? Bella scolds herself and goes inside.

Righteous and Wicked

She eats dinner. She watches TV. She quietly ignores the sound of the Jeep leaving.

She takes a shower. She gets ready for bed. She opens the box and takes out the picture.

He threads his hands in her hair as he guides her hot, wet mouth along his cock. He can feel how deep she's taking him, down into her throat. He pushes himself deeper, forcing himself inside her harder than he should. She groans, but she doesn't protest. And it feels good, so he doesn't care.

She's next to him now, kissing his ear while he zips up his pants. She wants more, but he's not going to give it to her. He came, he's satisfied, and now he realizes how badly he fucked this up. He's broken too many of his own rules.

This girl knows my name and I know hers --one rule broken.

She knows where I live--two rules broken.

This is exactly what got me into trouble last time.

Edward is thinking of a way out. And in his devious mind, he finds one.

"Jessica, baby, you know I think you're fucking sexy, but I've just gotten out of a long term relationship and..."

And Jessica eats his lies up with a spoon.

ThumpThumpThump

Bella jerks awake and looks at the clock. 11:30.

ThumpThumpThump

It's the door.

Righteous and Wicked

Jessica gets out of Edward's jeep and walks to her car. She smiles, thinking of the way he tasted, the things he did and said. She turns and waves as he pulls away, but his headlights blind her. She can't see if he waved back. She feels exhilarated by what she did to him, but she feels sorry that his heart is broken. She hopes he'll come back to her again, after he is healed.

That's it. That's the last time. Edward is making solemn and useless vows in his head. He's driving much faster than he should.

He's furious with himself.

He wants to punch something. To smash something. He hates himself. He hates how weak he is, how much he needs it, and what he'll do to get it.

He turns on to the dead end street, he sees the old ivy-covered house, and remembers his unfinished business.

When he gets out of the car, he hears that god-damned sound.

ThumpThumpThump

Bella pads downstairs, barefoot. She swallows hard as she approaches the door.

She turns on the porch light and looks through the peephole.

She is shocked, and not at all surprised by what she sees.

One haunting, storm blue eye stares back at her.

The door swings open and Edward is confused. He expected a spinster, a moth-ball scented cat-lady with a cane.

But this--this is a young woman. Probably his age. And she's pretty. Edward looks from her brown eyes to her fair flawless skin to her curves. Her hair is mussed. She was sleeping. He wonders if she lives alone. He sees her empty ring finger.

Righteous and Wicked

"It's you," she says.

Edward notices her blush. "Have we met?" he asks, confused. He doesn't remember her.

The girl looks away, and her face gets redder. Her expression changes from embarrassment to anger. She looks up at him, her hand on her hip.

"You're the jerk who stole my wind chime."

She's angry and it's cute. This tiny little person is trying to intimidate him. Edward knows just how to get out of it. He turns on the charm, the most deadly weapon he has.

"Yes. I'm the jerk," he smirks and steps toward her. To Edward's surprise, she steps back and her anger doesn't fade.

"Well, then. I've said all I had to say to you in that note. Get off my porch."

And she slams the door in his face.

With shaking hands, she slides the deadbolt into place and sinks down onto the floor. Her ears ring with the intensity of the truth that has just been shown to her.

Stormy eyes is her neighbor.

She saw him at the gas station and he doesn't remember. He helped her at the coffee shop and he doesn't remember. *Am I so forgettable?*

He stole from her, and said horrible things to her. She listened to him being intimate with two different women. She fantasized about him.

Him. Her nemesis. Her neighbor.

Righteous and Wicked

Bella feels faint. Too many unfamiliar emotions are rolling inside her. She wishes she drank alcohol. She longs to feel numb again.

She goes into Charlie's room and opens every drawer. She finds an old pack of Camels and lights one with her shaking hands.

The smoke makes her cough, and it tastes terrible, but she needs to do something.

She lies back on her father's bed and, for the first time in a long time, she can't sleep.

The truck is cold and she lets it warm up. She drives past the Jeep and refuses to look.

She gets her coffee and it tastes like crap.

She stands at the chalkboard and addresses 27 pairs of knee socks and pig tails.

She eats lunch with Alice and says "mmm hmmm" and smiles when she's supposed to.

She sits in the parking lot at 3 o'clock and stares at the church. Then, she gets out of her truck and goes inside.

"Emmett, it's Edward..."

Edward calls his friend and makes plans to meet him later to play basketball.

He eats breakfast. He does the work of several men, letting the sweat drip from his skin. He carries beams that are too heavy and thrusts them into place. He uses every muscle in his body to complete his work. The sun glares and the wind blows and the birds chirp and the clouds roll by and he works and he works and he works.

"You want me to pick you up?"

Righteous and Wicked

"Oh no, no, no. I'll drive. I just need directions." Bella speaks to Rosalie.

"Alright, well the dress shop is in Port Angeles..."

Bella is reluctantly going bridesmaid dress shopping with Rosalie and Alice. She arrives at the shop and Alice is waiting for her in the parking lot.

"I need to be serious with you for a minute," Alice says as her greeting.

"What? What's the matter?" Bella asks.

"Nothing, I just want to make sure you're okay with this."

"With dress shopping?"

"You know what I mean. If this is too hard for you..."

"It's fine...I'm fine, Alice. Life goes on. People are going to get married and be happy even if I wasn't. I can handle it."

"Okay. Good."

"I'm swearing off women. I'm done," Edward says as he sinks a shot. He checks the ball back to Emmett.

"Someone did a number on you, huh?" Emmett fakes right and moves to the left, then shoots a jump shot.

Edward wipes his brow. "I guess you could say that." He's tempted to share his secret with Emmett, but he doesn't.

"Is that why you moved back here?" He chucks the ball to Edward.

"Yes. No. I don't know. I just think it's better if I don't get involved with any more girls." He dribbles and shoots. He misses.

Righteous and Wicked

Emmett grabs the ball. "Maybe you just need to find the right one."

Edward shakes his head and walks over to the bench to grab some water.

Emmett follows, with the ball at his hip. "Uh, that reminds me--you know I'm getting married in a few months and, uh, I wanted to ask you to be my best man."

Bella drags the metal contraption from the shed. She bends down, opens the cap, and pours in the gasoline.

She pushes the lawn mower to the end of the driveway, grabs the pull handle, and yanks it.

Nothing.

She pulls again. Nothing.

She hears a car.

A smile spreads on Edward's face as he pulls up at his house. The expression feels unfamiliar and foreign. He realizes how long it has been since he really smiled. His muscles barely remember how to do it.

He sees her, dressed in jeans and an old shirt, desperately trying to start the lawn mower with her tiny arms.

He jumps out of the jeep and walks toward her.

Oh no. Please no.

Bella hears footsteps on the gravel and stops.

God, give me strength. She prays silently. She doesn't want to be unkind, but she sees no other way.

Righteous and Wicked

"You need some help with that?"

She slowly turns around. He's covered in sweat. White tee and black shorts. Sneakers. His hair is damp. He's beautiful. She tries to avoid his eyes. She fails.

"No. I can handle it. And I thought I told you to stay off my property?"

Edward fights a smirk at her attempt to be rude. He can see the sweetness that lies beneath it.

"Well, technically, I'm in the street, so it's *not* your property."

He steps closer. His audacity and proximity fuel the fire inside her. *God, please let him leave me alone.* She prays for what she thinks is right, not for what she wants.

She yanks the pull cord again. A rumble.

He steps closer now, too close. Her mind flashes accross her lust and her distaste for this man. Neither are Christian feelings and she wants to stamp them both out.

"Please, let me do that for you," he implores, and the voice that was once perverse is now sweet.

Bella turns to him. She'd like nothing more than for him to put his hand on the mower and make it purr.

She'd like nothing more than to sit on the porch and watch him push this machine back and forth across the yard. No shirt on. Dirty and sweaty. Muscles flexing.

She'd like nothing more than to bring him a beer when he's done, and watch him drink it.

Righteous and Wicked

She's like nothing more than to take him inside when he's finished, and get in the shower...

"I said I've got it!" she yells, yanking the cord with one final furious pull.

The engine roars to life. She turns away from him and begins to mow the yard.

She doesn't look back.

Edward paces in his trailer. The need gnaws at his insides. He takes a book from the shelf and lies down on his bed to read.

"The heaviest of burdens crushes us, we sink beneath it, it pins us to the ground. But in the love poetry of every age, the woman longs to be weighed down by the man's body. The heaviest of burdens is therefore simultaneously an image of life's most intense fulfillment. The heavier the burden, the closer our lives come to earth, the more real and truthful they become.

Conversely, the absolute absence of a burden causes man to be lighter than air, to soar into the heights, take leave of the earth and his earthly being, and become only half real, his movements as free as they are insignificant.

What then shall we choose? Weight or lightness?"

He lays the book upon his chest and rubs his hand along his jaw. "What then shall we choose?" *Will it ever be a choice?* He wonders.

The silence in the house is heavy, like a thick white blanket covering her. She's not hungry. She doesn't want to talk on the phone. There's nothing on tv.

She thinks of going to church, but it's late.

She takes the box from under the bed. She caresses the wood. She opens the box and takes out the picture. She stares at her husband and the woman next to him. She looks like a stranger now. Round stomach, fair skin, long hair, brown eyes.

Righteous and Wicked

The life she could have had flashes in front of her, and is gone. The emptiness she feels is a corrosive black hole in her chest. It's an unbearable weight. It burns and it aches and she wants to escape. The tears flow and drip off her face. She sees no point in wiping them away.

Headlights flash against her bedroom wall. She sees him leave and the spark is flickering. She's losing the fight inside herself. She wants the spark to outshine the black hole.

Then she's in her truck, and she's following him.

The book Edward is reading is "The Unbearable Lightness of Being" by Milan Kundera.

Next update should be next weekend.

Thanks for reading and please review!

Chapter 5: A Laborious Mosaic

A/N: Thanks to my beta, Rpattzlawyer and my pre-readers, buhbeesgirl and Bleriana! Check out Belriana's blog, TheColdShower!

Also, thanks to RoseArcadia for reviewing RaW on her blog this week!

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Then she's in her truck, and she's following him.

"There are very few human beings who receive the truth, complete and staggering, by instant illumination. Most of them acquire it fragment by fragment, on a small scale, by successive developments, cellularly, like a laborious mosaic."

~Anais Nin

Her body sways as the truck winds and races along the dark road. Ahead, she can see the red tail lights of the jeep.

Righteous and Wicked

She would drive forever, follow this stranger forever, if she thought she could escape the ghosts that haunt her. She can almost see them in the rear view mirror but, instead of looking back, she looks defiantly ahead.

Edward grips the steering wheel like it's a life preserver, like it could somehow save him from what he's about to do, but it can't. He presses the accelerator harder. The drive is aimless; he lets it flow from moment to moment, letting the night guide him.

There's a light up ahead, and a sign. He pulls into the dirt lot, jumps out of his jeep, and slams the door.

She puts on her blinker, and her truck slowly rattles over the rough dirt surface. She can see him enter the bar.

It's a hole-in-the-wall, a dive. She looks down at her pajama clad body and then up at the sky. There's no answer there.

She shuts off the engine, and closes her eyes.

It's smoky and crowded. He is guided by an unseen force. His brain is shut off. He orders a beer, and there she is. She looks nice, but not too nice. Long hair, dark skin. She sits alone, tapping her foot to the thumping music. Her table is covered in empty beer bottles, wounded soldiers. She plays with her hair, and stares straight ahead.

He saunters over and it's like slow motion. Her eyes fall on him. They undress him, they want him.

This battle is easily won.

He sits. "Hi."

A giggle.

Where am I?

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Bella gets her bearings. She has once again allowed the emotional exhaustion to permeate through her, to own her. She awakes from her slumber, disoriented in her truck.

She's in a parking lot.

Another giggle. A squeal.

What the...

Bella knew what she would find here, and that makes her reaction even more shameful. She can see him in the shadow that the faint light from the bar is casting. His car is parked just feet from hers. And she can see her. Whoever she is, whoever it is this time. Bella watches them pressing their bodies together.

It is beginning to become clear to her, like a shadow passing over the moon. *He needs this.*

Something about his compulsion is compelling her. Something about his unquenchable thirst is quenching her. It's pulling her away from her pain and into something else.

Bella can see the girl, pressed against the jeep. She can see Stormy Eyes, his hands touching, seeking. The girl's head is thrown back, her feet leave the ground. Bella can see him forcing, pulsing...and devouring.

Bella's mouth has fallen open. His body thrusts. Flames of lust are fanning across Bella's skin. He is so hard, so rough with the girl. Somewhere deep inside her, in a place she keeps covered and quiet, Bella is wishing for him to keep going. She wants him to get as far and as deep as he can inside of this nameless, faceless girl. She wants to take that girl's place, and let his body make hers forget. Bella's hand slides over her own thigh as she peeks at them from the cover of her truck. Bella is surrendering, she lets the lust take her, she sinks down into its depths. Her eyes stay locked, but her hand moves faster.

She smells good, but she feels even better. He pulls his mouth away from hers and she throws her head back as he kisses her neck. He's inside her, finally, and

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everything goes black. His mind is like a heat seeking missile, it cannot be dissuaded from its course for any reason. Harder, faster, deeper, deeper. She squeals and her fingernails dig painfully into his shoulder. He knows she wants it like this and he gives it to her that way. Harder, rougher, faster. His car rocks back and forth against their weight.

She cries out.

Any second now.

Almost there.

"Rather than trying to put this puzzle together, why not consider how you can resist this weakness?" Father Carlisle asks.

Her head hangs in shame, but Bella wants an answer.

"Why would God bring this man into my life if He didn't want me to feel this? Aren't these feelings His will?"

She struggles to make Father understand without sharing too many of the details.

"If I feel desire, isn't it God that has brought this to me? Wouldn't it be a show of His mercy for me to feel something else besides pain?"

"God will show you His mercy when you reach the gates of heaven, my child. He will show you that mercy for following the path He has laid out for you. A path of righteousness. It is the devil that tempts you now. It is the devil that makes you feel lust for a man who is not your husband."

Carlisle does his best to guide this disheartened and confused woman. He can only show her the path, he can't force her to walk it. What she does with his counsel is between her and the Lord.

Bella says her penance, then her heels click against the linoleum. She's late.

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"I don't know, babe. I mean, Best Man? Why don't you ask Jasper instead? It seems to me he's been a better friend to you than Edward." Rosalie is not thrilled with her fiance's choice and is doing her best to change his mind. She folds the laundry angrily. "Where the hell has he been for the last ten years anyway?"

"He was traveling, and working. He's been all over the world. Most recently he was living in Brazil."

"I don't know, something about him just seems off to me."

"Babe, he was like my brother. He's my best man, and Jasper's a groomsman. That's the way it's going to be. I love you, but it's not like I'm telling you not to pick 'Bella The Wet Blanket' as your bridesmaid."

"She's not a 'wet blanket'. She's been a good friend to me and she needs me right now. She's in a lot of pain, and she needs something to pull her out of it."

"And you think being in a bridal party is going to do that?"

"All right. Fine. Keep Edward. I'm keeping Bella." She picks up the basket and walks away.

The rain is a choir, steady and melodic. She imagines that it's a baptism. She stares at it as she takes the roast out of the oven. It slaps against the window. Enough rain to wash her sins away. Enough food for an army.

He's driving aimlessly and looking for a distraction. He passes Emmett's house, but he knows he can't go in. He won't be able to keep himself from flirting with the sexy blond. He's thought of a million ways to fuck her since he met her, and his almost non-existent will would force that scenario to end very badly.

I need some new friends. Some single friends. But would that even work? I should buy a bike. Maybe a dog.

He passes a liquor store. He stops, darts out through the rain, and goes inside.

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The wind picks up and makes the old house creak. It tosses her wind chime around brutally. The chime bangs against itself, crying out a plea to be saved from the savage gusts. Bella hears it and thinks of him. She tries to steel herself against those thoughts as she carves the roast. Instead, she thinks of all the dinners she cooked and ate with Jacob. She tries to think of the happy times. The times he said "Thank you" and "Tastes great, hun". She tries not to think of the times they ate in silence, the times they had no appetite.

ThumpThumpThump

Bella jumps ten feet in the air.

Edward drives with his co-pilot-a large bottle of wine that rests in the seat next to him. He pulls onto the dead-end street. He can barely see the girl's house through the sheets of heavy rain. He parks and stares at her lonely, lit window. The light is yellow and warm. A beacon in the storm. A small salvation.

Then, he looks down his dark, muddy driveway. The trees hang low, almost forbidding entry. All that waits at the end is a cell, a cage. No comfort, no way to escape his thoughts or to reign his desires in.

Edward looks back at the old white house. He runs his hand through his hair.

No ring on her finger, one car in the drive...she must be alone. He thinks, then grabs the wine.

Bella wipes her hands on the dish rag and walks to the door. She can feel who waits on the other side and her breath leaves her. The rain continues to punish the house and the wind moans. She opens the door.

Against the night and the weather, his eyes look different. Less tortured, less ravenous. They almost look pained, and her heart clenches at the sight of him. He is soaked. The rain causes his black shirt to cling to him; it drips from the darkened locks on his head.

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"What do you want?" Her words are harsh and they leave her mouth before her brain has a chance to filter them. She regrets it immediately. He shifts his feet, the cockiness she has so often unintentionally witnessed is absent. He extends his hand, offering the bottle of wine to his neighbor.

"I thought I would apologize..."

Then, the wind chime clangs and bangs loudly against itself. It interrupts Edward, as if on cue. Their eyes lock. It thunders in the distance, and then a strange thing happens.

Bella laughs.

She puts her hand to her stomach and laughs even harder. And in response, Edward laughs too. He throws his head back, laughing at the circumstance and the cacophony of beautiful sounds that emanate from this woman.

Bella wipes a tear from her eye.

"That thing has a personality of its own, I guess," Edward says, side-eyeing the wind chime.

"Yes. I guess it does," Bella says, as the last tremors of her laughing fit roll through her. She looks at his eyes again and sees that there's a person behind the mask he usually shows to others. A person who is just as lonely as she is.

She gingerly reaches out her hand and takes the wine.

"Thank you," she says softly, the smile still resting on her lips. "My name is Bella."

"I'm Edward", he says, and the smile on his face also refuses to fade.

They stand silent in each other's company, and then Bella makes a decision that she may either come to treasure or regret. She's not sure which, and in this moment she doesn't care.

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"Would you like to come in?" she asks.

And he thought she would never ask. The light that shines from the hall on to the porch makes her brown hair look almost red. The flush on her cheeks shows such an innocence, such a purity. Her kindness exudes in waves, and he soaks it up from her like she's the sun. Something warm and inviting amidst all of this cold.

A heavenly smell wafts through the doorway and makes his stomach convulse with a hunger he didn't know he felt.

"Yes. I'd like that," he says, and she stands aside as he walks into her home.

"Are you hungry?" she asks and follows him into the kitchen. "I was just making dinner if you'd like some."

Edward sits down at the table like he's been here a million times before. The chair feels like it was made for him and he lets himself get wrapped up in this warm, dry, deliciously scented kitchen.

Bella brings a cork screw and one wine glass to the table.

"Just one?" Edward asks, gesturing toward the glass and using the edge of the cork screw to remove the foil from the neck of the bottle.

Bella fidgets. "Um, well I don't really drink..."

Edward sees the apprehension in her eyes, like she's a child and he's offering her ice cream before she's eaten supper.

He stops what he's doing. He stands, and finds her child-like eyes. "Well, you can't make me drink alone," he says softly.

"No, I guess that would be rude," she says in an even softer tone. The tension is thick, and she backs away from him.

Edward regrets making her feel uncomfortable. He watches the way her lean body reaches up to grab another wine glass. He also sees the crucifix that rests

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above the window, and then casts his eyes away from her, not wanting to allow his need to rise up in this place. Not wanting to defile the sanctity of this haven with his dark debauchery.

She returns, and Edward pops the cork. He fills each glass, and Bella raises hers. Her hand shakes slightly and Edward feels his long cold heart warm at her innocence.

He smiles as she makes a toast.

"To neighbors," she says.

Edward clinks his glass against hers. "To neighbors".

They sit down to eat and Bella watches the way his large body overwhelms her small table. She can't remember the last time a man sat here. He looks out of place and perfect at the same time. It makes her feel safe in a way she has missed.

He tears into his food carnally, and Bella can see that she's not the only one who has missed sharing a meal. He gulps his wine and she watches him do it, his damp clothes still caress his body in ways that Bella finds too pleasing.

She looks away and spoons some gravy onto her plate. Edward refills her wine before she can say no and her head already feels lighter.

"So, this is your home?" he asks.

She wipes her mouth with her napkin. "No, well, it's my fathers house," she explains.

"And where is he?" Edward asks as he swallows another forkful of meat.

"He's travelling the country with his wife, Sue. They bought a motor home when he retired. They haven't lived here in years, no one has...until I came back."

"Well, that explains the disrepair," Edward says, abruptly.

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She flinches and he knows he said the wrong thing. He backtracks, "I didn't mean...I mean this is such a large house..."

"It's fine," Bella says. She feels embarrassed about the state of neglect that the house has been in. She takes her glass and sips more of the sweet, crimson, liquid. She takes a big gulp, enjoying the way it warms her whole body. Her head swims.

"And what brought you here, exactly?" Bella inquires.

"I'm building a house, didn't you know?" Edward says, playfully.

"Yes, I may have heard that," Bella smiles at his sarcastic answer. "You know, waking up to that racket on Saturdays nearly killed me."

"Then I won't work on Saturdays anymore," he vows.

Bella sees that he is serious and she feels flattered that he would change for her.

"So, why did you choose Forks?" she persists.

"I lived here when I was younger." Another mouthful of food.

"Why did you come back?" Another sip.

"Things just...stopped working out for me, where I was."

He readjusts his sitting position and their legs touch underneath the table. Bella jolts from the unexpected contact, and the spark inside her flickers.

"Why did *you* come back?" he asks, his misty blue eyes bore into hers.

She leans toward him, allowing the wine to make her bold. "Things just stopped working out for me, where I was," she says.

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Edward smirks and Bella has to resist the urge to brush her hand against his face. To touch his hair, to let him touch hers. She envisions him forcefully clearing the table with a swipe of his hand and throwing her willing body across it. She imagines his mouth on hers. She imagines the way he would taste, and the way his skin would feel, naked against her own. The way she would look beneath him, and him above her. She imagines him taking her, tearing her clothes, giving her pleasure, making her scream.

But the room is silent, except for the sound of the leaky faucet dripping into the sink.

Please review!

Chapter 6: Go Forth

A/N: T thanks to everyone who is reading and reviewing this! I have to thank the girls I like to refer to as "The Ficstressess" on twitter. They are awesome pimps and supporters. Love you girls!

Thanks to my beta, Rpattzlawyer and my pre-readers, buhbeesgirl and Bleriana.

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From the previous chapter:

Edward smirks and Bella has to resist the urge to brush her hand against his face. To touch his hair, to let him touch hers. She envisions him forcefully clearing the table with a swipe of his hand and throwing her willing body across it. She imagines his mouth on hers. She imagines the way he would taste, and the way his skin would feel, naked against her own. The way she would look beneath him, and him above her. She imagines him taking her, tearing her clothes, giving her pleasure, making her scream.

But the room is silent, except for the sound of the leaky faucet dripping into the sink.

"How do geese know when to fly to the sun? Who tells them the seasons? How do we, humans know when it is time to move on? As with the migrant birds, so surely with us, there is a voice within if only we would listen to it, that tells us certainly to go forth into the unknown."

~Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

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"I can fix this for you, you know," Edward says, tapping the faucet as he washes another dish.

"Oh, you don't need to do that. And you certainly don't need to be washing my dishes," Bella says as she takes the dish from his hand, dries it, and puts it in the cupboard.

She's having a hard time reconciling Edward, this gentle man before her, with Stormy Eyes, the volatile man she has watched from afar.

She dries another dish and tries not to focus on the way he smells, the heat she feels coming off his body, the ease with which he fits into her home. Her skin prickles as his forearm brushes against hers. She sees their reflection in the now darkened window as she stands beside him at the sink. He is focused on his chore, but Bella is not. Bella is focused on him. She watches his soapy hands, the way they massage the dishes. The movement of his fingers transfixes her. She tries to push her fantasies from her mind.

She thinks of the Lord, she thinks of her husband, but neither of them are here.

Edward is.

It would be futile for her to try to ignore the attraction she feels for him. The way her body responds to him whenever he is near.

In Bella's heart there is still passionate love for Jacob, but when she thinks of him that love is laced with sorrow. All of the happy memories she has of her husband are overshadowed by the tragedy they suffered through. Guilt creeps up in her veins and she pushes it down. The box upstairs under the bed screams for her, and she ignores it.

Edward hums to himself as he washes another dish, and her sadness shifts into joy. A joy that comes from just just being beside him.

He shuts off the water, and Bella hands him a dish towel. He wipes his hands and leans back against the sink. He stares at her and she stares back. He says

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nothing, but a soft smile lives on his lips. The spark flickers.

I should look away, I should walk away, I should ask him to leave, Bella thinks, but does none of those things.

"Thank you for dinner," he says finally, and the spell is broken.

He walks toward the door, taking in the look of the house, all the little knick-knacks and photos. He takes note all of things he could fix, of all the ways he could help this girl--Bella. He wants to return the courtesy she has extended to him.

"I could come by tomorrow, maybe...and fix the sink...if you like," he offers.

She hesitates, fidgeting nervously with the dish rag in her hands. He waits with his hand on the door knob, and his eyes look over her softness. Her delicate neck, the shine in her eyes. *Beautiful. Pure. Tender.*

"What time do you get home from work?" he asks.

He wants to see her again. Even in this brief encounter, her presence has brought him peace. A priceless gift that she has no way of knowing she's giving to him. He feels an irrational need to protect her, but he's not sure from what.

"I-I-I get home at 4, usually," she stutters awkwardly.

"What do you do, Bella?" he asks her, enjoying the way her name feels on his lips.

"I'm a teacher. I teach first grade at St. Robert's School for Girls."

And there it is. There is the innocence. The piety. The reason that he simultaneously wants to stay and flee. The reason Edward will not treat this woman the way he treats all the others. The reason that maybe she could be more than that. Maybe this woman could be his friend.

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"You know, Bella, I was thinking... I'm alone. You're alone. Maybe we could... be alone... together."

Edward is taking a step. He feels himself trying to move beyond his carnal needs--to truly fight his addiction. This girl is just the kind of person--just the kind of *friend* that could unwittingly drag him out from the blackness his life has become. All of his hope to turnover a new leaf rests in Bella's answer.

"Edward...the thing is, is that, I'm not alone. I'm married. I don't think it would be right for me to..."

Of course. There had to be something.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't realize. You're not wearing a ring." He's dejected. He watches her stare down at her bare hand.

"I'm not wearing it, because he left me."

She says it so softly, Edward can hardly hear her, but he doesn't need to hear her to sense the devastation that this woman feels, the agony she must live with. It's all there in her down-turned eyes.

Without thinking, he takes her hand in his and is startled by how soft she really is, how tiny, how delicate. Her hand feels heavenly in his, like a remedy for what's ailing him.

"Well, if he left you, then you *are* alone. Aren't you, Bella?"

Her head snaps up at his touch and his words, and her eyes change. He sees something pushing its way out from under that sadness. Some kind of epiphany is rising up, but he doesn't know what it could be. She gives his hand an almost imperceptible squeeze, but her face remains unchanged.

"Yes. I guess I am."

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He lets her go. "Well, if you decide that you don't want to be, you know where I am."

Bella shuts the door. Tears flood her eyes. She sits down on the stairs and her head hangs between her knees. Her fists clench and she weeps. Her body she shivers with sobs, and then the sobs turn into a scream. She is furious, frustrated, and grateful.

It took this man, this *stranger*, this sex-crazed thieving hero, to show her the truth. She is alone, and Jacob is never coming back.

No matter how much she wishes he would, no matter how many times she thinks that she feels him in bed next to her in the middle of the night. No matter how much she longs to feel his touch and hear his voice. No matter how many tears she sheds, no matter how much she misses him.

She is alone.

Lauren unlocks the door to the bike shop. She flips on the lights and starts up the computer.

She was running late this morning, so she goes in the back room to put on her makeup. She takes the black pencil out of her make-up bag and traces a thick line around each eye. She swipes on mascara, red lipstick.

The shop door opens. *Shit*.

She tosses the lipstick into her bag and walks out to greet her first customer.

"I want to get my marriage annuled," Bella says as she eats her salad.

Alice nearly chokes on her soda. "What?"

"He's never coming back, Alice. He doesn't want me anymore. He's gone, and I need to accept it."

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Alice is stunned. Stunned but thrilled. "Well, can we speak to Father Carlisle about it?"

"That's the problem. I can't get an annulment unless I can prove the marriage was fraud. I don't even know if I can do it without Jacob here, to give consent or whatever. And since he basically vanished off the face of the earth, there's no way for me to find him."

"Does Renee know where he is?"

Bella's cringes at the mention of her mothers name and Alice wishes she hadn't brought it up.

"I just, I can't call my mom. It just hurts too much..." Bella gets choked up, and Alice takes her hand.

"We'll figure it out, sweetie. I'll see what Jasper says. He doesn't specialize in divorce law, but I'm sure he knows someone who does."

He walks up and down the aisles, a jungle of rubber and metal as far as he can see. He noticed her when he came in - the shop girl. She looks tough but sexy: black eye liner, dyed hair, tattoos. She's too young for him, college age, but that's never stopped him before. He's trying not to watch her watch him. He's trying to be discreet, to pick out a bike without her help. But it seems that even when he's not looking for it, it finds him.

She's walking towards him, black fishnets, Doc Marten's, short skirt. He's the only customer in the store. He knows he could take her in the back room and do all the things he wants to, anything he wants. He could wait until the shop is closed and come back for her. He could fuck her up against the counter...on the floor. He can already envision her face turned to look at him over her shoulder as he takes her from behind. He can already feel how wet she would be, he can already hear her curse and moan. He is thirsty for her, hard for her.

He closes his eyes and takes a deep breath, trying to remain steadfast, to fight against himself.

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"Is there anything you need?" she asks him. Her voice is deep and sexy, he gets even harder when she speaks.

Yes. I want to fuck you. I want to fuck you until you're sore. Right here. Right now. I want to bury myself inside you. Edward abruptly grabs the bike in front of him. "No. I don't need anything from you. I'm all set."

The day goes by and Bella feels like a little kid. She stares out her classroom window, submerged in daydreams. Her stomach feels like there are sparklers in it. Little bursts of nerves and anticipation make themselves known at regular intervals. Especially right now when she's alone in her classroom, her girls at recess.

She feels excited. She's looking forward to something for once, instead of dreading what's next. She wants to see Edward again. She finds herself thinking about his smile, and the way his voice sounds. The way his body moves. She wonders what he'll be wearing, what he'll do and say...

Then her classroom door opens. The students are returning from recess.

Oh, no. She lost track of time. She forgot to pick them up.

They take their seats, and Bella stands to thank whichever co-worker was kind enough to help her out. She stops dead in her tracks when she sees it's the Headmistress, Mother Esme. Daggers are shooting out of her eyes. She's a sweet, small woman, but she can be immensely threatening, even terrifying at times.

"Can I speak to you please, Ms. Swan?" Her tone is sharp and brusque.

Bella closes her eyes. She knows she's in for it.

He fills the tires, and tightens each screw. He checks his watch for the hundredth time today, then gets on his bike. He wants to see how it handles the mud. He rides up the driveway. The white of her house flickers and fades through the trees. It would be a lot easier to get there if there were a path

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between their houses, and Edward contemplates creating one.

What's the point of that when I'm not even going to stay? Maybe I will stay. Maybe this will become my home.

He makes a mental note to get the bulldozer out here again...but not on Saturday.

And her high is now a low as she drives home after being chastised by the Headmistress. Bella so infrequently fails to meet the expectations of her job. It has been the one thing she has been completely in control of, and now that control is slipping.

All because of him. Because of Edward, and her inability to get him out of her head. She punishes herself mentally, and plans to once again go to confession. But a voice in her head tells her that prayer and absolution are ultimately no match for her increasingly impure thoughts.

She pinches the bridge of her nose, and then the valley becomes a peak. She sees him.

He hears an engine and he knows it's hers. He hoped he would run into her today, he almost planned it.

Her truck rumbles past him and stops at the top of her driveway. She gets out to get the mail.

Edward pulls up along side her. She doesn't look at him as she takes the mail out of the box and accidentally drops a letter on the ground. He bends to pick it up, but so does she. Their heads collide and they each reel back from the impact.

"Shit," Edward exclaims and rubs his skull. He sees how embarrassed Bella instantly becomes, and the pain fades, replacing itself with this feeling that is still new to him. The tranquility that he feels when he's near her. Her blush deepens, and he is tempted to touch her.

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She rubs her head. "I'm sorry."

"Are you all right?" he asks.

"Yes. I'm sorry. I'm not having the best day. Um, that's a nice bike," she says in an effort to change the subject.

"Thanks. I just bought it. I was thinking of taking it off-road. The girl at the store said it's a really great mountain bike..." He's rambling. It's awkward.

Bella fumbles with the mail and shuffles her feet. She's conflicted. Neither of them speaks. Edward wants to stay and talk with her, but he knows that it's not what she wants.

"So...I guess I'll see you around," he says. He straddles his bike and begins to ride away. Bella says nothing, and that confirms his suspicion.

"Wait!" she yells after him and he skids to a stop.

"I was wondering if...would you be able to maybe fix the sink later? I mean if you're not busy?"

He smiles and turns around, so pleased that she asked.

"I'm not busy now."

She hears his footsteps behind her and her heart pounds. There's no turning back now. She unlocks the door and throws her bag on the table. She turns to face him. Blue eyes, hooded sweatshirt, jeans. She's hypnotized.

Say something.

"I think my dad's tools are in the shed," she gestures for Edward to follow her out the back door, and he does.

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The afternoon is bright and pleasant, the air is crisp and warm. Edward walks beside her through the back yard. A bluebird sings.

"So, how is the house coming?" she asks him.

The sunlight shimmers on his face and he licks his lips. Bella's stomach flips and quivers.

"Good. It's good. Still a lot of work left to do. It should take about six months or so to get it done," he answers and she tries to memorize the tone of his voice.

"Is anyone helping you?" She notes the way their feet step in unison.

"I have contractors come in when necessary, but I want to do most of the work myself. I designed the house. I want to build it. It's more authentic to me that way."

Bella is impressed by the evident intensity he feels for his job. A passion she also possesses. Something Jacob never understood.

"Have you built many houses?" she asks, but she doesn't get an answer. Bella and Edward stop walking, distracted by the sigh before them. They stare at the rusted lock that binds the shed doors together.

"Oh, no. It's locked."

"You don't have a key?" he asks, bending down and taking the lock in his hands to examine it.

She shakes her head. "I have no idea where it would be. I have no idea what's even in the shed, to be honest with you."

"Well, I could go get my tools and take the door off." He stands and examines the door and the hinge. "Actually, this door is pretty rotten. I think if I took it off I would never get it back on again."

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Bella watches as he slides his hands along the wood. He examines the lock again and then walks behind the shed. He disappears.

"What are you doing?" Bella asks.

Edward returns from behind the shed with an axe in his hands.

For some reason, the sight of him holding a weapon sends a chill through her. He looks lethal standing there. His eyes are different, darker. Bella no longer sees Edward. She sees the man she remembers from the club and the parking lot. The stormy eyed man who takes whatever he wants. The man who lives just beneath the surface.

Wordlessly, he raises the axe over his head and Bella feels afraid. Then he swings, and strikes the rusted lock forcefully. The ping of metal hitting metal rings in her ears. She steps back and he strikes again.

She watches the way his muscles move as he swings the axe against the rusted lock. He looks like an animal and Bella feels the spark. He is on a quest, he is driven to get inside. He swings the axe again. Her fear morphs into lust. His strength and force make her legs feel weak. She likes watching him this way. Barbaric and merciless. The dark part of her is growing larger, the spark is becoming a flame. She *wants* him. Only him. No one else.

The lock breaks in two on his third strike and he rests the axe against the shed. He looks at her. His chest heaves with deep breaths and Bella stands, helplessly held in his gaze.

He waves for her to come closer. "Let's see what's inside."

The chapters are short because I feel the story flows better that way. I'm sorry if this frustrates anyone! I will update every weekend unless some major RL issue comes up. You can find teasers on my blog: [righteousnwicked\[dot\]blogspot\[dot\]com](http://righteousnwicked[dot]blogspot[dot]com). There is a link on my profile.

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There are also threads for this fic on Twilighted (thanks Rose!) and Robstenlove (thanks robstenlover!). Go visit and chat!

Thanks so much for reading. PLEASE REVIEW! Reviews make MY stomach flip and quiver ;)

Chapter 7: Divine Inspiration

A/N: Thanks to everyone who is reading and supporting this story. Thanks to my beta, Rpattzlawyer and my pre-readers, buhbeesgirl and Bleriana!

Special thanks to JaimeArkin who made me a seriously awesome vid for RaW. It is up on the blog and you absolutely have to view it if you have not yet done so. Also, there is a playlist of songs that have inspired this fic. Check it out and follow the blog so you can get updates when a teaser is posted.

Also, RaW and my other fic Darkness have been nominated for Hidden Star Awards, so thank you and I appreciate anyone who takes the time to vote.

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From the previous chapter:

Wordlessly, he raises the axe over his head and Bella feels afraid. Then he swings, and strikes the rusted lock forcefully. The ping of metal hitting metal rings in her ears. She gasps and he strikes again.

She watches the strength he way his muscles move as he swings the axe against the rusted lock. He is on a quest, he is driven to get inside. He swings again. He looks like an animal and Bella feels the spark. The fear morphs into lust. She likes watching him this way. Barbaric. Merciless.

The lock breaks in two on his third strike and he rests the axe against the shed. He looks at her. His chest heaves with deep breaths and Bella stands, helplessly held in his gaze.

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He waves for her to come closer. "Let's see what's inside."

"The whole history of science has been the gradual realization that events do not happen in an arbitrary manner, but they reflect a certain underlying order which may or may not be divinely inspired."

~Steven Hawking

A musty haze greets them as they enter the shed. Edward explores, lifting up tarps and opening boxes. Bella looks, but does not touch.

"That's weird," Edward says, peering under one of the many canvas blankets that cover the items which have lived in this shed since Bella was a young girl.

"What is it?" Bella asks.

"It's a mountain bike." He removes the cover, and a cloud of dust rises and circles around him.

Bella's mouth falls open at the sight of him. He looks like a phoenix rising up from the ashes, cast in light and shadow. His eyes squint at the dust.

"That must have been Sue's. She used to ride the trails around here," Bella recalls the memory from conversations with her father.

"Yeah? Well, we should fix it up. We could go riding together." Edward looks at her with hopeful eyes and Bella's rolls the word "we" around in her mind over and over again. *We. We. We.*

He said 'we'.

She's surprised at the effect that word is having on her, at how much she liked hearing him say it. "That would be...nice."

"Hell yeah, it would be nice," Edward says quietly, staring at the old bike. Bella is convinced he didn't mean to say that out loud, and she pretends she

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didn't hear him.

He clears his throat and picks up a tool box. "I think I found what I need. Let's go back to the house."

Edward reaches up to shut the shed door, and a sharp pain digs into his hand. Then another one, and another. "Ow, fuck!" he yells.

"What is it?" Bella asks him.

He hears a buzz and then it gets louder. He looks up and sees a hive. A swarm of angry bees are rapidly emerging from the disturbed nest that was hidden under the eave of the old shed.

"Run..." He grabs Bella's hand and half drags her to the house. The furious hum of the bees is at their back as they race to safety.

They enter the kitchen and Bella runs upstairs past Edward, leaving him alone in the kitchen. He assumes she is terrified, and he plunges his pained and swollen hand under the faucet, hoping the cool water will give him some relief. It hurts like hell, and he winces, trying not to focus on the piercing pain.

"Let me help you," Bella says.

Her voice startles Edward. He didn't hear her come back down the stairs, and he flinches at her sudden presence. He turns around and sees that she is trying to stifle a laugh.

He smiles back at her, over his shoulder. "Is this funny to you?"

"No. Of course not. I'm sorry." She shakes her head, trying to shed her smile. Then she offers her palm to Edward and waits for him to place his wounded hand in hers.

He does, and he watches as she drags her fingernail along the places where he was bitten, gently drawing the stingers out of his skin. It's painful, but

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pleasurable at the same time. Her touch provides immediate relief to him, and not just because she is removing the source of his physical pain. Her softness, her smell, her touch soothe him and he closes his eyes as he absorbs it.

He has spent many sinful nights wondering if he would lose his soul because of his desperate need to satisfy his thirst. But since he has met Bella, every time he has had the pleasure of being near her, he has felt that maybe he hasn't lost it. Maybe he was only starving it, and now it is gorging itself on the nourishment she offers.

She runs a cotton ball soaked in Witch Hazel over his injury. It's wet and cool on his burning skin. The top of her head is right at his chin. He breathes in the scent of her. It's pleasing and sweet, just like she is. He watches her concentrate on giving him first aid. He watches her trying to make him better.

Bella contains her laughter as she withdraws the stinger from his flesh. Edward has seemed to be an invincible force. And here he is, broken up over a bee sting.

She feels how rough and calloused his hands are, and she squelches a craving to feel them elsewhere. Along the side of her face, across her knee, down her thigh...

She looks up at him and is surprised at how close his face is to her. He was watching her help him. She can feel his breath on her face, and she's lost in the beautiful blue of his eyes.

"All better," she says.

"Thanks." His eyes move to her lips.

She leaves her hand in his, and luxuriates in the sensation of being so close to him. She wants to believe that he was brought here for a reason. To save her from herself. She wants to believe that he is here because of God's will. That there is a purpose to this moment, and that purpose will make it self clear to her when she is ready to see it. She feels this so strongly and is compelled to share

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the thought with Edward.

"Do you ever think that things happen for a reason?" she asks him.

He crinkles his eyebrows. "Like fate?"

His hand still rests in her palm and his thumb rubs a circle against her wrist. She wonders if he knows what he's doing.

"Yeah, kind of like that. For me, it's not fate. It's God."

He smirks. "You truly believe God exists, don't you?"

"Yes. You don't?" And now she runs her fingertips against his wrist.

"I'm more interested to hear why you do."

She watches his lips as he speaks. "Well, think about my wind-chime for instance..."

"Let's not," he says, smiling.

"No, really. I mean, it was one of the few things my father saved of my mother's after she left. When I came back, I found it and hung it up. Then you heard it, and now here we are. In my kitchen, together. When I think about things like that, about each thing that had to happen to bring something or someone into my life- *that's* when I really feel and *know* that God exists."

Edward is amazed. He has never heard anyone explain faith like that to him, and when she speaks about it, it makes him want to believe too.

She looks down again, and he thinks about the unknown hardship she has been through, and he's even more impressed by her faith...that she would still believe in God after a marriage that is broken for reasons still foreign to him. For a moment he considers the fact that if her husband had not left her, he wouldn't be standing here holding her hand right now. He can't understand why a man

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would leave a woman this good, this kind.

"What happened to your husband?" he asks.

Bella pulls her hand out of his and moves quickly away from him. "I'd rather not talk about that...right now."

He wishes his curiosity hadn't forced her to retreat from him, to take her gentle touch away. But he wants an answer. He wants to know more about what happened to her...but he can wait.

Edward respectfully nods in response to her request, takes the wrench off the counter, and begins to fix the faucet.

He lays on the floor and works under the sink. Bella sits at the table and pretends to stare out the window, but she's not. She's watching him, listening to him grunt as he works.

He finishes quickly and she realizes that she probably could have fixed the leaky faucet herself. All Edward needed to do was to tell her how . But he didn't. He fixed it for her. He's here.

He stands and wipes his hands, walking toward her on his lanky legs. He towers over her. She looks up at him for a moment, trying not to stare at the obvious bulge in his pants. It's right at her eye level. She flushes and then stands.

"That was... very kind of you...Edward. I'd like to make it up to you somehow." Her tone is sultry and suggestive and when she hears herself she is shocked by her own voice. She bites her lip, and her face heats.

Edward doesn't answer. He doesn't smile. He just looks at her. Her words hang heavy and unanswered in the air.

He raises his hand and here it comes. This is what Bella has wanted since the first time she saw him. She wants him to touch her, to kiss her. She feels the

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craving and this time she doesn't push it away. She accepts it.

She stares deeply into his eyes. His hand comes up to her shoulder and he very, very slowly pushes her hair off of her neck. His skin grazes hers and she is dominated by goose bumps. She closes her eyes and she is a sponge of sensation. She is riddled with anticipation. *Here it comes...*

But he doesn't kiss her.

He gently moves her hair away from her face, and her eyes flutter as he touches her. He lowers his hand to his side. "How about we go riding tomorrow?" he asks.

Her heart is in her throat and she can barely speak. The lust she feels for him throbs through her. He doesn't know it, but she will do anything that he asks.

"Alright," she whispers, still dazed by his profanely chaste touch.

He walks to the door, and Bella comes to her senses, remembering a prior obligation.

"Wait, Edward, I can't tomorrow. I'm going out with friends. But I can go on Saturday," she offers, hoping with her entire being that he will accept.

"Then I'll see you Saturday," he answers and disappears through her front door.

"Hello, Bella. Long time no see," Jasper greets Bella as she enters his office.

He's dressed impeccably in a pinstripe suit, his wavy hair smoothed into place. He's handsome and professional. Alice so often speaks about their love life that Bella feels almost awkward being alone with him, but she knows he doesn't know what she knows. He kisses her cheek and she sits in the leather arm chair. She crosses her legs and Jasper takes his seat behind his desk.

"So, Alice tells me you'd like to legally end your marriage."

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Hearing the words out loud makes Bella's heart skip a beat. It is hard for her to hear and to admit, but she knows she must do it.

"Yes. That's right."

"I consulted with a colleague and since you were married in Arizona, we have to work with their laws. I've printed them out for you. Here's a copy."

Bella reads:

Grounds for Filing: *The Petition for Dissolution of Marriage must declare the appropriate Arizona grounds upon which the dissolution of marriage is being sought. The dissolution of marriage grounds are as follows...*Bella looks up from her paper, confused. "Honestly, Jasper, this is Greek to me."

"Well, that's why I'm here," he says, flashing her a crooked smile. "Since we are not able to contact Jacob, the only grounds we have to file on are that Jacob has abandoned you. However, the law states that at least one year must pass before you file, and this is where we have a problem."

"A problem?" Bella had not anticipated this.

"Yes. According to what Alice has told me, it has been seven months since Jacob left, is this correct?"

"Yes."

"Then unfortunately, we won't be able to file for another five months. Unless, of course, we try to find Jacob."

"I know this is supposed to be a celebration, but it looks like there's nothing to celebrate," Bella tells Alice and Rosalie.

They're sitting in a restaurant, an unopened bottle of champagne rests in the middle of the table. No one says anything and Bella looks up to find two faces filled with pity.

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"Well, I think that's bullshit." Rosalie says, her arms folded across her chest. "Fucking Arizona."

"Hey, listen, Bella. Just because it's not official doesn't mean we can't celebrate," Alice says. "I think the fact that you are even willing to take this step and move forward is major- and *that* is *absolutely* worth celebrating. Waiter!" Alice beckons the waiter over to open the bottle of champagne.

"She's right, Bella," Rosalie says, reaching her hands out across the table toward her friend. "This *is* a big deal and we are *so* proud of you. What made you want to finally do this anyway?"

"I guess it was just the right time," Bella says. She looks down at her hands and smiles, thinking of Edward.

"Wait a minute. I know that look," Alice says. "Bella Swan, does a guy have anything to do with this? Did you *meet* someone?"

Bella's face brightens in spite of herself, and her friends light up in response.

"Yes," she answers. "I did."

She drives home, a little buzzed from the glass of champagne she should not have had, and full from dinner. She was careful not to share too much about her neighbor with her friends, knowing that the temptation for them to meddle would be too great.

Saying it out loud made it even more real. She wants him. But she knows first hand that he's the farthest thing from right for her. *Definitely not boyfriend material. But what if he could change ?* She wonders if he knew how she felt, would he change for her? Can a man so compelled to seek pleasure from women ever be content with just one? Would she ever be enough for him?

Something catches her eye and Bella slams on the brakes. The fact that Forks is a small town is illustrated to her once again. She has just passed a bar on the outskirts of town. A black Jeep is parked in the lot. It's Edward's.

He cleans up after working all day, the water in the shower runs black with the dirt and sweat that have coated his body. He begins to pace inside his trailer, his body has become overrun with his need. It has been on his mind all day, poking through his thoughts like a stubborn splinter. He needs a distraction and looks out his window at the empty white house. It's a mirage in his desert. Frustrated, he picks up his book and he reads:

" The realization that he was utterly powerless was like the blow of a sledgehammer, yet it was curiously calming as well. No one was forcing him into a decision. He felt no need to stare at the walls of the house across the courtyard and ponder whether to live with her or not. Tereza had made the decision herself."

He throws the book on the floor. The parallels between his previous living situation and the one he has now are becoming much too similar. He remembers Victoria and the reason he had to abandon his previous home. His memories of his former self disgust him, but at the same time, it's like thinking of an old friend. *Just one more time. I could just do it once more. I can stop after that. I can be good after that. Just one more time. Just one last time.*

The air surrounding the trailer is dead. Not a breeze. Not a sound.

It's eerie, and he feels his thirst rising. It is fed by loneliness and boredom. It is fed by memories he can't escape. He scoffs at his pathetic attempts to change. He is unchangeable. *This is what I am. This is what I am.*

He tosses the book on the floor and gets dressed. He slips back into his former self easily, because it never really left him.

He looks in the mirror and everything is just right.

Bella timidly steps toward the bar like a fawn about to leave its mother's side. Her heart is split with two desires.

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She wants to find him here. She craves the savage man who takes women and breaks locks. She wants to find him, to remain unseen while she watches him with another woman once again. She wants him to have found what he is looking for.

But she also wants to be wrong. That it's not his car. He's not here. He's at home, waiting for tomorrow to come, thinking of her. She wants to believe that he could save his touch only for her. That he would want *only* her.

Her mind flashes back and forth between images of him- Edward's smile on her porch...the sound he made when he came in that girl's mouth... his face contorted with pain after the bee sting... his hands between another woman's legs... his hands covered in soap while he washed her dishes...his mouth on someone else's neck and lips...his mouth an inch from her own...

She feels dizzy with the divergent desires that dance through her thoughts, but she pushes through the bar door anyway.

Thanks so much for reading! PLEASE REVIEW! xxx

Chapter 8: Passion and Reason

A/N: Thanks to my beta, Rpattzlawyer and my pre-readers, buhbeesgirl and Bleriana!

I can not tell you how much I love reviews. Reading them makes the time I put into writing worth it. So, I want you to know how much I appreciate even the shortest review. The feedback is awesome.

Thanks.

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But she also wants to be wrong. That it's not his car. He's not here. He's at home, waiting for tomorrow to come, thinking of her. She wants to believe that he could save his touch only for her. That he would want only her.

Her mind flashes back and forth between images of him. Edward's smile on her porch, the sound he made when he came in that girl's mouth, his face contorted with pain after the bee sting, his hands between another woman's legs, his hands covered in soap while he washed her dishes, his mouth on someone else's neck and lips, his mouth an inch from her own...

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She feels dizzy with the divergent desires that dance through her thoughts, but she pushes through the bar door anyway.

"Your reason and your passion are the rudder and the sails of your seafaring soul. If either your sails or your rudder be broken, you can but toss and drift, or else be held at a standstill in mid-seas. For reason ruling alone is a force confining; and passion unattended is a flame that burns to its own destruction."

~Kahlil Gibran

He sits in a dark booth with his beer in front of him. The bar is seedy and visited by only the worst of humanity. He smiles to himself, thinking that he fits right in. It's crowded with drunk men who are most likely looking to do what he is here to do, but for them it's a want, not a need. A choice, not a compulsion. Edward is looking for the kind of woman who can meet that need. The kind of woman who won't say no. He looks around the bar again, and finds nothing. *Maybe it's a divine intervention, maybe there's a reason I haven't found a victim*, he thinks...but then he sees her.

A tiny blond, obviously drunk, tight little body. A skirt that's too short and a top that's too tight. She looks like she comes here often, and a girl that would visit this kind of dive is exactly what he wants. He traces the line of her curves with his eyes. She's with a few friends and he begins to plot how to separate her, how to get her alone. Visualizing what will come next excites him, it gets him hard. His pulse races and his mouth waters.

He is hunting.

Bella timidly enters. She scans the faces of the crowded bar. It's dimly lit and she can't see much, it reeks of spilled beer and sweat. She feels eyes on her, eyes of drunk men and jealous women. She is overdressed and out of place. Her hands shake as she walks to the bar and orders a glass of wine, for the purpose of having an excuse to sit down. The tattooed bartender rolls his eyes at her order, and then serves her. She holds the glass between her elegant fingers and continues to look for Edward, but she does not see him.

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An older man seated next to her smells her perfume and looks up. He likes what he sees. He moves his stool closer and says, "Hello, I'm Garret."

The one room bathroom is tiny and cramped. There's barely room for one person, let alone two. The drunk blond laughs as Edward hoists her up onto the sink. She kisses him, but he pulls away. He's not here for that. She runs her hands over his chest, clearly enjoying the feel of his body. He rethinks his position. Tonight he needs all of the control. He swiftly spins her around so she's bent over the sink, facing the dirty mirror. He can see her face and she can see his in the reflection.

The sound of his belt opening clinks and jingles. He pushes her skirt up over her ass and yanks her panties down violently.

"You're alllll business, huh?" she slurs and giggles.

Edward plunges two fingers deep inside her and this immediately silences the girl. He sees her bite her lip in the mirror and she moans.

He pulses his hand until he feels that she's wet enough for him, and then he's inside her. The sweet relief he feels when her warmth encircles him is inexplicable. It's like coming up for air after being held beneath the waves. It was like he was drowning without this; suffocating, and now he can breathe.

He thrusts his hips and grips her hair, pulling her head up so he can see her face clearly in the mirror. Usually he doesn't care what it feels like for the girl, because he's only there to take. But this time he wants to know that it feels good for her too; he wants to know he's not the only one that is finally taking a breath.

"Look at me," he says, her body stuttering against the sink as he fucks her, his hand knotted in her hair. "Look at me. Do you like the way my cock feels inside you? Do you like watching me fuck you?" He pulls her head back farther so his mouth is at her ear. He nibbles the soft flesh of her earlobe and neck. "Tell me," he whispers.

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"Oh...oh..." The girl moans and closes her eyes.

Edward pulls on her hair harder. "Open your fucking eyes and tell me..."

She obeys, and he sees the glaze of lust that coats her reflection. He knows the answer, but he wants her to say it. He pulses and thrusts, pulling himself out all the way and then plunging deeply into her again.

She cries out, "Yess. Yes. I like it. You feel s-s-so good. Shit..."

Edward grabs the hem of her shirt and lifts it up to her neck. He pulls the cups of her bra down, and watches the way her tits bounce and jiggle in the mirror every time he slams his cock into her. He lets go of her hair and then slides his hands over her exposed chest. He pinches her nipples between his fingers, squeezing and kneading her breasts with both of his hands. His mouth is on her neck again, and he feels her wetness dripping down his shaft.

"Has anyone ever fucked you this good before? Tell me." Her skin tastes salty, she moans, and he's pushes deeper. He feels himself tightening inside. He knows satisfaction is coming soon, and he can't wait for it to wash through him. To feed him.

His compulsive need to dominate and possess this girl's body completely envelops him. It's like she exists for the sole purpose of bringing him pleasure. He forces her head down over the sink again, and now he can only see himself in the mirror. He thrusts harder, gripping her hips. He looks like an animal. He barely recognizes the man he sees, but it feels like it's his true self is reflected back at him. It sickens him, but he indulges it, surrendering to his demon fully.

"Fuck. Fucking tell me, you slut. Fucking tell me how good this feels."

"Oh, god, oh god...oh god...you fucking feel so good...ah, ah, ah!" The slapping sound of flesh meeting flesh gets faster and louder as he slams into her. Then, he brings his hand up and smacks it against her ass.

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She moans. "Oh, yes...shit. I'm gonna come...you're gonna make me come like this..." she cries.

He leaves a slight red mark on her, but she likes it, and so does he. He does it again, and her flesh gets redder. He does it again and again. *Slap, slap, slap.*

He is taken over by his lust. It seizes his mind and body; his passion eliminates his sense of reason completely. He plunges deeper and deeper into the abyss.

"Mmm...uh...fuck," he groans as he grips the girl's hips. His cock throbs intensely as he comes inside her, coming so hard that he gets dizzy. His ears ring with the release. "Shit..."

He lets go of what he has been trying to hold in, and he loves the way it feels. He needs this fleeting feeling more than anything else in the world.

She turns to him and kisses him, and he lets her. Her lips move against his, but he feels nothing. His rational self is reclaiming its throne, and he is immediately repulsed by what he has just done. He is sick. He is sickened, and filled with selfloathing. He is numb.

Maybe I was wrong. He's not here. Bella scans the crowd again, and then looks down at her untouched wine. The man next to her has been making feeble attempts to hit on her and Bella is barely fending him off, politely declining his offers for more drinks.

She stands up to leave, and then she freezes.

She sees him. Edward.

A flushed and disheveled blond girl is walking ten feet in front of him. His hair is a nightmare and his eyes are downcast.

It feels like someone has stopped time, and Bella has been turned to stone. A sob rips through her chest, and she feels herself get wet simultaneously.

Righteous and Wicked

She was right, and she wants to die.

She was right, and she wishes she had been there.

She immediately imagines what went on. She feels jealous. She feels empty.

And she feels angry. She is angry that Jacob is gone, and yet she still can't get rid of him. She is angry that she is alone. She is angry that this slutty blond got to have Edward, and she can't. She is angry that the first person she has allowed to come anywhere near her is a twisted sex addict. But she is mostly angry at herself for how turned on she is by his sin.

Edward is walking to the door, but he will have to walk right past Bella to get there.

She sits down and pulls her hair over her shoulder in an effort to hide behind it. She wants to disappear.

The blond parades back to her friends like she's taking a victory lap, and Edward just wants to get away. His shame rises up like bile. Now that the rush is gone he can see, and he is beginning to think clearly. He feels overwhelming disgust, revulsion, and disappointment. He is helpless and alone.

Then, he sees a girl at the bar. Beautiful dark hair, long legs, short dress. Some skeezy guy is trying to get with her and is failing miserably. Edward almost wishes he had seen *her* before going for the blond, then kicks himself for having yet another sick thought. But it doesn't matter now. It's all over. The internal struggle he has wrestled with has exhausted him. It dawns on Edward that he really is no different from the guy at the bar. He is just as bad. He is no better.

Edward has hit rock bottom. He wants to get the fuck out of this place. He walks past the dark haired girl and his eyes move from her legs to her face.

Shock and fury rise up inside of him when he sees that it is Bella. She is looking down at her full glass like she wants to crawl inside of it, avoiding the

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asshole next to her. The thought of Bella's quiet elegance being tarnished by this hellhole is too much for him to bear. Edward stalks toward her bar stool.

"What are you doing here?" he asks, grinding his teeth.

She looks up at him, and she looks different. She looks...sexy. Her eyes are angry. " *I'm* having a drink. What are *you* doing here?"

"You don't drink, Bella. This place is a shit hole. You shouldn't be here. And who the fuck is this guy?" The juxtaposition of her delicate loveliness contrasted with this filthy place, the abhorrence that he just partook in in the bathroom, and Bella's proximity to a scumbag is turning Edward into a vial of acid.

"That's Garret. And maybe I *like it* here." She answers him in a voice he has not heard from her yet. Antagonistic, like a defiant child. He wonders why she is here with this guy and why she would subject herself to someone so obviously unworthy of her.

Edward will not tolerate it. He can't allow the one person that makes him feel safe and good to be exposed to this darkness. If he can't save himself, he needs to save someone. To keep one thing in this world good and clean. And he needs to get her out of here before he gives into the temptation to fight Garret.

"Get up. Let's go. We're leaving." Edward grabs her elbow. Garret stands, but the look Edward gives him makes him think twice about starting an argument.

Bella shakes Edward off. "I think I can make my own decisions."

And their eyes are locked in an impasse. Edward's acidic fury and her childlike defiance battle between their irises.

He is the first one to break. He needs her to remain untouched by the evil this place exudes. The unreasonable need to protect her flares up inside of him, and he crumbles against it. He will not disappoint himself twice in one night. His fury dissolves into a plea, his shout to a whisper.

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"Bella, I just can't leave you in this place. I'll worry for you all night. Please, let's just go. Please, Bella. Please, just come with me."

He is begging her. He has such desperation in his voice and in his eyes. Bella can not refuse him and she doesn't want to. His face has changed from aggressive to kind. Stormy Eyes has once again been replaced by Edward.

Bella relents, and Edward takes her hand, guiding her out of the bar.

Feeling his hand in hers amplifies her feelings of envy and rejection. She looks down at their joined skin and wonder if this is the closest she will ever get to him. She vows to make sure that it's not.

They walk through the moonlit dirt parking lot and reach his jeep. The night is silent, except for the call of an owl up above. He holds the passenger door open for her.

"What are you doing?" she asks.

"I'm taking you home."

Bella is confused. "But I have my truck here."

"We'll come back for it tomorrow. Please, just let me get you out of here." He is begging.

"I'm okay to drive. I wasn't drinking." And Bella is refusing him again.

They engage in another staring contest and this time Edward relents. He sighs and shuts the door. "Fine."

He crosses his arms across his chest. He looks intensely distressed. He looks bruised and beaten. Bella can't understand why he is having such a strong reaction to her presence in the bar, but it makes her ache to see him so upset. She longs to comfort him like she did after the bee sting. She wants to ease his pain.

Righteous and Wicked

She steps toward him, following through on her private vow. *Closer*. He looks up, and the storm is somewhere in his eyes, rolling through him. Plaguing and tormenting him. She wants to take it away.

She thinks of confessing and telling him that she knows about his struggle. Would that make it easier? If he knew that she knew his secret, would she be able to get closer? Or would he push her away?

She takes both of his hands in hers and steps closer. She slowly slides her hands up his arms, over his biceps, to his shoulders, around his neck. Their bodies linger an inch apart. *Closer*. Then, Bella gently rests herself against his chest.

Edward responds to her touch. He wraps his arms across her back, and pulls her closer. One hand slides up into her hair, and he presses her into him. He tenderly rests his cheek on top of her head.

Their pain becomes one pain as they embrace. The river of loneliness that runs through each of them evaporates. She can feel the storm retreating away, she can feel his heartbeat slow--a steady contented rhythm. She rubs her cheek against the soft cotton of his shirt, and feels the heat of his body resting just beneath it. She can feel his breath in her hair, and they are silent. Peaceful.

An owl has left its perch in a nearby tree. It circles high above Edward and Bella in search of prey. It glides and soars through the starlit sky. It doesn't notice them holding each other tenderly in the light of the moon. It doesn't see the single tear that's escaped from Edward's eye. It is unaware that Edward's hands are gripping Bella tighter, holding her closer. It doesn't hear Bella whispering, "It's okay. It's okay. It's okay..." into Edward's chest, over and over again.

Please review!

I will try my best to make the updates more frequent if I can.

xxx

Chapter 9: Giant

A/N: Thanks to my beta, Rpattzlawyer and my pre-readers, buhbeesgirl and Bleriana!

Special thanks to my super pimp, JaimeArkin. She wrote an amazing review for RaW on IndieFicPimp.

This chapter is dedicated to Cheekyki, thanks for the inspiration!

IMPORTANT PSA:

Several reviews have addressed the issue of Edward not practicing safe sex. I can assure you he is. I find it distracting to describe the action of opening the condom, etc. but I do feel strongly about the issue of safe sex and I encourage everyone to be responsible. Edward will not be giving or getting any diseases in this fic. I'm happy that so many readers have brought this issue to my attention. Thank you!

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Righteous and Wicked

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" Our first journeys show us how little difference places make. At home I dream that at Naples, at Rome, I can be intoxicated with beauty and lose my sadness. I pack my bags, hug my friends, get on the plane, and wake up in Naples, and there next to me is the cruel fact, the sad self, unrelenting, identical, that I fled from. I look for the Vatican and the palaces. I pretend to be intoxicated with sights and suggestions, but I am not intoxicated. My giant goes with me wherever I go."

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

Bella wakes and finds her hand possessively gripping the pillow next to her. No head rests there. She's annoyed that she still unconsciously searches for Jacob in her sleep. But this morning when she wakes, she consciously wishes that it was Edward laying there.

She rolls over and looks at the clock. 1pm.

She jolts upright in bed and listens. Silence.

It is Saturday and it is silent. No hammering, bulldozing, sawing or banging. Silence. She feels rested, she feels awake. She lies back into her pillow and remembers last night.

Righteous and Wicked

Edward-feeding his need. The sin Bella has witnessed several times before. She felt violently repulsed by his obvious dirty deed in the bathroom and intensely attracted to him for the same exact reason. Regardless of what plagues him, she craves him. She wants him. Witnessing him trying to protect her from Garret only heightened that attraction.

Edward-wounded and vulnerable. So lonely. So desperate. The intimate moment they shared was profound. She feels like he let her inside just a bit further, like she got a just a little bit closer.

It is excruciatingly obvious that his burden weighs on him so heavily, and Bella would do anything to try to take that pain away. She has thought of a way, but she's not ready to share it with him- yet.

Edward is the first man to hold her since her husband. While they were standing there together in the moonlight, she felt burning desire for him, but she also felt a need to save him. Once again, she had the sensation that Edward has been brought to her for a reason. That he was meant to be in her arms. She felt as if the world could fall away and she would be content to remain there, with her head pressed against his chest.

She has only felt that way for one other man.

The sunlight shines through her bedroom window and illuminates the empty side of the bed. The space that has been occupied by a ghost. And now she feels like she is betraying someone. Someone who's not even here.

The wooden box lurks under her bed like a monster, and she gives into the temptation to open it, to once again partake in her self abusive ritual.

She runs her fingers over the old initials "BB".

Bella Black. The person she used to be.

She takes out the picture and looks at Jacob's hands resting on her full belly. Enormous smiles on both of their faces, the joy that only expecting parents can

Righteous and Wicked

know. So proud to almost be.

She takes out her wedding ring and reads the inscription, "Our love shines brighter than the sun. You'll always be my only one."

The black hole that Bella has been ignoring is ripping her apart again. She wipes her flowing tears, and wants to throw the ring out the window. She wants to set the box on fire. She wants to forget.

Bella resolves to no longer labor as a servant to her past and her pain. She closes the lid with resentment. This time she does not return it to its home beneath her bed. She pulls an old shoebox from her closet and stuffs it inside, burying it alongside all of the other old things that she has no use for.

Edward rises early as always. He looks at the unfinished frame of the house he is building. The ladder and lumber that rest there. He would love to work, but he won't. He won't disturb her.

He stares at the low ceiling of his trailer. His feet hang off the edge of his tiny bed.

He thinks about last night. He thinks of the intensity of the perversion in the bathroom with the blond. He is so disheartened by his inability to control his impulses...his urges.

He has made this vow a hundred times before--that this is the last time. That he won't do it again. He will stop. False promises and bargains. Always lying to himself.

He wants to finally, truly mean it. His dark secret has always forced him to remain isolated from the world. He has never tried to lean on another person. He has never felt that any kind of relationship could help him to be better.

He thinks about finding Bella in the bar, and how the unexpected sight of her made him feel even more shame, more disgust over his weakness.

Righteous and Wicked

He thinks of Bella enveloped in his arms in the parking lot in, inadvertently absorbing what haunts him, unknowingly absolving him of his sin. Her virtuous nature has kept him from feeling any attraction to her, but last night it was just that element of her that he found so intoxicating.

Edward has never before been attracted to a "good girl". He has always found that only certain kinds of women fit the mold of what he needs. Only certain kinds of women will go down on him an hour after meeting him. Only certain kinds of women will fuck him in a bathroom without even knowing his name. Edward has never had any use for the kind of girl that Bella is. He's never been attracted to a girl like her...until now.

Holding her last night brought him a feeling that he has only previously felt when immersed in the ocean of his impulse. The all consuming release he gets from fucking random women was rivaled by the simplicity of just holding Bella in his arms.

When he is with her, he doesn't think about finding his next victim. The incessant longing is absent. The only rationale he has, is that his desire to feel the inexplicable blissful peace she naturally brings to him outweighs his insatiable lust.

Bella's sensuality and femininity are not lost on Edward, and in spite of his growing attraction to her, he knows he could never treat her the way he treats his victims. Regardless of any temptation he may feel, he would never want to involve her in his sickness. He would never degrade her purity by dragging her down into his deeply sinful needs.

He thinks that he could really beat his demon, finally resist his addiction, if he had Bella in his life. For some reason, she is like the mute button for the constant white noise of his deviance. She came into his life by accident, a woman as lonely and as lost as himself. In pain, just like him.

Edward is realizing the only way to completely stop himself from feeding his disgraceful hunger, is to throw himself headfirst into a friendship with Bella.

Righteous and Wicked

This will not be an easy feat. In fact, it may be impossible.

Bella gets dressed and paces through her house in a panic. She has plans to bike with Edward later in the afternoon, and the nervous anticipation is killing her. Her stomach is on fire. Will he act differently? Will he be happy to see her? Will he even come? Is she doing something wrong by being with him?

She goes out onto the porch and continues to pace. Her mind is muddled with a million different worries. She sees a bee buzzing in the lilac bushes that line the porch and she smiles, thinking of him.

She is restless. Not knowing what else to do, Bella gets in her truck and drives to church.

There are scattered congregates occupying various pews inside St. Robert's. Bella kneels in the back. She stares up at the stained glass window and prays for answers.

Should she continue to try to get close to Edward The Sinner? Will she still fiend for his lustful indiscretions if she pursues a relationship with him? Should she remain faithful to Jacob, a man who no longer loves her and is not in her life? Is getting a divorce an unforgivable sin? Why have tragedies befallen her if not to lead her down a different path?

Bella stares at the stained glass, the figure of Jesus that resides in the window above the altar. His hands are outstretched with love and mercy. The sun shines through the Sacred Heart of the Lord, casting every corner of the church in colored light.

Bella stares at it, the sun's rays burn into her, and she remembers the legend of The Sacred Heart...

St. Margaret Mary experienced visions of the Lord in which he instructed her in devotion. He told her she would act as His instrument. Jesus revealed to her His Sacred Heart as a symbol of His love for man, saying:

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"My divine Heart is so inflamed with love for mankind . . . that it can no longer contain within itself the flames of its burning charity and must spread them abroad by your means."

Then He took her heart, placing it next to His own in His chest, and then returned it, burning with divine love into her breast.

He told her, "Do nothing without the approval of those who guide you, so that, having the authority of obedience, you may not be misled by Satan, who has no power over those who are obedient."

Bella has tried so hard to be obedient, but where has it gotten her? She was obedient to a father she rarely saw, and a mother who loved her based on conditions, and then took that love away when her conditions were not met.

She tried to be obedient to a husband who wanted her to conform to his wants and needs, regardless of her own.

She has tried to remain obedient to God, a God who has only taken things away from her, and when she finally finds something that *she* wants, she is told it is evil.

An old Hispanic woman is in the pew next to Bella, dressed in black with a rosary draped over her fingers. Alone. Praying. Kneeling in servitude.

Bella flashes on her life to come. Will she end up like this old woman? Bowed in prayer, all alone in the world? Obedient and isolated?

Is it a sin to want more than that?

She casts another look at the illuminated figure of the Lord. Her faith in God is not shaken, but she refuses to believe that the feelings she is having for Edward are wrong. Bella's heart burns with her love for God, and she has to believe that he loves her too, even if what she wants is a sin. She wants to place Edward's blackened heart beside her own and let it heal.

Righteous and Wicked

Her eyes fall on the confessional, but she feels she has nothing to confess--no reason to seek forgiveness. She is not looking for salvation any longer. She has done nothing wrong. She has spent her life trying to please others, and has done only what others wanted.

No more.

For once, she is going to do something for herself. She stands up, turns her back to the altar, and walks away.

Edward rides his bike down Bella's driveway and finds she is not at home. Her truck is gone. He peeks in the windows. Her curtains billow in the wind, but there is no other movement.

He walks back to her shed. Gingerly avoiding the bee's nest, he takes out the old bike and goes about filling the tires and checking the brakes. He bends down, with his knees in the earth. He tightens bolts and polishes the metal until everything is just right.

Bella rolls down the window of her truck as she speeds away from the church down the winding country road. The sun warms her, the air smells of spring. Sweet earth and new life.

She is smiling. She turns up the radio, and sings out clear and strong. She feels lighter. The weight of her uncertainty has left her shoulders. She has decided what she wants to do. She has chosen a new path for herself.

The truck turns and rattles down her street. She pulls into her driveway, and smiles wider.

Edward is sitting on her porch. Black cap on his head, pulled down over his eyes. Back pack on his back. Two shiny bikes rest beside him. The wind chime sways just above his head, gently clinking its own rhythm. Edward is unaffected by his old enemy. His eyes are on her and he smiles when he sees her face.

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She hops out of her truck, feeling weightless for once. In her heart she knows she is making the right choice. To pursue whatever it is that is happening between her, and this dangerously beautiful man. She tries to conceal her excitement and arousal as she walks toward him.

Sun light shimmers in her hair. Her pale pink lips are turned up in a beautiful smile, an expression he is becoming increasingly addicted to seeing.

"Hey," she says. Her hands are in her pockets.

"Hey," he replies. He feels her nervousness.

"You fixed the bike," she states. "Um, thanks." He sees genuine appreciation in her eyes.

"Are you ready?" he asks.

"Yeah. Let me just pack some food and water." She moves to walk into the house, but he blocks her path. She is once again an inch away from him, and he can feel her heat.

"I already did that," he says, impressed with his forethought. "Let's go."

She nods and Edward watches her bend down to roll up one leg of her jeans in order to keep it from getting caught in the bike chain. Her blood red shirt falls forward as she bends down, and he can see her small full breasts and the lace of her bra. Her skin is luminous. He gets rigid looking at her body.

Already, he is tempted to break his promise to himself. The dark place in his mind flashes on the things he could do to her. He closes his eyes and breathes deeply, forcing away the perverse thoughts. He knows that this will not be easy, but he is resolute in his desire to change his life.

To distract himself, he searches for her eyes and finds peace and prudence there. Her kind and pure face quiets his rising need like ice on a burn.

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Edward watches as she expertly mounts her bike. She looks like she is no stranger to it.

"You bike a lot?" he asks.

"I'm from Arizona, Edward," she replies as if he has asked a stupid question, but she smiles when she answers him.

He smirks at her. "All right, tough girl. Let's go."

He swiftly pedals down the road toward the wooded dead end where the trails begin, and Bella is right beside him, an arms length away, easily keeping pace.

The forest envelops them, and it almost seems alive. Branches bend and cover them in shadow and the smell of green and spring is everywhere. They ride in silence down the wooded trail.

Bella rises off her seat when they ascend hills, she never lags behind or seems out of breath. Edward is impressed. His interest in her is increasing, and he desires to know more about who she is and the past that haunts her.

They ride up and over hills, down the other side, wandering deeper and deeper into the woods, enjoying the feel of the wind on their faces and the rush of speeding through the trees together.

"Can we stop up here?" she asks, finally.

They pull off on top of the hill and walk their bikes into a small meadow. They sit side by side in the grass, sipping water and catching their breath.

Edward takes a plum from his bag and hands it to Bella. She eagerly takes a bite and Edward watches the way her lips caress the fruit.

She looks at him curiously. "You're not gonna eat anything?" she asks.

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Edward stares into the deep warm brown of her eyes, he watches her lick the juice of the fruit from her lips. He thinks about what she would taste like, the way her mouth would feel, and again must force the thought away.

He will settle for the next best thing.

He gently takes Bella's wrist in his hand. Her skin is unspeakably soft. He slowly pulls the hand that holds the fruit toward him, holding her gaze. Then, he opens his mouth, and wraps his own lips around the flesh of the plum. He takes a bite, still gazing at her, and he sees her mouth fall open. He knows that look. He knows what he could do to her right now, and his mind flashes on their bodies, naked and tangled together...the smell of her, his name on her lips, her touch...

Edward fights his temptation. He pulls his mouth away and releases her hand.

Bella is astounded by the eroticism of what Edward has just done. She slowly brings the fruit back to her own mouth, wrapping her lips around the place that Edward's have just been. She takes another bite. He is still watching her and she is completely bewitched by the blue of his eyes, and the carnal need that is rising inside her.

Edward finally speaks, and breaks the spell. "Bella, can I ask you something?"

She tries to remember how to make her mouth form words. "O-okay."

"What was your life like in Phoenix?"

And here it is. She wants to get closer to him, and this is going to have to be how she does it.

Bella takes a deep breath to steady herself and looks up at the sunlight that is falling through pockets in the canopy of trees. She closes her eyes and gathers her strength. She prepares to tell her sad story--to show him her scars-- to reveal the giant that follows her wherever she goes.

Righteous and Wicked

Please review, and follow the blog!

righteousnwicked[dot]blogspot[dot]com.

Chapter 10: Accidents of Time

A/N: Thanks to Playing With Fire for popping her beta cherry on this chapter. Thanks to Bleriana for pre-reading and stroking my fragile ego, love you girl!

Continued thanks to rpattzlawyer and buhbeesgirl!

Special thanks to JaimeArkin for making an amazing teaser vid for this chapter! She is an artist and a sweetheart, and I'm so happy I know her!

Happy Birthday to Cheekyki!

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"Since you cannot do good to all, you are to pay special attention to those who, by the accidents of time, or place, or circumstance, are brought into closer connection with you."

~Augustine of Hippo

Edward watches as Bella tries to begin her tale. She glances up at Heaven and then down at her hands where they rest in the grass. He can see her pain rising up, about to break the surface, like a ravenous animal concealed in the brush, waiting to strike.

Finally, Bella speaks, and Edward listens...

"I met Jacob in Junior High. We were best friends, and that friendship eventually turned into more. We were so in love. That deep first love that feels so intense, so all consuming. We talked about being together forever, but we broke up when we went to different universities. We found each other again after graduation and started dating. He proposed to me quickly, and not long after that we got married. He wanted to have children right away. I wanted to wait, but he didn't. Every time he saw a stroller there was longing in his eyes. Every time one of our friends had a baby, it was like our failure was reflected back at us. I never viewed it as a failure, but he did. He wanted a family so badly.

"My mother was on me about it all the time, too. She wanted a grandchild. I loved Jacob, and of course I loved my mother. I wanted to see them happy.

"I got pregnant not too long after we started trying, and Jacob was so thrilled. I was too. Every time I felt the baby move inside me, it was such a miracle. I knew how blessed we were.

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"In my second trimester, my friend Angela suggested we go on a girl's trip, and we decided to go camping. Kind of like a last hurrah, the last time we would be able to do something like that. Once I became a mother, she was sure our friendship would suffer.

"Jacob didn't want me to go with her, and we fought about it, but I went anyway. Angela and I rented a cabin, and on our third night there I started to have cramps. We were out in the woods...hours away from anything...out of cell phone range. When I started bleeding, she drove me to the nearest hospital.

"By the time we got there, I had lost a lot of blood. I lost the baby..."

Bella's voice cracks, and a sob rips through her...but she continues to tell Edward her story.

"The doctor said it was a genetic abnormality. That it was my body getting rid of a fetus that was not viable. He said it would have happened even if I wasn't camping, he said that the trip had nothing to do with it...but Jacob didn't want to hear it. He was devastated. Every time he looked at me I could feel him judging me. He thought it was my fault, he thought that I had been reckless. He blamed me...and so did my mother. She wouldn't speak to me after I lost the baby. She couldn't forgive me for putting her grandchild's life in jeopardy. She wouldn't return my phone calls and refused to see me."

Bella pauses, staring into space, clearly grieving her mother's absence.

"I wanted to try again, but we didn't get another chance at it. Jacob was so scarred from what happened. A month after the miscarriage, I woke up one morning, and he was gone. He didn't leave a note. He just left. He disappeared and didn't come back or try to contact me. He left me all alone. I couldn't take the pain of living in that house without him. I loved him so much. So, I sold the house, and moved back here. Every day since then has been emptier than the next."

Bella is staring down at the green she has been idly running through her fingers. A tear drops off the end of her nose and lands on a blade of grass, like

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dew.

Edward doesn't speak, because he is speechless. The loss she has suffered is three-fold. A baby, a mother, a husband. He could never have imagined the depth of her pain. The abandonment and desolation she must feel. The guilt.

He knows what it's like to be that secluded. He knows the agony of loneliness. He knows the bitterness of looking back at things you cannot change. Edward is moved to emotion. His numbness has been replaced with feeling. He so rarely feels anything for anyone, but right now he feels compassion. He wants for Bella to never experience that kind of pain again. Someone so good doesn't deserve this kind of sadness.

He wants her to feel joy...and he wants to be the one to make her feel it.

His thirst is for her smile, his hunger for her laughter.

She is afraid to look up. She is afraid to see Edward's reaction. She knows his face will be filled with pity, and Bella has had enough of that for one lifetime.

She doesn't look up, but she feels a hand on her back. The hand begins to make slow circles. This touch holds no pity.

Bella sits in silence, crying tears she has cried a million times, but this time she is not alone. Edward is there, and he is comforting her.

Bella wakes and stumbles through the haze of Monday morning. She pulls out of her driveway and looks fondly at the black Jeep. Revealing her past to Edward was difficult, but he made it easier. There was no pity in his eyes and no judgment.

Edward asked her if he could stop by and see her during the week.

Of course, Bella said yes.

"But she was *looking* at me."

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Bella tenses her fingers in front of her on her desk. "What do you mean she was 'looking at you'?"

"She was *looking* at me *mean*, Ms. Swan. It's not fair and it's not nice! She's not nice; tell her to stop looking at me!"

And there is not enough coffee in the world to help Bella get through this kind of day. Little bullies, little mean girls, little tattle tales. First grade in a girls' school is like a shark tank.

Bella manages to survive until her lunch break, and meets Alice in the faculty room.

"You look...rested..." she says, eyeing Bella up and down. "How's Sexy Neighbor Guy? Did you see him at all?"

Bella's mind flashes back to Friday night--the moonlit parking lot.

"Um, yeah, we went for a bike ride."

"Like a date? Bella, did you go on a date?"

"No. No, we were just...hanging out."

"Sure you were. You better not be withholding juicy details here. You know that I'm married. I thrive on other people's juicy details."

"I promise you there *are* no juicy details, Alice. Your marriage is *way* more juicy than my single life is. Trust me."

"Fine. But when the juicy comes, you better be generous with it. Did you get Rose's email? We have a dress fitting this weekend and..."

And Bella stares out the window, thinking of bulldozers, bikes, wind chimes, and bees.

Righteous and Wicked

"Rose, can you get the door?" Emmett shouts from the bathroom.

Rosalie pads down the stairs with a big smile on her face, expecting to find Jasper on the other side of the door. But it's not Jasper, it's Edward. Her face falls.

"Oh. Hi," she frostily greets him and holds the door open so he can enter the house. "Emmett will be down in a second."

Edward says nothing. It's awkward. Tense. He just looks at Rosalie. She can feel his perverted eyes moving to her hair, to her breasts, to her legs...

And back to her eyes again. He makes her feel dirty. He is handsome, she can't deny that, and maybe in a different time and another place, she would have enjoyed the eye sex he is trying to have with her. But it pisses her off that he has the audacity to ogle her in her own home, with her fiancé, and *his* best friend, just feet away.

She folds her arms across her chest and shoots daggers at him. She won't let him make her uncomfortable, and she wants him to know that she doesn't want any of what he's offering.

He smirks at the nasty look she is giving him, and a chill runs up her spine in spite of her desire to appear unaffected by his creepiness.

Suddenly, he looks down and away, and Rosalie is thankful that he has stopped visually molesting her.

"Hey man, you ready to get your monkey suit?" Emmett asks Edward, interrupting the tense moment as he thunders down the stairs, swiftly kissing Rosalie goodbye.

She watches them get into Emmet's car and drive away, then she does the same.

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She's trying to tell him to fuck off, and he knows it, but he finds it amusing just the same. She's pretending she doesn't want it, but he knows that deep down, somewhere inside her, she *does* want it--but she won't admit it to herself.

He imagines her blond head bobbing between his legs. The flesh of her breasts in his mouth. Her legs wrapped around his waist, or bent in submission. Her feet resting on his shoulders. He fantasizes about watching the angry look on her face melt into the ecstasy he knows he could make her feel. He can almost hear her begging him for more. He can almost taste her sweat.

Edward is in a trance of temptation. He gets rock hard and his hunger is all consuming. He thinks of the one thing that can distract him. The one thing that can make him come away from the edge--Bella.

He looks away from Rosalie and thinks of Bella's eyes, her smile, her voice. Her sweetness.

But the thoughts of Bella don't quiet his thirst, they only shift his focus.

He needs her. He knows he has to see Bella as soon as he can--tonight .

"Oh my God. She looks gorgeous! Bella, doesn't she look fucking gorgeous!"

"Alice, watch the language, will you please? And yes. She is stunning."

Rosalie stands on a pedestal in front of a three way mirror. Bella is on her left and Alice is on her right, identically dressed in light blue silk taffeta. The seamstress kneels at Rosalie's feet with pins between her teeth and glasses sliding down her liver spotted nose adjusting the hem of her gown.

"Bella, you look...happy today. I'm glad to see it, " Rosalie says, to Bella's reflection.

"That may have something to do with *you know who*..." Alice says in a sing-song voice, and Bella shoots her a look.

Righteous and Wicked

"Who? Sexy Neighbor Guy? Did you see him again?" Rosalie asks, with a smile from ear to ear.

Bella turns beet red and stares at her feet.

"They went on a *bike ride*, Rose. How romantic is *that*?"

Bella's friends squeal and shriek, overjoyed for her. She wants to let herself feel happy too, but they don't know what Bella knows. They don't know that at any moment she could discover him entwined with another woman. They also don't know that, in addition to feeling devastated and violently jealous, Bella would be extremely turned on by it. And although she has embraced her desire for Edward, she has not yet embraced her attraction to his secret sickness.

Rosalie and Alice think Bella's new crush is cute and sweet. That it is the beginning of a healthy relationship.

They are mistaken.

Bella stands in the kitchen washing lettuce in the salad spinner, her eyes locked on Edward's black jeep. She could hear him working when she came home, and she imagines what he would look like...exhausted and dirty. Instead of ignoring the fantasy, she indulges it, and she doesn't regret doing so.

She wonders if he will be leaving soon, if he will go to some random place tonight, looking for someone strange and beautiful. She is terrified and exhilarated by the idea of him leaving. Her stomach burns.

She wonders if he did leave, would she follow him? Will she continue to pursue his sin now that they have formed a sort of friendship?

She turns her attention away from the window, to the pot of boiling water on the stove.

He sits on the edge of his bed, staring through the trees at the white house, and dreaming of the sanctuary that lies within.

Righteous and Wicked

He nibbles on the skin of his thumb. His leg jiggles up and down with his nervous energy. The thirst is rising, and he's not sure that he can refrain from hunting. He is torn. He doesn't want to indulge himself by seeking an anonymous victim, and he doesn't want to allow his urges to taint his relationship with Bella. He doesn't want to soil her with his desire.

Bella has continuously brought him peace and distracted him from his compulsions, but he has been finding himself more and more interested in her. Drawn to the way she gracefully shoulders her burden. Her beautiful virtue. He wonders if that attraction will ultimately turn her into one of his victims. He doesn't want it to, but he's not sure he can stop himself.

He lies back on his bed and picks up his book.

" Anyone whose goal is 'something higher' must expect some day to suffer vertigo. What is vertigo? Fear of falling? Then why do we feel it even when the observation tower comes equipped with a sturdy handrail? No, vertigo is something other than the fear of falling. It is the voice of the emptiness below us which tempts and lures us, it is the desire to fall, against which, terrified, we defend ourselves."

It would be so much easier if he just let himself fall. But there is nothing righteous about falling, and he has chosen to no longer be a failure.

ThumpThumpThump

Her muscles involuntarily contract, causing her to jolt. Tomato sauce splatters from the edge of her wooden stirring spoon.

She wipes up the mess with a dishtowel, and walks away from the hot stove.

She smooths her hands over her hair. *It's him. It must be him.* She bites her lip in an attempt to conceal her smile as she swiftly walks to the door.

What she sees on the other side sends a rush of electricity through her. It's Edward in all black, the outfit he usually wears when he's looking for a woman.

Righteous and Wicked

The same clothes he wore in the club, at the coffee shop, in the bar. But he's not out looking. He's here.

Bella has to fight back the urge to touch him.

"Hi," he says, smiling.

"Hi," she responds.

Bella is drawn to him. Attraction and revulsion revolve through her. The duality is dizzying. He will only torment her, but she wants him anyway.

"Can I come in?" he timidly asks.

"Okay."

They wanted so desperately to see each other and are now locked in the grip of formality. Shielding their true desires behind it.

He walks past her, into her living room. His eyes wander over all of the antiques that live there. His hands pass over certain items, and Bella watches his languid, long fingers. They stop when they find Charlie's old record player. Bella watches as he kneels down and begins to browse through the old dusty albums.

He finds something that piques his interest and pulls it out, blowing the dust off of the cover.

"May I?" he asks, gesturing toward the turntable.

"Of course," Bella politely replies.

Edward lifts the needle and places it on top of the spinning black circle. He turns the volume up as loud as it will go. A gritty and melodic voice fills the house...

Righteous and Wicked

I'm silent in my solitude

I'm quiet as a thief

I have stolen all these hours

I have gotten no relief

Bella watches him. Edward closes his eyes and his head begins to move back and forth to the rhythm. Bella feels her body getting hotter, but she is frozen where she stands.

His eyes open and fall on her. The stormy blue pierces her and the six feet between them feels like miles.

As if sensing her thoughts, he steps toward her. Slowly.

My crazy dreams and tragedies have taken me for a ride

But I can see strange glory on the other side

Oh this has been my misery and the source of my pride

But all along I'm thinking I've been taken for a ride

They stare at each other, devouring each other. The lust they have both been harboring is threatening to overflow, to break through the levy and flood.

Bella takes a step. She looks at his mouth. The scruffy stubble that surrounds it. She wants to run the tip of her nose along his jaw.

Edward takes a step.

She takes another step.

Righteous and Wicked

They are an arm lengths away, their gazes locked, their chests heaving with longing and things unsaid. The only sound that fills the room is the singer's solemn voice...

But like a stubborn beast when the barn is on fire

I might resist you when you try to save my life

When the flames rise around us and I can't see the door

This is still my home and it has never burned before

This is where I've taken my solace and my peace

The walls are caving in but I am still a stubborn beast

Just an inch apart.

So close.

His hands reach for her. He quickly grabs her wrists and throws them over his shoulders, swiftly drawing her against his body. She immediately feels his hardness press into her. She closes her eyes with pleasure and her breath escapes.

Why don't you take me when I'm willing?

His hands slip around the small of her back and he begins to slowly command her body in rhythm with the music. Her mouth is at his neck, she can almost hear the blood pulsing beneath his skin.

She is afraid to look at his eyes. She is afraid for him to see how badly she wants him, even though she can feel that he wants her, too.

"Bella..." he whispers into her hair.

Righteous and Wicked

His lips are so close to hers. And now she has no choice but to look. She finds his eyes, and sees her lust reflected back. They gently dance, just barely moving. Desperate flesh pressed against desperate flesh.

I might resist you when you try to save my life

"Edward..." she whispers, answering his unspoken plea.

Why don't you take me when I'm willing?

And that's all the invitation he needs. He gently takes her lip, just barely, between his own. Just enough to taste her. *So sweet.*

He opens his eyes and looks at her. She is begging him to continue, and he cannot resist this temptation.

He presses his lips to hers firmly, with definite purpose. The feeling that is rising and coursing through his veins is unfamiliar to him. When he kisses her, he does not sink into the blackness of his sickness. He is not falling. He feels her goodness flowing into him. The lust he feels is not a desire to selfishly use her body and discard it, but to treasure it.

Unexpectedly, he feels her hands pull him closer, sliding up his neck and winding into his hair. Her touch excites him further, his desire is tangible. He feels her soft tongue tentatively touch his, and she tastes so sweet. *So sweet, so good, so...sexy.*

And now his hands have a mind of their own. He cradles her face, with a tenderness he has never shown to anyone. And she is breathless, and he is tasting her, savoring her.

She melts against him. His hands slip through her thick, soft hair. She softly moans, and at that sound the tenderness leaves him. It is replaced with fire and urgent passion.

Righteous and Wicked

He kisses her deeply, and she meets him. Their hands clutch at fabric and flesh. Trying so hard to get closer, their bodies burn against each other. They burn *for* each other.

The crescendo of this first kiss rises and weaves like a symphony through their bodies and their souls.

Every wound that they have ever had is erased with this kiss.

It is beautiful.

Bella is drowning in the depths of Edward. His taste and his touch, she submits and surrenders to it. To him. Mosaic's of color flash behind her eyelids. She is overwhelmed with the pleasure of feeling his skin against her own. Finally.

But an alien entity is trying to enter the sanctity of this moment. Bella can't put her finger on what it is.

What is that? What is that smell?

Then she places it. It is smoke.

Bella reluctantly pulls away from Edward's vice-like grasp. "Something's burning," she says.

Edward smiles at her. His face is flushed and he licks his lips. "Yes. Something's definitely on fire."

Edward is reading "The Unbearable Lightness of Being" by Milan Kundera.

The song they are dancing to is "Stubborn Beast" by Jolie Holland. Please listen to it. It can be found on the blog, along with other goodies:

righteousnwicked[dot]blogspot[dot]com

Righteous and Wicked

Reviews make me smile brighter and write faster!

xxx

Chapter 11: A Perfect Soul

A/N: Thanks to Playing With Fire, Bleriana and rpattzlawyer.

This chapter was a nightmare, not because I didn't enjoy writing it, but because my computer ate half of it.

It is dedicated to Bleriana, thanks for being patient and I hope Stormy lives up to your vision of Portugueseward. xxx

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Righteous and Wicked

"I don't care if it hurts, I wanna have control

I want a perfect body, I want a perfect soul"

~Radiohead

Edward runs to the kitchen and Bella follows him. The pasta water has bubbled over and is frothing and dripping down the stove. The sauce has burned and is congealed to the bottom of the pan. Edward quickly removes it from the heat, waving the smoke out of his face. He throws it into the sink and runs water over it, as it sizzles loudly and steam encircles him. Then, the kitchen is quiet.

Bella opens a window. Cool air rushes in, dissipating the gray clouds. Edward stands at the sink with his back to her. Not sure what to say, she begins to walk toward him. She reaches her hand out to touch him, but withdraws it before she makes contact, letting it rest at her side.

He looks down at the thick, black liquid that was once Bella's dinner. His body is still throbbing with need for her, but his mind is uneasy.

He does not regret kissing her. It was so intense, so intimate. It felt so good to touch her, so... different. But he feels himself walking dangerously close to the edge of the cliff. He's afraid that if he goes further with her, it will open the door to his darkness. He's afraid that if his demon is released, it will attack her. It will gorge itself...and then it will crave more.

He knows that he will not be able to stop with just her. He will acquiesce to his thirst again. If he allows himself to indulge with Bella, he will be violating his pledge to leave her untainted, to be the source of her joy, not sorrow. If he touches her again, it will only end badly. It will leave her hurt, once more.

He won't do it.

He turns around and finds her tiny body standing right behind him. He smiles at how timid she is, and his resolution flounders. It would be so easy. He could do it right now.

Righteous and Wicked

Take her. Touch her. The voice beckons from the shadows.

Desire hangs in the air like the smoke above them. He wrestles with the temptation to satisfy their mutual need. It would feel so good...he could give her such pleasure...it would be so easy...

"Looks like the food is ruined," he says, reaching up to brush her hair from her shoulder. When he touches her, her eyes briefly close, and then open again.

"Yeah, I guess there's no way to save it," she says. He can see how deeply affected she was by the kiss they shared. He can see that she wants more...and so does he. But he can't give it to her. He's not ready. Not yet.

"Well...then," he says, "I guess I'm taking you out to dinner."

Bella stands in her bedroom, rummaging through her closet. She puts on a soft gray sweater, brushes her hair, and runs gloss over her freshly kissed lips.

She looks at her reflection. *What am I doing?*

Ignoring the voice of uncertainty, she runs downstairs, where Edward waits for her.

It smells like leather. The light from the dashboard makes his knuckles look white. Bella dutifully stares straight ahead, wondering where he is taking her. The radio plays, just loud enough to prevent awkward silence in the car...

When you were here before,

Couldn't look you in the eye

You're just like an angel,

Your skin makes me cry

Righteous and Wicked

She wonders what would have happened if they hadn't been interrupted. Would he have made love to her? On the living room floor...on the couch...

Would she have finally been the one to meet his need?

His restraint has surprised her, but in a way it is a blessing. Anything more than a kiss would have been too much. It would have been too fast. Her head tells her it's for the best, but her body disagrees.

She wants him, but she doesn't want to be just a conquest. She wants him, over and over again. What she wants is to be the sole object of his desire. She knows that this is an unrealistic expectation, but she feels it nonetheless.

"Are you cold?" he asks.

She looks at him; his eyes are fixed on the winding road. "No, I'm fine. Thank you."

He glances at her and she looks away. Longing engulfs her. Now that she has touched him, she wants more, she needs more. But she doesn't know how to get it.

She has to get inside his head.

The restaurant is dark inside. The kind of place that illicit couples come to hide, to avoid being caught. The aroma of fresh bread and spices fill the air and the wait staff is impeccably dressed.

Edward speaks to the raven-haired hostess, and they are brought to the back of the restaurant to a cozy, secluded, candle-lit table near a bay window. There are no chairs, just a cushioned bench seat on the windowsill. Bella and Edward have no choice but to sit right next to each other.

She looks at the menu, and Edward looks at the wine list. Their arms brush against each other, and Bella feels the powerful pull to him. The warmth of his body is fanning the spark inside her. She lets herself rest against his heat.

Righteous and Wicked

"Do you want to get a bottle?" he asks, "Oh...that's right- you don't drink."

Bella is nervous. She's on an unexpected first date, and is suffering from unsatisfied lust. A glass of wine sounds like a perfect antidote. "I guess a glass or two won't hurt. I like red."

Edward smiles. "All right."

The waiter returns and Edward orders the wine, chatting about Argentina and Malbec, but these are foreign topics to Bella.

Edward asks what she would like to eat, and orders for her.

And then they are alone.

She carefully begins her journey inside Edward's mind. "So where did you live, before you came here?" she asks him.

"I was in Brazil," he answers, spreading his crisp white napkin across his lap.

"Were you building a house there?"

"Yes. I designed and built a guest home for a wealthy couple. Well, for his wife mostly. The man wasn't really interested in the project, but the wife was the one who...wanted it."

Bella can see that he is uncomfortable answering her, and she can only assume what it was that the wife wanted from Edward, or what he took from her.

"Do you speak Spanish?"

"Actually, they mainly speak Portuguese there," he corrects her.

"Oh." Bella feels embarrassed by her lack of worldly knowledge. Phoenix and Forks have been the extent of her travels. "So, you speak Portuguese then?"

Righteous and Wicked

"Yes," he answers. The black of his clothes makes his eyes seem an even deeper blue, and Bella struggles to keep focused on her goal.

"I've heard it's a beautiful language. Will you say something?"

He smirks, and is quiet. His face is devious and tender. He rests his elbow on the table, and his bicep flexes as he runs his fingers through the back of his hair. He is thinking, and Bella waits.

He clears his throat and finally speaks, his deep voice is low, intimate...almost a whisper.

"Linda Bella, seus lábios são tão deliciosos. Você é linda, Bella, sua pele é tão macia. Só de pensar em você fico com tesão."

She has no idea what he's said, but she feels herself flush. The spark has become an inferno, and she fears she will soon become nothing but a pile of ashes. His mouth is closed, but his eyes are still speaking to her, and *this* language is not foreign.

"What does that mean?" she asks.

He leans in closer to her, and his hand slips on to her knee. "It means..."

He hesitates.

She is blazing, scorching.

"It means...I'm happy that I met you, Bella."

She wants to tell him, to *show* him how much she craves him. She wants him to know she can give him what he needs. She wants to kiss him again, right now. She wants his hand to slide further up her thigh...

"I'm...I'm happy I met you too..."

Righteous and Wicked

The waiter approaches again, and Edward abruptly removes his hand from her leg. Her skin soundlessly screams at the loss of his touch. If Bella was less of a Christian, she would tell the waiter to go the hell away. She narrows her eyes at him, furious at his interruption.

He shows them the bottle, and waits for Edward's approval before he fills each glass. He sips and nods politely, dismissing the eager waiter. Bella tastes the wine. It is sweet and dry, she relishes the flavor. Edward clearly knows what he's doing.

She continues to push for more of Edward's story. "Where is your family?" she asks.

His brow furrows. "I don't know. The last I heard, they were living in Ireland. I was never really close to them."

And here is a piece of his puzzle. "Not even when you were little?"

"No. My father traveled a lot for work. He was always busy, always away. My mother...my mother was an alcoholic. I was pretty much raised by a nanny. Her name was Maggie," he answers, staring into space.

"And where is she?"

"She died when I was seventeen," he gulps his wine.

"That must have been...hard for you," she tries to sympathize with him.

He clears his throat and sits up straight. "Yes. Well, what can you do...people come and go."

She recognizes his attempt at minimizing his pain. She hears it underneath the layers of his rehearsed response. The effort it takes to look effortless when you try to remove your heart from your own life story.

It's like looking in a mirror.

Righteous and Wicked

"Yes. Yes, they do."

It occurs to Bella that they have more in common than she thought.

Edward pulls into Bella's drive. He feels relieved to have shared some pieces of himself with her. He let her in, he allowed her to attempt to scale his insurmountable wall.

The wine has made him warm inside, but he can see that it has made Bella drunk. She giggles as he puts the car in park. He looks at her and her eyes shine with the blissful haze of wine.

"That was a nice dinner, Edward. Thank you." She shifts in her seat, and to Edward's disbelief, her hand moves across the console, and on to his thigh.

This is too easy, too tempting. She could become a victim so quickly.

The powerful urge to grab her and drag her into his lap seizes him. He wants to kiss her, her lips, her neck. He wants to grind himself against her, to let her feel how hard he is for her. He fights to resist, and it is not easy.

He takes her hand and interlaces his fingers with hers. She squeezes it, and leans closer to him.

He does the same. Their mouths are so close...he wants to taste her, but he restrains himself. He moves his lips away from hers, then, he softly kisses her forehead.

"Bella, have you ever needed something?" he asks her. He wants her to understand why he can't touch her the way he wants to, why he can't give her what she craves. He wants her to know that his soul is at stake.

"What do you mean?" she asks him. Her eyes are so innocent.

"Has there ever been something you had to have, or you just couldn't keep going? Something you couldn't resist?" He wants to tell her so badly, to let her

Righteous and Wicked

see his true self.

"Yes. I mean, I have to have coffee every day. I really can't live without it."

He laughs and runs his hand over his jaw. Her attempt at identifying with him is adorable. There is no way she could ever imagine how damaged and venomous he really is.

"Well, sometimes people need things that aren't good for them. Sometimes they have to work hard to stay away from those things, no matter how much they want them..." He is saying too much. If he reveals his sickness, she will run. She will be disgusted by him, the way he is disgusted with himself. He will never see her again.

He lets go of her hand. "Bella, I have to go. I have a lot of work to do tomorrow."

Her face falls and she looks at her lap. *Shit.*

He is hurting her, and he can't stand it. He should let her go, he should stay away, but he is selfish, and he won't.

"When can I see you again?" he asks.

She looks at him, and her expression is strange. There is passion in her eyes, but it's mixed with something else...it's like she really sees him...it's like she knows...

He has never had a woman look at him this way before. She reaches up and touches his face. He should stop torturing himself, he should just stay away, but her touch is so soothing. Edward closes his eyes and allows himself to enjoy it.

Bella gently cradles his jaw and traces his mouth with her thumb. It is heavenly. Then she leans into him, and presses her lips to his forehead. She mirrors the chaste touch that he gave to her. She is giving him just what he can

Righteous and Wicked

handle, just what he can take.

He smells her perfume, he feels her hot skin on his. He knows that he will never be strong enough to stay away from her. His fingers brush against her neck. He wants to take her right here...he wants to take her inside. His thirst is rising up, threatening break through the chains. He caresses her slim neck, her delicate shoulder.

"Edward..."

He can barely breathe, he is drowning. He has to give in to it, to have her naked in front of him. He wants to unleash his frenzied need, to let it explode. He wants to make her body his. He wants to *fuck* her.

"...tomorrow. Come tomorrow," she answers, and gets out of the car.

Translation from Portuguese: "Beautiful Bella, your lips are so delicious. You are beautiful, Bella, your skin is so soft. I'm hard just thinking about you."

Song from this chapter: Creep- Radiohead

Playlist is on the blog.

Please review!

Chapter 12: Create and Destroy

A/N:

Thanks to Playing With Fire, Bleriana and rpattzlawyer.

There have been some questions about why Stormy has blue eyes. I never pictured Edward with green eyes, as they are only red, yellow, or black in the books. I also picture Edward as Rob, so that's why my Edward has blue eyes.

This chapter is dedicated to my Pirate, happy birthday! xxx

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"Edward..."

Righteous and Wicked

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"...tomorrow. Come tomorrow," she answers, and gets out of the car.

"Every act of creation is first an act of destruction"

~Picasso

She tenderly passes over the rotten wood of the porch; it creaks and threatens to give way beneath her feet. As she ascends the stairs, the idea that has been slowly rising up in her brain is taking shape.

What if she told him that she knows? He wouldn't have to pretend anymore. Maybe if he knew that Bella was unfazed by his addiction, he would be able to behave freely. Is he ashamed? Or does he just not want to be with her? She has felt his skin on hers, rigid and unrelenting. The way it felt just can't be a lie.

Does he only want to be with anonymous women that way? No commitment, no strings attached. Just sex--whenever he wants it, however he wants it, with someone he'll never see again?

The idea of that weighs on Bella's heart.

She gets into bed and pulls the covers over her head, immediately falling into a deep sleep filled with unfathomably dirty dreams of Edward.

The National Weather Service has issued a severe thunderstorm warning for all of Clallam County , including Forks...

Edward slams his hand down on the clock-radio, violently silencing the object that has awoken him. He grunts and rolls over in his bed, running his hand over his bare chest. He is immediately faced with the enormously painful reality that he has not given into his thirst for what feels like a very long time.

Righteous and Wicked

He touches himself and thinks about trying to take care of the need without help from another, but he knows it won't work. He has tried that before, and it is never satisfying. It doesn't bring the same deliverance. It doesn't give him the same thrill. The thrill of watching someone else's body tremble and quiver at his hand. The thrill of penetrating and possessing. The thrill of entering the blackness that he so desperately tries to run from. The total loss of control. Completely and willingly submerged in sin.

He closes his eyes and sees Bella's face - Bella's body - taking that dark journey with him. He imagines for a moment that she's the kind of girl he needs. Wicked and unapologetically immoral. He imagines her in unholy positions, screaming and sweating and begging. He has barely been able to suppress his grim urges, and he is facing the cruel reality that it's only a matter of time 'til he gives in. Whether it's with her, or someone else. He has to get some kind of relief.

Fuck.

He needs a distraction. He sits up, and the sheet slides down his torso and rests at his hip. He picks up the phone.

"It's Edward. I need you to come out here today. There's something I want you to do."

"All right young ladies, when we enter the church, I expect to see folded hands and quiet mouths. No silliness. And don't forget to genuflect before you sit in the pew. Third and fourth rows today, and we will be discussing Father Carlisle's sermon after lunch, so please pay attention."

Bella is the perfect picture of decency and spirituality as she leads her students down the aisle. She walks past Alice's class, and waves. Alice winks at her.

She looks toward the confessional and feels momentarily conflicted and guilty. She has a dark mark on her soul, and is being dishonest by pretending to be an example for these girls. She never wanted to be this person, but here she is. Will God love her anyway? She makes the sign of the cross, and sits down with

Righteous and Wicked

her extremely well behaved students.

He walks through the hardware store, thinking that this is the safest place he could possibly be. Old men - working men, are the only people that should be here. But, of course, he is wrong.

A housewife, covered in jewelry, is pretending to look at fixtures. But she's looking for someone just like him. She's practically gift wrapped.

She smiles at him.

Edward doesn't smile and he doesn't move.

"Hi George. I have 15 dollars on pump three," Bella tells the ancient gas station attendant.

"How's that old truck treating ya, Bella?" he asks through his almost completely toothless grin.

"It gets me where I need to go," she smiles at him.

A mason jar rests on the counter, filled to the brim with Charms lollipops. She is flooded with the memory of being a little girl on Sunday mornings. Her grandfather used to take her with him to get the paper, before anyone else had gotten up. He would buy her a lollipop, and warn her not to tell her mother. She had to eat it in the car before she got home, so they wouldn't get in trouble.

She stares at the bright cellophane wrappers and remembers the simple innocence of that time - when the only wrong she ever committed was eating a lollipop before breakfast. Riding in the backseat without a care in the world. So much simpler than her current predicament of contemplating committing adultery with a depraved sex addict .

Those were the days.

She grabs a strawberry lollipop. "I'll take one of these too, George."

Righteous and Wicked

She removes the wrapper like she is handling a fragile object and then reverently licks the red circle.

The door of the truck creaks open and her high-heeled foot meets the driveway. She flings her purse onto her shoulder and slams the door, still enjoying the sweet candy. She looks up at the blue-black clouds that are threatening rain; thunder rumbles in the distance. She hears the painfully familiar and ungodly sound of the bulldozer. She instinctively looks toward Edward's property.

The gigantic yellow machine has cleared a path between her yard and his. Time slows down to a crawl as Edward emerges through the woods. He is walking toward her, covered in mud from foot to knee, his white shirt soaked in with sweat. Her appetite for him has reached a fever pitch.

She can see his face clearly as he gets closer. He's smiling.

She takes the lollipop out of her mouth.

"Hey," she points toward the bulldozer, "what's with the path?"

"Nate and I cleared it today. I thought it might be easier for us to get back and forth. You know, because my driveway is so long and muddy," he says it like it makes perfect sense, and Bella blushes, flattered that he wants it to be easy for him to get close to her.

"Well, you know, I've never even been to your house. Maybe you could show it to me sometime?" she asks.

He nods, but doesn't say anything, and then he turns and walks away.

Bella is baffled. *Did I offend him?*

He stops and turns around, his smirk makes her knees weak. "Are you coming with me, or what?"

Righteous and Wicked

What I wouldn't give to be that fucking lollipop. He thinks as he walks beside her toward the newly formed path.

She's in her work clothes. Pencil skirt, silk blouse, hair up. He steals a glance at her out of the corner of his eye, and she's sucking and licking that lollipop like a pro. The sun glints off the silver cross on her neck and his filthy thoughts are temporarily disrupted.

Edward looks away, struggling to find something normal to say. *What do people talk about?*

"So, I heard there's going to be a big storm tonight. They say we may be flooded and lose power."

"Yeah, I heard that too," she replies.

The weather. A normal topic.

They reach the edge of her yard and Bella stops. She is looking down at her feet.

"I think I should go change my shoes. Heels and mud don't mix."

He looks down at his work boots and feels stupid for not considering this. Without thinking, Edward scoops Bella up in his arms.

"Whoa, what are you..."

He looks into her eyes and she stops protesting. She's staring at his mouth and he knows what she's thinking. He wants to kiss her too.

"What kind of lollipop is that?" he asks.

"Strawberry," she raises her eyebrow, "you want a taste?"

Fuck yeah, I want a taste.

Righteous and Wicked

He opens his mouth and she holds it out. He licks it, and she watches him do it. Her skin is flooded with pink, and he is harder than he has ever been.

He carries her down the path, and they don't speak. He feels her fingers wrapped around his neck, softly fondling the back of his head. He delights in the way she fits so perfectly into his arms. He runs his hand over her stocking covered legs and she shivers at his touch. He wants to tear them from her body.

He sets her down at his trailer door. Nathan, his contractor gets out of the bulldozer and approaches them. Edward doesn't like the way he is looking at Bella, and he moves in front of her.

"Thanks Nate. That's all for today."

"Yes, sir. I'll be back with the flatbed to get the dozer tomorrow. I want to get home before the storm hits." Nate says, as he gets in his truck and pulls away.

The frame of the house is enormous, even though only the foundation and first floor have been completed. Bella thinks that this could be a home for a family, not just one man. She wonders why he is building such a large structure only for himself. The trailer he is currently living in seems miniature compared to the incomplete creation.

He opens the door to the trailer with a jerk, and holds it for her. "After you."

It's not messy, but it's not clean either. The only places to sit are a kitchen stool or the bed. She chooses the bed. He sits down next to her. Thunder rumbles in the distance, and the dangerous storm that has been predicted is making its way closer and closer to Edward and Bella.

Edward leans back on the bed, supported by his elbows. Bella sits on the edge, with her legs crossed. He reaches past her, and presses play on his stereo. His arm brushes against her back. Then, the rain starts to fall, pitter-pattering on the tin roof.

I don't want you, but I need you

Righteous and Wicked

Don't wanna kiss you, but I need to

Oh, you do me wrong now

My love is strong now

You really got a hold on me...

"Are you hungry? I could make you something to eat," he offers, absentmindedly pushing a tendril of hair from her eyes. The tender yet erotic touch pushes Bella over the edge. She submits to the nagging idea that has been eating at her. *Tell him.*

"Edward, what's happening here?" she asks.

His azure eyes are locked on hers. "What do you mean?"

"I mean this," she gestures between them.

He raises his hand and cradles her cheek. Bella's need for him is crushing her, she can't fight it. She is compelled to finally surrender to it. Impulsively, she kneels on the bed and straddles Edward's lap. What she truly craves presses against her, just where she wants to feel it.

"Shit," Edward says.

She slowly moves her hips against his, her fingertips rub against his scruffy face. And then she kisses him. Deep and frenzied. Lips and tongue, tasting and consuming. With this kiss she is telling him how much she desires him, and he hears her.

"Edward, I want you. I want to be with you," she pants.

His hands slide down her back and grip her hips. He ferociously throws her down on the bed, and descends on her petite figure. Dominating her. Grinding against her.

Righteous and Wicked

"I want you too, Bella, so much," he whispers in her ear.

He kisses her neck and she grips his hair in her hands. Giving in to this feels so good and so right. Her heart pounds and she gets wet at his touch.

"Edward, I know about...the way you are...and I want you to know, that I don't care," she says breathlessly.

He suddenly jerks up.

"What did you say?"

Bella sits up next to him, pulling her skirt into place and taking his hand in hers. "I-I know about what you do. I've seen you..."

"Wait, what?" he shakes his head, and anger creeps into his face, replacing the passion.

"That night I ran into you at the bar, I stopped there because I saw your car. I know you were...with someone...in the bathroom," she admits.

He pulls his hand away from hers. His eyes are once again barbaric and savage, a human storm. "What the fuck, Bella? Were you following me?" he shouts.

"No. I mean, not that time..."

He shakes his head. "There were other times? What the hell is wrong with you? Are you some kind of stalker or something?"

He can't believe what he's hearing. Bella knows.

"Edward, no...I just...I saw you at the club, and then I followed you once, and then I came by here once, and I heard you with the girl from the coffee shop, and then, when I passed the bar that night I saw your car and..."

Righteous and Wicked

He is furious. He can't comprehend this. Bella - his antidote, his remedy - is just as wretched as he is. Everything he thought was true is false. He stands up and grabs her elbow, yanking her off the bed.

"And what, Bella? That gets you off? Listening to me fuck other women? That fucking gets you wet?" he shouts.

He is completely shocked and enraged. *How can this be?*

"Let go of my arm. You're hurting me," she whimpers.

He didn't realize how tight he was gripping her, and immediately lets her go. His demon has surfaced. He is face to face with the reality that she knows how twisted and perverse he really is. His disgrace is reflected back at him through her eyes.

He has to get away. There is no one on earth who knows his secret. He can't handle it. He opens the door. The rain is pouring down mercilessly and he is instantly soaked as soon as he exits his trailer.

Bella chases after him, into the rain.

"Edward, where are you going?"

He gets in the Jeep. He doesn't answer her or look at her as he revs his engine and peels out of the driveway.

"Edward!" Bella weeps where she stands, paralyzed and shocked by what has just happened. She never dreamed that he would reject her this way. She is livid, embarrassed and ashamed.

She runs up the muddy path. Lightning cracks and flashes, snaking across the sky, followed by an earth-shaking, thunderous boom. She shivers in the cold of the pouring rain as she climbs her porch steps and then collapses once she's inside. She buries her head in her hands, sobbing and moaning. She is utterly destroyed.

Righteous and Wicked

Thunder booms again, shaking the old house. Bella doesn't hear the sound of screeching tires or the thud and crunch of metal as Edward's car swerves off of the slick road and crashes into a tree.

Please, please, please review!

Song from this chapter: "You really got a hold on me" Smokey Robinson

Thanks so much for reading! Please visit the blog and the forums!

Chapter 13: The Fragrance of The Violet

A/N:

Thanks to Playing With Fire, Bleriana and rpattzlawyer.

Special thanks to Bleriana for including RaW in her Sinday post! If you dont read The Cold Shower blog, you should!

There was some confusion regarding my identity on Twitter, so thanks to those who helped to clear it up.

The last chapter was an evil cliffie, so let me make it up to you with this early post! xxx

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Righteous and Wicked

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"Forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it."

~Mark Twain

The alarm sounds. 6AM.

Bella sits up. Her head is heavy, and her heart is broken.

She let herself feel. She let someone in, and it was a mistake.

Her life was empty before *he* came. Empty, but easy. Sleep was all she lived for. Her body was numb and she was alone. Alone--with nothing and no one.

The emptiness was pleasurable compared to the agony and anger she feels now. The wound that Jacob left her with was healing; she was accepting a new path. But now it has now been ripped open, and the path she chose has been closed to her.

He rejected her. They *both* rejected her. She's worthless. Forgettable.

Bella sinks back into bed, picks up her phone, and calls in sick to work. She blankly stares at the stark ceiling and falls into a dreamless, barren sleep.

He's cold. Something sticky is clinging to his eye, gluing it shut. He tries to lift his head, and then the searing, throbbing ache in his skull bombards him.

Righteous and Wicked

It smells like burnt rubber and anti-freeze. He licks his lips and tastes blood. He forces his one good eye open. The front end of his jeep is crumpled around an elm tree. The force of the impact broke the bark off the trunk, and the morning sun makes the pale pink of the lumber look like flesh. He is disoriented and has been unconscious for hours.

He struggles to sit up. The collision caused his unbuckled body to collide with the windshield. The glass is cracked with spider webs. He hesitantly touches the stickiness on his face. His eye is swollen shut. Still, he has no broken bones, just some blood and bruises. Some would say he was lucky.

The car door squeaks and screeches loudly as he forces it open. He never even made it to the end of the street.

He leans back against his damaged jeep, and the recollection of how he got here hurts him far more than the physical pain of the accident.

He can see the roof of her house poking up through the trees from where he stands. Once a place of respite from his darkness, now a source of shame. How can he ever look at her again?

ThumpThumpThump

A cold, prickly feeling ripples over Bella's skin when she hears the knock at the door. She is in her robe and she hasn't showered. *Shit.*

She peeks through the peep hole, hoping to see blue eyes, but instead she sees mascara-coated eyelashes batting back at her.

She opens the door a crack. "Alice. Hey."

Alice pushes past Bella, her arms filled with brown paper grocery bags. "Okay. I got O.J., tea, some soup, and some ginger ale. And why the hell didn't you answer your cell? I called you three times today. You never miss work; I figured you were half dead."

Righteous and Wicked

Perfect description.

"So, what's the matter with you?" she asks, unloading the groceries.

"I'm just...I don't feel well," Bella says, pulling out a chair at the table.

"Well you look like shit."

"That's nice, Alice. Thanks."

She places the back of her hand on Bella's forehead. "You don't have a fever."

Bella looks down at her fuzzy-slipped feet.

"Hold on, is this a bum out? What happened? Was it Jacob? Renee? Did one of them call you?" Alice asks in a panic.

"No. No, nothing like that." Bella unconsciously looks out the window at Edward's house, and Alice sees her do it.

"Wait. Is this Sexy-Neighbor-Guy drama? You better tell me, Bella," she says and sits down at the table.

"No. It's nothing...really Alice. It's just a cold. I'll survive."

"What the fuck happened to your car, bro? Oh, shit. Look at your face! Damn. Did you wreck? I don't know how you even managed to drive this over here." Emmett says.

Rosalie comes out into their driveway. She stands with arms folded. And Edward feels his increasingly starved hunger flare inside of him when he sees her.

"Babe, I'm gonna take this down to the garage. You want to keep Edward company?"

Righteous and Wicked

Over her future husband's shoulder, Rosalie can see the lewd look that is creeping onto Edward's battered face and she feels sick. "No. I mean I can't. I'm meeting Alice and Bella."

Edward freezes. His perverse thoughts of the blonde retreat and disappear. *That has to be a coincidence. There must be more than one Bella in this town, right?*

Hearing her name makes something inside him twinge. It makes him feel warm. He misses that feeling more than he thought he could ever miss anything. He misses Bella. Bella, who knows his secret, and still wants him. He regrets rejecting her, but he knows she's not likely to forgive him.

"Em, can you just drop me at home?"

Her coffee is cold. She gets chalk on her skirt. Her lunch is tasteless. Headmistress Esme has unkind words for her. She goes to church and prays for mercy. The solemn silence gives her some comfort. She prays for relief. She meets Alice and Rose for dinner, but she doesn't bother to eat anything. At home, she goes to bed and dreams of nothing.

He treads lightly on the beams and shouts gruffly at his workers. His unquenched thirst, his shame, and the physical pain he feels are causing him to behave crudely, and he won't apologize for it. His self-loathing seethes through him and he projects it onto anyone who crosses his path.

He is angry at whatever it is that makes him this way. He hates himself for being an addict, and for pushing away the first person to accept him. He is angry that he ended up on this street. What happened in Brazil pales in comparison to this. A jealous husband trying to kill him--that he can handle. But breaking a sweet angel, that is something he can't live with.

He looks toward the old white house. It taunts him. He hears her truck go by, and he retreats inside his silver cage.

He can't even look at himself in the mirror.

Righteous and Wicked

She sleeps, she wakes, she works.

Empty.

She sleeps, she wakes, she works.

Alone.

He sits in the diner. The food tastes like shit. This is the longest he has gone without giving in, and without Bella to give him strength, it feels like an impossible feat. The waitress is pretty, and he's hungry for her, not the food.

Every day is bleak and pointless. Like a zombie, she stands in front of the kitchen sink, washing and peeling potatoes. She looks in the fridge, and takes out the tub of butter. It's empty. *Perfect.*

She's in a slip dress, not fit for the grocery store, but she doesn't care. She grabs her keys and walks out onto the porch. The wind-chime clinks and the anger she has been ignoring rises up. Now it has a target. She wants to smash the object that brought that man to her. She stomps over to it, forgetting the usual tender footed path that is necessary to navigate the old porch safely, and the sound of cracking wood replaces the sound of the chime.

She falls and hits the floor with a thud, a burning pain shooting into her leg. The rotten wood has finally given way. Her right foot is stuck in a hole, where the wood of the porch has collapsed. She is submerged up to her calf in a splintered cavern. She tries to lift her leg out, and the pain become worse. The wood is pinching her flesh, and rusted nails are threatening to puncture her.

She reaches into the pocket of her cotton dress, but it's empty. No cell phone.

She rubs her hand over her face, and reluctantly looks toward the path.

He gets out of the shower; his black clothes are laid out on the bed, waiting for him. He towels off his bruised body and gets dressed. His black eye and split lip have healed, but he still looks like he got the worst of a bar brawl. It doesn't

Righteous and Wicked

matter, because he knows whomever he finds tonight will like it. A wounded man is like heroin to women. He looks in the mirror and everything is just right.

No sense in fighting it any longer. This is what he is, and without Bella he doesn't have the strength to try to be different.

Something on the floor catches his eye and he stops. By the bed is the stick from Bella's lollipop. He picks it up and sits down. He touches his lips, thinking of her kiss and her strawberry taste. The look in her eyes when she told him that she knew of his sickness. The way she saw what he truly is.

She doesn't care. She wants me anyway. She reached her hand out to me and I didn't take it. I pushed it away, and I ran. She'll never forgive me, and she's better off this way. I am a poison.

He thought he could get better if he had her in his life. He was drawn to her sweet purity and simple goodness. He saw a piece of her inside of himself, and that was the only thing helping him to hold off. To keep his demon at bay. And now he has lost his grip.

He was foolishly deceived by her innocence. She *watched* him, and she *liked* it. If the only good person he has known is dark like him, then what is the point of pretending to be someone else? He made a mistake in thinking that he could ever be more than a monster. He dresses, hopelessly tosses the stick in the trash, and grabs his keys.

The repaired Jeep waits for him in the driveway. To him it looks like a hearse. His hand is on the ignition when he hears it.

Someone is screaming.

"Help! Someone help me!"

The pressure on her leg is causing pins and needles as she loses circulation. She knows there's only one person who can hear her on this isolated street, and

Righteous and Wicked

the thought is devastating. Even if he hears her, his help is the last thing she wants to receive. To have to see him will bring only pain.

But the futility of her situation makes her desperate, and she calls out again, louder this time.

"Please! Help! Someone please help me..." her voice trails off, the pinching pressure of the cracked and splintered wood against her leg makes her wince.

Her eyes fill with tears, half out of pain and half out of frustration. She looks toward the path again, and this time she sees him.

He emerges from the wood running forcefully, her vile guardian, her sordid savior. He runs swiftly, dressed in black. The delicious dark devil. The human storm.

She is aroused and demolished, filled with rage and relief.

He swiftly climbs the steps, and kneels breathlessly before her.

"Jesus, Bella, you scared me." His chest heaves with deep gasping breaths; his face is distressed. "Are you hurt badly?" he asks.

"No. The porch gave way. My leg is stuck. It hurts to try to move it." She notices his black eye and cut lip. "What happened to you?" she asks.

"Don't worry about me," he says, as he slips his fingers between the fractured wood and Bella's skin. Seeing her in pain is more than he can take, and it makes him realize that somewhere inside of his black heart, there is a light for Bella.

His muscles flex and the veins in his arm bulge as he grunts loudly, ripping the shattered wood away from her leg with his bare hands. He pulls again, and removes another chunk of the decayed wood, then he guides her injured leg out of the opening.

Righteous and Wicked

She slides back, relieved to be free, and rubs her scratched calf. Edward leans against the railing of the porch, panting. "Let me see your leg," he demands.

She can't even look in his eyes. She knows she'll get lost there. She *wants* to get lost there, and that terrifies her. He is dressed in black and she knows that he was on his way out...or on his way back from someone.

"I'm fine, Edward. You can leave now."

"Bella..." Edward's sweet voice comes out of Stormy's mouth.

"Just go." She won't let him hurt her again. The anguish she feels over the way he treated her is still a fresh wound on her heart in spite of the time that has passed.

She stands up, and so does he. He moves toward her and she steps back. "Edward, please. Just leave."

He steps closer. "No." He answers her with direct defiance.

She wants to fight back, but she also wants to just give in. He reaches up to touch her, and she pushes him away. "Don't."

She looks in his eyes and her fear is realized. She gets lost in the storm and it feels so good. She can see that he is desperate and resolute. She can feel the fiery pull to him. "I think you made yourself clear the other day, Edward. What else is there to say?" she challenges him.

He reaches to touch her again and, against her better judgment, she lets him. "I want to say that I'm sorry," he whispers.

"Well, you are not forgiven." She says with half-hearted ferocity, and turns to walk into the house.

He grabs her shoulders, turning her around. "Bella, do you understand that I don't *want* to be this way?"

Righteous and Wicked

"Edward you need to go. You were so cruel to me..." she wipes a traitor tear from her eye.

Her tear tears into him. He can't stand it. "Bella, please, I need you to forgive me. I want to try to be good. I don't want to be like this anymore, but I can't do it alone. I need you, Bella...I need you to save me." He takes both of her hands in his, interlacing his fingers with hers. He's trying to bind himself to her in some way.

She pulls away. "Well, *I* can't take any more pain, Edward. I want you to leave."

They stand at war, each unwilling to give in.

Edward attacks first, grabbing her hips and pushing her back against the house. "I'm *not* leaving."

And the storm returns.

He lightly touches her face, and she flinches, but doesn't pull away. "Bella, I'm so sorry. Please forgive me." He leans his forehead against hers.

In spite of her anger, she can't fight her attraction to him, her need for him. She surrenders, and brings her lips to his, gently. They are warm and wet; she barely touches them with hers. It almost hurts her to be this close to him.

Edward kisses her back, deeply. He cradles the back of her head and feels her soften against him. Touching her this way alleviates the misery he felt without her. He lifts her up, pressing her back against the door. He kisses her harder, reaches behind her, and turns the door knob.

They stumble into the foyer of the house, leaving the front door ajar. Their kiss continues as he carries her--unbreakable, hungry and desperate. They only make it as far as the stairs and Edward lays her down. He descends upon her, kissing her neck, rubbing the length of his body against hers. He wants to give himself to her, to replace all her pain with pleasure. He whispers again, "I'm so

Righteous and Wicked

sorry, please forgive me."

Bella opens her eyes. She can see their reflection in the hallway mirror. What she has only fantasized about is reflected back at her. Edward-- craving her, devouring only her. The front door was left open, and anyone could walk in or see them. This public yet private display feeds Bella's inner voyeur, and she is dripping wet. The way he touches her fuels the ache she has for him, and her need to feel him inside of her is all she can think of. She provokes him, fanning the flame, "You are *not* forgiven," she whispers.

He reluctantly removes his lips from her body and kneels before her. He wants to worship her, to adore her for accepting him as he is. He runs his hands over her bruised and scraped calf; he kisses her knees, and runs his fingers along the unspeakably soft skin of her thighs. He can see that her breathing is uneven. He slowly slides the hem of her dress up, and then his hands are on the lace of her panties.

"Edward, wait..." she tries to stop his hands with hers, but the look he gives her makes her think twice. She doesn't want to stop him, but she knows that this is his drug. She doesn't want to enable his addiction with her own selfish desire.

Edward looks ferocious, a single minded beast. He refutes her plea, "No. No waiting."

She gives in to him, and her hands help his to slide the thin barrier between them from her body. He kneels between her legs, and she's exposed to him. It's erotic and new to her.

He is ravenous, he wants to take her roughly, right here on the stairs, but he won't. Earning her forgiveness is all he wants. He licks his lips and lowers his head between her legs. Her body is beautiful and he feels unworthy of the sight before him.

Bella cries out before he has even touched her. The anticipation of what he's about to do is driving her out of her mind. She pants. "Wait. Edward, shut the door. Turn out the light..."

Righteous and Wicked

He smirks up at her. "Now Bella, I think we both know that you don't want me to do that."

She may know his secret, but he knows hers, too.

She bites her lip and indulgently runs her fingers into his hair. He holds onto her hips and stares into her sweet, brown, lust filled eyes. Then, finally, he tastes her.

Edward licks and sucks at her sweetness and Bella throws her head back. She is gasping and moaning. The space between her legs feels like pulsing fire. "Edward that feels so good...oh my God..."

He slides his tongue around her clit, and her body quivers. She pulls and squeezes at his hair and his hand slithers up under her dress and grabs her breast. Her nipple is hard and he takes it between his fingers. Her magnificent skin is hot and damp with sweat. He licks and sucks at her while his hands eagerly roam her body.

Bella's hips move in rhythm with the way she wants to feel him. She is frantic with lust. "Edward, please. I want to feel you inside me."

He takes his mouth away from her wetness and moves up her body. He kisses her neck again, and his immensely hard cock presses against her through his black jeans. He whispers, "Bella, I want to give that to you, but not now. I can't now. I just want to make you feel good. Bella, I want you to forgive me. I need you to. I need you to save me, Bella. Você não sabe quanto tempo eu esperei por você."

His hot breath is on her ear, and her neck, as he rubs his hips mercilessly against hers. His sweet and gifted tongue kisses her neck, her cheek, her collarbone. She slides her hands over his shoulders, his arms, his chest. She can't help how intensely she craves him, but she feels guilty for tempting him. "It's okay, Edward. We don't have to do this."

Righteous and Wicked

He takes her face in his hands and looks deep into her eyes. "Bella, I'm not finished. I want to give you more." He pulls the top of her dress down and kisses her breasts. He attentively admires her and she watches his mouth and his lips. He licks and kisses her body, and then once again his tongue tastes her slick warmth.

He moves his mouth on her slit in ways she has never known. She feels pleasure rise and ripple through her. The intensity of his touch causes her to call and cry out oaths she has never uttered before. "Oh, God, Oh, God, Oh, God..."

He caresses her swollen lips with his tongue, and he moans against her flesh. He feels grateful that she is letting him touch her this way, and he is amazed at his restraint. Instead of seeking out his own pleasure, he is giving it unselfishly to her. This is something he has never done before. He feels satisfied by her satisfaction; her wanton cries of joy are quenching his thirst. In the back of his mind, he knows that this feeling is fleeting and he will crave her or someone else again soon, but for now he feels content to listen to Bella say his name, to be the reason that she trembles.

He kisses her thigh and reaches up to touch her face, her silken hair. "Eu te adoro, Bella."

Then, he slips his long fingers inside her and Bella shatters. He watches her face, and her body contorts and pulses as she comes for him. He wants to make her feel it again.

He goes down on her beautiful flesh; worshiping her with his hands and his mouth.

Bella is completely submerged and smothered by the seemingly unending and glorious bliss. She writhes against him, and calls out his name. "Edward, yes..." He kisses her lips with abandon and then she feels his tongue inside her. She is amazed and awed at the depth of sin she is indulging in, with Edward's head buried between her legs. But right now, this rapture is her religion. Her prayers are for Edward to never stop giving her this pleasure. Right now his lips are her

Righteous and Wicked

savior.

And somewhere in the midst of her repeated throes of deep and ardent passion, Bella forgives Edward.

Translation from Portugese: "You don't know how long I've waited for you." "I adore you, Bella."

Song that inspired the chpater: "Yasmin The Light"- Explosions in The Sky

Please review!

xxx

Chapter 14: The Good Gift

A/N:

Thanks to Playing With Fire, Bleriana and rpattzlawyer.

Special thanks to Bleriana for keeping me sane while I write this.

RaW has been nominated for "Best Must Read" on the Twilight Face Book's "Avant Garde Awards"! Thanks to whomever nominated this story, and I appreciate anyone who takes the time to vote!

There are a lot of little know authors and under the radar fic's nominated!

[twilightfb-awards\[dot\]blogspot\[dot\]com](http://twilightfb-awards[dot]blogspot[dot]com)

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And somewhere in the midst of her repeated throes of deep and ardent passion, Bella forgives Edward.

" You fall into my arms.

You are the good gift of destruction's path,

When life sickens more than disease

And boldness is the root of beauty - which draws us together."

~Boris Pasternak

His fingers are tracing an unknown pattern on her shoulder. Her face is pressed into his chest as they lay together at the foot of the stairs. The sweet spring breeze blows the front door open just a bit farther, and then it squeaks back to its original position. She can see the new crater in the porch, and her leg still hurts, but that sting is completely overshadowed by the indulgent delight she feels right now, laying in Edward's arms. She knows that it will have to end, that this feeling will soon pass...that it can't last. The inevitable disappointment looms over their resting bodies.

She allows herself to breathe him in, to seal this moment. She now realizes that it was Edward who did those things to her body--not Stormy. Stormy would have taken her, he wouldn't have been able to stop himself. She's satisfied from the pleasure he has given her, but she can feel that he is not. He's still rock hard against her thigh.

Her desire to make him hers in some way is overpowering.

The taste of her lingers on his lips as he rests with her beside him. Her delicate pale legs are tangled with his, and the torment he usually feels has lulled. The

Righteous and Wicked

inner war he fights is quiet, but his physical need to be inside of someone has not been satisfied.

The spell Bella casts on him saturates the air, and he wants this moment and this feeling to persist.

But he knows that it can't. Abstaining from taking Bella like he wanted to was the hardest thing he has ever done.

But he did it.

Bella breaks the peaceful silence. "I'm not stupid, Edward," she says into his shirt.

He thinks he heard her wrong. "What?"

"I know how this has to be," she says quietly.

"What do you mean?" he asks, but he knows the answer.

"I mean, I want you to know that I've already been in love. I was married, and I know that that's not what this is."

He shifts his position so that he can look in her eyes. He tries to memorize her face and the way she makes him feel, because he knows that this will all be over soon.

Love is something that he has never felt for a woman, something that he is convinced he can't feel. He is incapable of that kind of depth. He's too selfish.

Still, he feels *something* when he is near her and it's not self-preservation. With Bella he doesn't want to just take.

But wanting to do something is not the same as actually doing it, and Edward knows that. He will continue to wrestle with his demons.

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He wants to tell her that she's wrong, but he's not sure that she is.

"Okay, young ladies, it's story time. Please clear your desks. You may put your head down if you wish, but please keep your ears open."

Ms. Swan puts on her glasses and opens her book.

" Once there was a tree...

and she loved a little boy.

And every day the boy would come

and he would gather her leaves

and make them into crowns

and play king of the forest.

He would climb up her trunk

and swing from her branches

and eat apples.

And they would play hide-and-go-seek.

And when he was tired he would sleep in her shade.

And the boy loved the tree...very much.

And the tree was happy."

Bella reads to 27 lovely little fidgety girls. The words roll off of her tongue and settle on her heart. She reads about giving everything you have to someone you love--everything, until there is nothing left. She stands at the front of the class

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and reads, but in her mind she sees Edward's face. She sees the vision of how she wants to give herself to him.

She wants to give and Edward's designed to take, but is she prepared to give this way?

"So you're definitely out of here once the house is sold?" Emmett asks. He ties his shoe and grabs the ball.

"That was the plan," Edward answers, stretching out his hamstrings.

"And did the plan change?" Emmett bounces the ball back and forth between his legs, waiting for Edward to stretch.

"No. I just, I never stay in one place for very long you know? Bad habit I guess." Edward pushes his right arm across his chest, stretching out his shoulder. Then he jogs toward Emmett.

"Maybe you should stop moving around. I know it's part of your job, but you must have a shit-ton of money by now. You should put down some roots." Emmett takes a shot and the ball bounces off the rim. "Roots could be good."

Edward catches the rebound and sinks his jump shot. His thoughts automatically turn to Bella. "Yeah, maybe you're right. Roots. Roots could be good."

"I committed adultery." Bella kneels before the screen between her and Father Carlisle and robotically engages in the ritual of confession.

"And are you sorry for your sin?" he asks her. There is no emotion in his voice.

"I am sorry that I have offended God, but I am not sorry that it happened. Father, I feel drawn toward this man and it's more than physical. I feel that I can help him, and that's why he was brought into my life."

"And can you be of help to this man without sinning again?" Father asks.

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Bella would like to say yes, but in her heart she knows the answer is no.

This time they ride down a different path. The day is beautiful and warmer than it has been yet this year. Small white clouds float through the blue above them. The open field is filled with life.

Golden reeds brush against her hand, and she lifts herself up off of the bike as she follows Edward down the bumpy trail.

He stops, and she pulls up alongside him. "Is that a lake over there? Look through the trees," he asks.

Bella follows his pointed finger, and smiles at what she sees. Shielded by the forest are hints and glimmers of shimmering water. "Wow, it is. I never even knew that was there."

He smiles back at her and jerks his head in that direction. "Let's go."

They ride through the wilderness down to the lake and drop their bikes beneath a tree, then they sit together at the edge of the water.

She looks out at the waves, but she can feel him staring at her. Things that have been said and things that have not been said hover in the air. She has made her decision and this is the moment that will change everything.

She pushes her hair behind her ear and hugs her knees; then she looks him square in the eye.

He sees her staring out at the hidden lake. The breeze blows her hair across her face and she tucks it away. He has been trying so hard to survive without giving in to his thirst, and although Bella calms him, she also tempts him.

His attraction to her grows each time he has the pleasure of being with her. They have not been intimate since the day on the stairs, but he finds the easy way she has about her inexplicably intoxicating.

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They seem to have an unspoken agreement that the time they share will almost serve as a distraction from what they truly want to be doing - what Bella desires and what Edward must avoid.

"Edward? I've been thinking...what if I could help you with your...addiction."

He's shocked that she used that word; he's never heard it said out loud in reference to what plagues him. "What do you mean?" he asks.

"I mean, I want you to get better, but I know that it's a struggle and I know that sometimes, you have to give in. When you feel like you... *need* it...I want to be the one to give it to you."

Physically he could easily see her in that role, and he has, many times, in his mind. But it's wrong for him to want to taint her like that. "Bella, these women that I'm with, they're not like you...I could never ask you to..."

"I know what kind of women they are, Edward. I could be that way for *you*. I could try."

She not only accepts him, but is so altruistic and selfless. Her offer to help him touches untouched parts of his heart. No one has ever reached out to him this way.

But he is angry that she would want to lower herself and get involved in his depravity. "Bella, I don't *want* you to try."

"Edward, this is something I want to give to you." She turns toward him, and rests her hand on his knee, trying to coax him away from anger, to convince him to let her in.

"Bella, I know that you may feel like you know me, but I don't think you really do..." He strokes her hand.

"You're a sex addict and you don't want to be. Isn't that the gist?" She is blatantly calling him out on his secrets, and it's almost refreshing to have this

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silent burden lifted.

"Well, yes, but you should know I'm not proud of it, and I just can't drag you into it." He lowers his head with shame.

She kneels next to him, and lifts his jaw with her hand. "Everything in life isn't black and white, Edward. You need to stop thinking in absolutes. There's a gray area here, and that's where I want to be."

"But why? What do you get out of this?" he asks, and his concern for her is real, but his eyes are on her lips.

"I get *you*, Edward." He is stiff and his body burns at her words. He touches her hips.

"Edward, people view charity as this great notion, this great action, but people only really *give* because they like the way it makes *them* feel. There's no such thing as an unselfish act."

He has had this thought before, but he thought it was something only wicked people like himself would think. He is shocked to hear it from someone who is not only kind and good, but religious.

"I thought you were Catholic?"

"Yes. I am. But I've just been doing a lot of thinking lately about wrong and right, and good and bad, and I'm learning that people are just pieces of those things. Like I said before--there are no absolutes."

"Gray." He says.

"Yes. Gray." She moves even closer to him, her face an inch from his. "I want to do this Edward. I feel like we found each other for a reason. I want to help you get better. We can try to be strong together. But when you feel weak, when you can't survive without it, when you *need* it, I want to be the one to give it to you."

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He feels conflicted, but his heart pounds and twinges. *She is so beautiful, and she wants me. She wants to save me...and I want to be saved.*

He can't control himself any longer. He grabs her head in his hands and pulls her to him. He kisses her deeply, lips and tongue and teeth. He feels himself get hard...harder. The lion inside him roars.

Bella grudgingly pulls away, and looks in his eyes. "Restraint." She reminds him.

She's right, and he hates it. "Okay." He lies back on the ground and looks toward heaven. "Restraint."

The deal that they are making to try to help Edward abstain from sin and sickness is noble, but deep down inside they both know that he won't be able to do it.

She gets ready for work, following the familiar routine, but it feels different now that she has declared her intentions to Edward.

The wooden crucifix that hangs above her bed is taunting her, looking down on her from above with judgment. She remembers being a young girl at St. Robert's. Sister Irina would make the class stand with their arms outstretched, holding a school book on each palm, mirroring Jesus' position on the cross. She would walk through the rows, making sure no one bent their elbows or lowered their arms.

"Jesus was hung on the cross; he gave his life for *you*. The pain you feel is *nothing* compared to what he suffered. He felt unspeakable agony to take our sins away. *That* is how much Jesus loves you." Sister Irina would tell them, over and over again.

Since a young age, Bella was taught that love is pain. To really love and be loved, that is all she has ever wanted. Love isn't supposed to hurt.

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Bella buttons her blouse, and slips on her heels. She can hear the faint whispers from the old wooden box in the closet.

She looks at herself in the mirror, her appearance in no way matches the dark desires that are growing inside her each day. *This isn't about love*. She tells herself.

She wants to believe that she doesn't need love. Everyone who was ever supposed to love her is gone. The lack of love in her life is *her* cross to bear.

She looks at herself in the mirror and wonders if she will ever truly have a full heart.

The old, lifeless, lonely house is filled with light and sound. A passerby would see Bella and Edward lit in the warm glow of the kitchen as music wafts through the windows.

But there are no passersby, only Edward and Bella playing scrabble at the kitchen table.

"That is *not* a word."

"What do you mean? It's totally a word. It means really crappy." He leans back in his chair arrogantly.

She shoves the dictionary at him. "Show me where it says 'craptastic' in the dictionary."

He stares her down, and her heart flutters at his haunting blue. His lips perk up in his smart little smirk. After a brief staring contest, he relinquishes to her challenge and withdraws his letters.

He replaces them. *T.R.A.P*

"Trap."

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It occurs to Bella that this is foreboding, but she ignores the thought and focuses again on Edward's fingers as they arrange the letters. She thinks of what those fingers did to her and her face flushes.

She sees him noticing, and the smirk gets larger.

Bella clears her throat. "Um, do you want another beer?"

"Yes. Are you going to continue to make me drink alone?" he asks, raising an eyebrow at her.

"I'm afraid so," she says, pushing her chair from the table.

Edward gets up and changes the music. Bella hands him his beer. He lets his fingers rest on hers where they are wrapped around the cold bottle.

"It's alright if you love me

It's alright if you don't

I'm not afraid of you running away, honey

I get the feeling you won't

There is no sense in pretending

Your eyes give you away

Something inside you is feeling like I do

We've said all there is to say"

Bella sits back down and Edward stands. He sips the icy ale and watches her. She returns to the game, using the word he has just put down and making her own.

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T.A.S.T.E

"Taste, " she says.

Yes. Yes I want to taste you. He thinks, and sits back down across from her. The table acts as a barrier, keeping him from doing the things that he wants to do but shouldn't. She's playing with her hair and she has no idea how badly Edward wants to touch her. She innocently fingers her letter board, her sweet little eyebrows crinkled together in concentration.

Edward loves that she tries so hard to keep him occupied, to try to keep his mind on things other than quenching his ever present thirst. But sometimes she hurts more than she helps. When she wears a certain color, or touches him, or laughs...or breathes.

He is always tempted, but he is fighting, and she is there.

Tonight, the temptation is winning. "I should probably leave," he says.

She looks disappointed, but nods in agreement.

He asks the same question he always asks, and he knows just what she'll say. "When can I see you again?"

"Tomorrow. Come tomorrow," she answers.

He walks toward her and places his half empty beer on the table before her. She looks up at him, but doesn't move. Her luscious mouth opens and closes with things she wants to say.

Edward places his hand on her porcelain cheek and runs his thumb along her soft skin. Her eyes close indulgently.

He bends down to kiss her forehead, then he opens the door and is gone.

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The walk home feels like a million miles and he can still faintly hear the music playing when he reaches his front door.

Bella lies restlessly in bed. It's too early for sleep, but she can't think of anything else to do. She feels hot, like she has a fever, but that's not what it is. She *wants* Edward to break down. She wants him to crack, to give in. She rolls over in her bed, her sheets tangle around her fitful body.

She hates how selfish she is.

Edward lies in bed. He stares into his closet at the clothes he usually wears when he is hunting.

The bargaining begins.

What if I just did it one more time? I could drive far enough away that I wouldn't know anyone. No one would recognize me. I could go quietly, headlights off so Bella wouldn't see me leave...

He battles against the devil on his shoulder. He can think of nothing but his need. He stares out the window at her house. He longs to feel release . But can he be with her that way? Can he show her his true face? Will she balk at his evil and run?

He picks up his cell phone and types out a message to Bella. Then deletes it. He rolls over, he sits up. He lies down.

He opens his drawer and grabs a handful of sunflower seeds. The painstaking process of eating them has distracted him before--replacing one addiction with another--but right now it's like swatting at a raging bull with a feather.

Black clothes. Bella's offer. Bella's body. Consuming her, bending her, filling her. The blackness before he comes, and then the unspeakable bliss.

His skin is crawling and he can't take it. He showers and dresses. He looks in the mirror, and everything is just right.

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He grabs his keys, gets in the Jeep, and gives one last look at her old white house. He starts the car. There is no turning back from this.

He takes out his cell and texts Bella. "It's Edward...Meet me at First Beach...I need it."

Bella is reading "The Giving Tree" by Shel Silverstein.

They are listening to "Breakdown" Tom Petty.

Thanks so much for reading and reviewing!

xxx

Chapter 15: The Rapture of Living

A/N:

Thanks to rpattzlawyer for getting this done early, and thanks to Bleriana for her awesome feedback.

RaW has been nominated for "Best Must Read" on the Twilight Face Book's "Avant Garde Awards"- [twilightfb-awards\[dot\]blogspot\[dot\]com](http://twilightfb-awards[dot]blogspot[dot]com), and as "Most Seductive Tease" in The Rare Gem awards- [thesparkleterawards\[dot\]blogspot\[dot\]com](http://thesparkleterawards[dot]blogspot[dot]com).

Thanks to whoever nominated this story, and I appreciate anyone who takes the time to vote!

I recommend you read this chapter at home, alone, with a nice glass of wine

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From the previous chapter:

He grabs his keys and gets in the Jeep. He gives one last look at her old white house and starts the car. There is no turning back from this. He takes out his cell and texts Bella. "It's Edward...Meet me at First Beach...I need it."

"Once I knew only darkness and stillness...my life was without past or future...but a little word from the fingers of another fell into my hand that clutched at emptiness, and my heart leaped into the rapture of living."

~Helen Keller

Sleep is rarely a stranger, but tonight it is eluding her. She throws the covers off of her restless body and opens a window. The cool night breeze blows the scent of cut grass and earth into the house.

It cools the perspiration that has risen on her skin--her fever for Edward.

She looks up at the sky. Deep gray clouds move across the moon and cover the blinking stars. Rain will soon fall and she can smell it, she can feel it in her bones.

She startles at the sound of her phone vibrating. The lights are off, and she stubs her toe on the bed as she follows the sound of the vibration. She hobbles and limps to her nightstand and flips the phone open.

She is completely stunned. She is terrified and overjoyed at what she reads.

" It's Edward...Meet me at First Beach...I need it."

He turns the wheel, swerving along with the snaking curves of the road. Through the windshield, he can see the moonlight on the vast expanse of water as he approaches the beach, but it grows scarce as the Jeep speeds along. Clouds are forcing the light away--blackness and rain will be here soon.

His phone sits silently on the seat next to him, and his eyes impatiently dart toward it. He grips the wheel tighter and drives faster.

Bella's hand is incessantly running through her hair, over and over again. She nervously paces about her bedroom--and then her fingers are on her phone: "*I'm coming. I'll see you soon.*"

Her closet is flung open and she has absolutely no idea how to do this.

She crawls across her bed and rips open her top drawer. *Thigh highs. Yes.* She rolls the stockings down and pulls them over her feet, remembering the way Edward's hands rubbed over her legs when he carried her down the path to his

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house. Her fingers touch the silver cross she wears around her neck, and she slowly removes it. Its charms won't be needed tonight. She pulls her nightgown off over head and stands in front of the mirror topless, with nothing but black thigh-highs and panties on.

She musses up her hair. The woman standing before her looks like a stranger--and she likes it.

She crawls back over the bed to her closet, flips through the hangers and finds a dress that she has never worn, tags still on, purchased on an impulse. It's tight, it's short, it's blood red--it's perfect. She puts on the highest pair of heels she has and She crawls across the bed again. She runs to the bathroom, and sprays on perfume. Her shaking hands swipe on a few coats of mascara.

Her reflection is mocking her.

" *These women I'm with...they're not like you...*" She hears his voice in her head, but the woman she sees in the mirror says something else. The small spark inside of her has grown into a searing flame of unapologetic lust, and tonight she will let those flames consume her.

Bella slips off her underwear and tosses them on the floor.

He leans against the Jeep. His car is the only one parked on the bluffs overlooking the raging black water below. The waves roar and retreat as they crash against the pebbles that cover the moonlit northwestern beach.

His phone finally buzzes in his pocket and he experiences a moment of terror before he opens it. *What if she says no?*

He reads her response, snaps his phone shut, and gazes up at the sky with gratitude. His already overpowering desire and rigid hardness increase exponentially. He feels a twinge of guilt when he thinks of sweet Bella, but his demon forces that reluctance away.

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He lets out a breath he didn't know he was holding and begins to allow himself to truly imagine all of the obscene things he is finally going to do to her body, the ways he will show her what his need really is. He thinks of all of the ways he wants to fuck her.

She drops her keys in the dirt. The wind has picked up and it tosses her hair around her face. Her hand continues to shake as she puts the key in the ignition and begins the journey to First Beach.

She wonders why he didn't just come to her bed, or she to his, but then it dawns on her that that would be too personal...too intimate. Intimacy is not what Edward hungers for.

This realization makes her stomach flip and burn. Her skin tingles with nerves and anticipation. The world blurs by her, and she fears she won't be able to do it the way that he needs her to--that she won't be good enough.

The thoughts of inadequacy are leftover from her relationship with Jacob and she shakes them off. She pushes her foot to the accelerator, and leaves all of the old fears behind her.

He hears her thundering truck approach and, although he hasn't had to wait long, it has been long enough. Her tires crunch against the rocky terrain and Edward has to fight the urge to run to her when she pulls up next to him.

He fears that he won't be able to show her the monster, to treat her the way he treats all the others, but that instantly changes when she opens the door. His instincts take over and his need to feed his addiction overrides his need to keep her pure.

Edward is completely floored by what he sees. Bella--her seemingly limitless legs covered in sheer black stockings. A red dress, untamed hair caught in the cool wind, black shoes adding to the length of her legs, the thin straps crisscrossing and holding them to her delicate ankles.

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Bella shuts the door and stands motionless, looking at him--the desperate villain that she craves. This time the black is meant for her and her alone. No trace of Edward in sight, only Stormy Eyes in all of his glory. His tangled hair and rough jaw will soon be within her grasp. She can almost taste the sin that is about to take place, and she is not sorry.

Edward watches her saunter toward him; his lust is at its zenith.

"Hi," she says anxiously.

His eyes move slowly over her, already doing dirty things to her though he has yet to touch her. She feels them on her legs, her breasts, her face, and her eyes. She clenches her thighs together; her fever for him owns her entire body.

He doesn't answer her greeting, but opens the door to the backseat of his Jeep. "Get in the car," he orders her.

Bella swallows the lump in her throat and does as he says. He follows behind her and shuts the door.

The interior light goes out and they are submerged in almost total darkness. Bella is aware that she should feel conflicted, she should feel remorse or fear...but she does not. She feels alive.

The wind has picked up even more and it whistles around the parked car. The air is charged with electricity from the approaching storm.

The only sound is their breath.

"Get on your knees. Turn around," he says.

She does it and faces the window, her back to him. She feels his hands push her hair off her shoulders and he slowly slides them over the fabric of her dress. She savors the sensation of having him touch her this way, her dark fantasies of him are slowly coming true. He slips his hands around to the front of her body and they greedily ghost over her slippery, stocking covered thighs. His hands

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continue to run up her body and under her dress...they freeze when he feels that she isn't wearing anything underneath. He curses when he finds her uncovered flesh and runs his fingers over her wet lips, teasing her. She moans and presses herself against his hand.

He slides her dress up over her hips, her bare ass on display for him. His lips and tongue taste her lower back, then her hip. He grips her flesh tightly; pulling her toward him so she can feel his hard cock pressed against her round bottom. Then his hands are cupping her breasts and his hot breath on her shoulder.

"Bella, what do you want me to do to you?" he asks--and she knows the answer that he needs to hear. The answer she is now ready to give to him. Her hesitation to engage in the profane has completely faded away.

Words she thought she would never say flow so easily from her lips tonight. She looks at him over her shoulder. "Edward, I want you to fuck me."

He gently tugs at her hair and turns her body around to face him. He unzips her dress and she kneels before him in nothing but stockings and heels. He fondles her bare skin and then tangles his hands in her soft hair once more.

"Are you sure?" he teasingly asks. "Say it again."

He rubs his soft lips against hers, but continues to hold her hair tightly so she can't fully kiss him.

She looks in his eyes, but is silent. "Say it again, Bella. What do you want me to do?" He licks her parted lips with the tip of his tongue, and then pulls her face away from him again.

"I want you...to *fuck* me," she says with unfaltering emphasis and purpose.

Edward did not anticipate the emotion he is currently feeling. The relief of showing his true face to someone who really sees him. The others were victims--trophies. Their total purpose was to provide him with satisfaction. He has never been with a woman who knew about his secret. The wall has come

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down.

He hungrily wraps his lips around hers; he tastes her and her soft, sweet mouth opens for him. He fills it with a raging and passionate kiss.

And then the rain begins to fall.

She touches him everywhere as he kisses her. His arms, his hair, his neck. She presses her body to his, desperate to get as close to him as she possibly can.

Then she dares to touch where he wants it most.

Her palm runs along his hard cock, from head to base where it is confined in his dark jeans. He breaks the kiss. "Shit," he says as she rubs him, and she can see his eyes close in the dark. He takes deep, desperate breaths.

His reaction makes her brave and she opens his belt. His hands rest on either side of her neck and he looks down at her fingers; he is watching her unleash him.

She lowers the zipper and slips inside his briefs. Finally, she touches his thick hardness--it is full and throbbing and waiting for only her.

"Edward...I want you to fuck me," she says again.

He turns her around again, her back is to him; her hands press against the cold window and she sees tiny rivers of rain run down the glass. The soft sound of falling water whispers against the roof of the car. Bella presses her forehead against the window and braces for what he is about to give her.

His mind is focused only on filling his void, on feeding his hunger. The same as it always is when he is with a woman this way. He can hear her shallow breathing. He wants to make it faster; her wants to make her breathless. He wants to hear her scream.

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He rubs the head of his cock against her entrance, luxuriating in the way her body responds to him. She stiffens and he feels her dripping on him as he rubs himself up and down her slit. He thinks of Bella's secret. "You liked listening to me fuck those women, didn't you, Bella? It got you hot...it made you wet. You wished it was you, didn't you?" He teases her with his words and his body. "Did you dream about this? Did you touch yourself and think about me? My cock inside those girls...inside of you..."

"Edward, please..." she says.

"Please? Please what, Bella?" He places just the tip of his hard-on inside her tightness.

"Yes. Yes, I liked it...I wanted it to be me. Please, Edward...please..."

And the fact that she is almost as desperate as he is makes him clench his jaw and grind his teeth; he wants to be inside of her so badly. He feels himself begin to sweat. He grips her shoulders and enters her slowly, painfully slow. His ears ring with the bliss only an addict can know--the unparalleled relief of finally getting what is so desperately needed.

The bones of his hips meet her round, fleshy ass, and Bella's whole body shifts forward. He is filling her, and she is taking it. He pulses against her and his hands hold her waist. He pulls out completely and then violently thrusts himself back in, pulling her body into his. The frenzy has begun. He can hear her breath quicken, every moment he gets closer to making her scream

"Ah..." she cries, and he sees her fingers clench into fists.

He quickens his pace, her body at his mercy. He plunges himself in and out of her, deeper and harder. Every time he pushes inside, he pulls her hips toward him and she whimpers. He rapidly thrusts-- the blackness falls over him. He is mercilessly fucking her.

The glass is cold against her palms, but the rest of her body is on fire. She has been dead inside for so long, but right now she feels insanely alive. The feel of

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him just at her entrance is making her quiver; she can hear her blood pound in her ears. When he finally enters her, the initial sweet sting and burn dissolve into extreme pleasure.

He fills her so severely that she struggles to balance herself. The way his hands command her makes her feel like clay being molded. Bella knows that his hands have walked this path before on all kinds of women. He pounds against her and she knows that he is losing himself, that this is the same as it has been with all of the others. She wants to make him hers somehow; she wants to see his eyes.

She boldly breaks his rhythm. She turns and lies down on her back and Edward looks puzzled, almost afraid.

She gets distracted by his exposed member. She admires it, it is as big as it felt inside of her. She fearlessly focuses her eyes on his and then licks his protruding cock, tasting him and herself.

"Fuck," he says, and she takes his head in her mouth. She likes the way this makes her feel, the control of being the one to please him. But she needs to feel him inside her again. The precious gratification of being so close to him is enslaving her. The fire that Edward lit in her is raging out of control.

Bella seductively moves up his kneeling body and pushes her palms against his shoulders until Edward settles into the seat. She straddles his legs and pulls his black t-shirt off of his body.

Edward is disoriented. He never allows his victims to dictate how his ritual will unfold. But Bella is fucking turning him on. Her wetness hovers over where he wants to feel it and her bare breasts are so close to his lips. She runs her fingers along the nape of his neck, and he reaches up to push the waves of hair from her face.

Then she strokes him and guides him inside her. Her hips meet his, but she doesn't rise up. She lingers there and she moans with eyes closed, just relishing the feel of him inside her.

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"Bella, fuck, you feel so good." He cradles her face and the kiss they share is amplified by the intimacy of lingering with him buried inside her so deeply.

She lifts off of him ever so slightly and he rises to meet her. Their bodies create a slow, steady cadence. Edward can feel beads of sweat slowly rolling down Bella's bare back. His hands cup her breasts and he adores her pert nipples with his lips.

"Do I feel as good as all the others?" she whispers. He can hardly believe his ears; he never thought she would meet his darkness this way.

He doesn't hesitate. "Better, you feel so much fucking better."

She rides him harder now and he can feel it rising to the surface, the demon raging at the gate, ready to be completely unleashed. He touches her in every place that he can and he licks the skin between her breasts. He knows he can't hold on much longer, he will have to take her *his way*.

He grabs her gyrating waist and flips her body back down onto the seat. Her hair is splayed out over the leather, her pale skin in contrast with the dark interior of the car. He kneels before her, his chest rises and falls with quick breaths and the rain pounds down on the car. He brings her calves up to his shoulders and slides down toward her till her knees are bent. Then he braces himself against the window and viciously forces himself back inside her.

Now she cries out. He shows her no tenderness; he has surrendered to the black. In the back of his mind, he wants to stop, but he can't. She deserves better than what he's doing to her now--she deserves slow and gentle adoration--but his thirst only allows for primal and carnal debauchery. She desperately grips on to his thrusting hips and Edward watches her beautiful breasts move in rhythm with his thrusts.

"Eu amo te sentir por dentro, bom pra caralho." He is fucking her the way that he needs to--rough and selfish and raw. He feels himself boiling, soon he will come, and he will get what he wants...what he needs. Sweat drips from his chin onto her flat, satin skin. The windows are covered in fog. He leans back and

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holds on to her thighs. He fucks her even faster now, incomprehensible profanities falling from his lips.

His eyes meet hers. He sees her purity fading and something inside him feels different. He gets lost in her gaze, and once again, pleasure is something he wants to give to the angel that he is corrupting. He presses the heel of his hand down on her abdomen just below her navel and shifts his hips back, forcing the head of his cock against the inside of her body in a way that will make her come harder than she ever has before.

Bella's whole body jolts and trembles. Her back arches and feverish euphoria spreads across her face. "Oh, God, Edward! Oh, yes! Oh, God. Ah!" Her body writhes in the cramped backseat. She screams and moans and shrieks and comes, and Edward's release is unfathomable. It feels like a revelation, a rapture. He is dizzy from the pleasure, and she is screaming, and it is so fucking unbelievable.

"Mother fuck..." His cock thunderously pulses inside her, and he watches her lovely face in the tumultuous throes of the devilish ecstasy he has made her feel. He is unspeakably satisfied. It has never been this good...and he has never felt so evil.

Translation: "I love the way you feel inside, so fucking good."

OMG.

Please review!

xxx

.

Chapter 16: Silence and Restraint

A/N: Thanks to PlayingWithFire, Bleriana, and Rpatzlawyer for their time and effort!

Thanks so much to Jaime Arkin for making an amazing teaser vid for this chapter!

It means a lot to me that readers take the time to review and to share this fic with others, thanks so much for your support! I loved all of the reviews for the last chapter especially, they made me smile, so thank you!

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"The deepest feeling always shows itself in silence; not in silence, but restraint." ~Marianne Moore

The agreement that Edward and Bella made should have been simple: when Edward felt that he needed to feed his addiction, it would be Bella who gave herself to him. What neither of them accounted for was the way this arrangement would affect them, the way it would change them, the way it would make them *feel*. They couldn't have known that being together that way would awaken Edward's long dormant heart and Bella's untapped lust. The arrangement should have been simple, but nothing ever is.

Edward climbs the ladder, his tool belt heavy at his waist, but not as heavy as the sinister burden he carries on his soul. He rolls up the sleeves of his flannel shirt and aggressively begins work on the roof of the house. He is vehemently glued to his task. Creating, not destroying. The sooner he gets this house completed and sold, the sooner he can move on. This is not his home, it will never be his home. He punishes his body as he works beneath the hot sun. He has imprisoned himself in his work.

He feels the familiar pang of shame and regret that floods through him after every seedy tryst he engages in, but this time it is unbearable. He has not seen her since that night. He won't allow himself to. The haunting truth that he has used a beautiful, innocent woman to satisfy his loathsome sickness is crushing him. This is not what he wanted to do. He took advantage of a lonely girl and made her an accessory to his crimes. His self hatred is epic. He is beyond reproach and beyond forgiveness.

He wipes the sweat from his brow and weakly vows to never, ever do it again.

Bella comes home from a brutally long and exhausting day of work, and opens her mailbox. A delicately packaged invitation is addressed to her. *"You are*

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cordially invited to the engagement celebration of Rosalie and Emmett, to be held at The Moonstone on Saturday May 24th at seven o'clock in the evening. Formal attire."

She looks toward Edward's house. It has been almost a week since she has seen him. His absence in her life is profound. She has been waiting for him to come to her, but he hasn't, and she is too afraid of what will happen if she crosses the invisible boundary he has drawn.

She thinks of that night, them lying together in the backseat of his Jeep, silent except for the sound of the falling rain...the things he did to her, and she to him. The pleasure he made her feel, the way he pushed her to the edge of everything she has ever held to be true. She let herself go, and for a few precious moments she was completely free from the bondage of her faith and her life.

Since that night, Bella has become almost completely single-minded, one could say obsessed, with thoughts of Edward's naked body. She once pushed those kinds of thoughts away, but not anymore.

She remembers the tenderness he showed her, only after the deed was done--zipping up her dress and slipping her shoes onto her feet. She thinks of him walking the short distance to her truck with his coat held over her head to shield her from the rain and keep her dry. She remembers the lost and distant look in his eye when he leaned in to plant a restrained kiss her on forehead...and then he said goodbye.

Since then there has been only empty silence.

She has heard him hammering every day; the banging almost speaks to her, forbidding her from coming near.

Bang. Bang. Bang.

Stay. A. Way.

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Every night, Bella makes more food than she needs to and plays records louder than she should, in the hope that he will come. Every night she lies awake listening for the sound of her phone vibrating or his Jeep leaving. She is waiting for him to breakdown again and go hunting, but he has not yet done it, and she has barely slept. She fantasizes about him, his eyes, his voice, his body. His face has taken up sole residence in her mind's eye. Heavy breaths and naked flesh and the taste of his mouth. She wants him, she needs him so much.

But she knows he is struggling, and she is selfish in her new found lust for him. She feared that after she enabled his sickness he would reject her, he would regret--and her fear has come true. She is in despair, sullen and bitter, but giving him space is something she will reluctantly do.

Once again Bella is doing what she does best--putting someone else's needs before her own.

Edward hears her truck rumble past yet again, and he looks up from his plentiful work for just a moment. Trying to ignore her has been horribly difficult, and trying to force his obscene fantasies out of his mind has been next to impossible. He has worked extremely hard to try to forget the things they did that night in the rain, but the memories stubbornly refuse to budge. To sleep with a woman and have her not be just a victim has made him question everything he thought he knew about himself, but his inevitable inability to treat her differently has made him see that he can never be better than what he is.

And Bella deserves more.

He has tried so hard to survive his nights without her, resisting the temptation to go to her or to someone else has been a daunting feat. An itch that he can't scratch. Just as much as he craves her body and what he can take from her, he also feels a pull to her in a way that is more than just physical...and it is terrifying.

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He would love to go to her now, to kiss her and hold her. He would love to pick up the phone and call her, to hear her voice. But he is paralyzed by his shame, and he knows every second that passes is taking her further away from him.

He hates this truth, but this is how it has to be.

"I think I need to sit down. Yep. Yes, I definitely need to sit down. How are you gonna drop a bomb like this on me at the damn mall, Bella? Let's go to the food court before I pass out." Alice jerks Bella's elbow essentially dragging her past the busy shops.

Bella has confessed her sins to Alice, but she does not feel absolved. More than guilt, Bella feels fear. Fear of never touching him again. Fear of not having the chance to sin again.

She parts from Alice, and gets two coffees. She returns to where Alice sits with her head down on the table, resting on her folded arms. She looks back up as Bella approaches.

Alice whispers, "Sex. You're serious? You had *sex* with this guy? In the *backseat* of a car? Wait 'till Rose hears this shit, she's seriously gonna die."

"Alice, I'm not telling you this so you can tell Rose and Jasper and Emmett and everyone else we know. I'm telling you this because I need some discreet advice. I'm not like an expert on seducing guys." Bella says quietly as she leans over the table.

"It doesn't sound like you had to work too hard." Alice smugly sips her latte.

"I know, but I haven't seen him or heard from him since. It has been over a week. He came over almost every day before we... *you know*. It just seems like maybe it was a one time thing for him? I don't know..." Bella struggles to explain the difficult dynamic between her and Edward without giving away his dark secret. "I just feel like maybe he wants to be just... I don't think sex is...he's just...different. He's not like other guys. He's ... *strange*."

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"Well, then it sounds to me like you two are perfect for each other. Guys are dicks, Bella. They always play these kinds of games." Alice smiles and sips. "What's his name anyway?"

"Edward. His name is Edward."

Emmett and Edward walk out of the bar into the night. "I know you don't have a mailbox or anything, so I'm just gonna hand this to you." Emmett lights a cigarette and digs in his backpack, then hands Edward an envelope. "It's an invite to our engagement party. Rose wants everyone to meet each other before the wedding, you know, the bridal party and the family. It would mean a lot to me if you were there. You can even bring a date if you want." Emmett pats his best man on the shoulder.

Edward thinks of how much he would like to ask Bella to accompany him. He wishes he was normal...that he could have a girlfriend. He imagines an alternate universe where he would be satisfied with just one woman, and could treat her the way she deserves to be treated.

But that will never be.

He puts the envelope in his back pocket. "Of course. I'll be there. "

"Are you going? You have to go. You should bring Edward," Alice says as she sips her Diet Coke and scans the papers she's grading.

Bella takes a bite of her sandwich and looks out the window of the faculty room. "Alice, I haven't seen him or heard from him, how am I going to ask him out on a date? Besides, I don't think he's really into *dating*. I think it might be over, actually." When these words leave Bella's lips she feels her heart crack and split in ways she did not expect. *It's over*.

"So...what? He just fucked you once and that's it? Just call him."

Bella nearly chokes on her lunch. "Will you watch your mouth, Alice? We are at work!"

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"Well, if you're not going to bring him to the engagement party, then you should at least invite him to the Carnival this weekend. That's innocent enough, right? No pressure."

Stormy Eyes...at a Catholic Charity Carnival. Bella almost laughs out loud at that visual.

She has been wracking her brain trying to think of an excuse to see him, or call him. Several uncharacteristically deceitful ideas have crossed her mind. She's thought of breaking one of the already almost broken things in her house, and asking for his help. She's even thought of accidentally locking herself out. A part of her wants him to heal from his sickness, but a larger part of her wants to tempt him into it again, to have his hands on her that way once more. She has been selfishly scheming of some way to have him in her grasp. Being at Edward's mercy has been all she can think of. Her attraction to him is consuming her, it's almost like an addiction.

"Yeah," she answers. "Maybe. We'll see."

The wind chime clinks and wavers in the wind, releasing its sweet song into the spring evening. Bella sits alone in jeans and a sweatshirt on her porch in the fading light of the day. She has gone back to wandering through the halls of her decrepit home like a ghost. Alone, abandoned, cast-off, unwanted and of no use. She holds her cell phone in her hand. She's in a trance, staring at the path between their houses. To have someone come into her life, and then vanish, after being alone for so long...

She wants to go to him so badly, the longing for him is like honey in her veins, thick and heavy.

She imagines him emerging from the woods, a tempest in his eyes, his long lanky body swaggering slowly toward her. She wants him to come to her, and tell her that he needs it again. She wants him to carry her up the stairs, and twist and bend her body into submission. She wants to be in his arms, to feel his lips and his breath. To hear her name fall from his lips. To give him what he craves. She wants to lay naked in his arms, held and secure, shielded and

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serene.

But the path is empty.

All she hears is the wind chimes' mournful song...and all she feels is lonely.

Bella wakes and dresses and drives to work, an emotionless robot once again. She has surrendered to the fact that Edward does not want her the way that she wants him. She has accepted that it is over. But she puts on the fake smile and pretends that everything is fine.

She automatically stops at the gas station for her precious coffee. As she walks toward the shop she stops and slams her palm against her forehead. *Wallet.*

She turns to head back to her truck, and freezes when she sees the black Jeep--and Edward resting against it. He is pumping gas. He sees her and a half smile spreads across his face. Bella can't move. Thankfully, Edward subtly waves and she has the sense to wave back. He replaces the pump and stands there, his arms folded across his chest. He is covered in earth and grit from his work.

He beckons to her and she forgets to breathe. Her heart drops to her feet and she can't breathe.

He is fighting to pretend he did not see her, but his body reacts to her presence immediately. Just watching her walk makes him hard. In his mind he knows that he is the worst thing that could ever happen to her. He knows that he needs to finish the house and get as far away as he can, before he destroys her.

But it is his newly awakened heart, not his mind that cries out when he sees her beautiful face. It screams when he sees her small smile and it pounds when she follows his unspoken request to come to him.

She's dressed elegantly in a knee length black skirt and a cream colored blouse. Her hair is pinned up and he wants so desperately to release it. His thoughts flash back to her naked, and sweating, and screaming in his arms.

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As she gets closer, the hurt that hides in her warm brown eyes becomes visible, and it's like a stake through his chest. He knows that he is the one who made her feel it. He knows she is hurt because he feels the agony too. Trying to keep himself away from her has been unbelievably difficult, not just because he craves her body so intensely, but because he misses her.

He realizes that they will feel pain if they try to resist and stay apart, and they will feel pain if they give into temptation. A double edged sword. There can't be a happy ending for them. Is it better to stay silent and restrain, or willingly walk through the door?

"Hey," she says nervously, and he wants nothing more than to feel her skin against his.

Bella is aware that this is a pivotal moment. She feels there is a reason she is seeing him here, in this place--the place she saw him for the very first time.

This is God telling her to reach out, to grab on to this man. Bella takes this as a sign that she is on the right path, and though she knows Edward must disagree, she feels compelled to pursue it, whether he likes it or not. The anguish that his absence has caused her has been too much to bear and she refuses to sit idly by while things she wants are taken from her, again. Instead of giving, she wants to take.

"Where have you been? Why haven't you called me?" she asks him directly.

He looks at her long and hard before he answers. Bella can't read his emotion, but his eyes don't lie. There is something there. She glances over his body and her newly dark mind imagines sinful things.

"I was working," he answers.

He steps toward her and runs his hands through his hair with frustration. He stops just short of where she stands, just far enough away so that he can't touch her, or she him. They both feel and resist the magnetic pull.

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Edward wants to leave this poor girl alone, but he just can't help himself. He wants her, he needs her, and he doesn't have the strength to stay away.

"When can I see you again?" he asks.

Rosalie holds the hand of the giant child she will soon be married to. He is buzzing as they walk through the bright, noisy carnival, constantly seeking ways to ingest sugar and win obnoxiously large stuffed animals. Her impending wedding is causing her much more joy and excitement than stress, and that mainly has to do with her doting and considerate fiancé, and for that she is grateful.

She smiles at him as he stuffs a chunk of fried dough in his mouth and then leans in to kiss her with powdered sugar coated lips. He lifts her up off the ground with his muscular arms and she closes her eyes, completely content with the life she has chosen.

However, that feeling flees when she opens her eyes. Through the crowd she sees Edward. His presence makes her immediately uncomfortable. He walks with a woman, and Rosalie feels pity for whoever it is. She wonders why any woman would choose to keep company with someone so obviously rotten and despicable. She feels bad for the woman, but she feels worse when she sees who it is.

Her innocent smile and shiny brown hair are unmistakable. The woman with Edward is Bella.

Her jaw drops in shock. "Babe, I think we need to go," she tells Emmett, pulling on his immovable body.

"What? Why? I'm just getting started here," he whines.

"I had too many turns on the Tilt-a-Whirl I think, I feel sick Em, can we please just go home?"

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Emmett rolls his eyes and wraps his arm around his girl, half carrying her to the car. Rosalie needs to think of a tactful way to warn Bella about Edward. She doesn't want to run into them, and have an awkward moment. Bella would immediately be able to see her disgust, she has never been able to hide her feelings from her friend.

Rosalie looks back at them over her shoulder. She sees Edward staring at Bella. Her face is flushed and she smiles brightly, then looks down bashfully as Edward touches her cheek.

Please review!

Chapter 17: Passion Rules Us All

A/N: Thanks to Team Wicked: Rpatzlawyer, Bleriana, and PlayingWithFire. I love you guys.

I really appreciate everyone who reads, reviews, and pimps this fic. It means a lot! Thank you.

Happy Thanksgiving.

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Rosalie looks back at them over her shoulder. She sees Edward staring at Bella. Her face is flushed and she smiles brightly, then looks down bashfully as Edward touches her cheek.

"Passion, it lies in all of us, sleeping...waiting...and though unwanted...unbidden...it will stir...open its jaws and howl. It speaks to us...guides us...passion rules us all, and we obey. What other choice do we have? Passion is the source of our finest moments. The joy of love...the clarity of hatred...and the ecstasy of grief. It hurts sometimes more than we can bear. If we could live without passion maybe we'd know some kind of peace...but we would be hollow. Empty rooms shuttered and dark. Without passion we'd be truly dead."

~Joss Whedon

The parking lot of St. Robert's has been converted into every child, and child at heart's, dream come true. Lights blink and stutter. Screams and laughter from thrill seekers on fast rides approach and fade away, and the smell of things that can only be bad for you fill the air.

Edward walks slowly beside Bella, dressed handsomely in a crisp button down shirt and slim fitting jeans. The tantalizing odors that surround them seem like a minuscule temptation compared to the captivating appeal of Bella, and all of the things his monster wants to do to her. He is in constant conflict, he wants to resist and he wants to surrender again.

Bella feels the night breeze blow against her skin through her thin dress, and along with it, the scent of Edward. He walks closely, and she feels the heat coming off of his body. It mingles with her own and the resulting chemistry binds them together. In this crowded place, it is as if they are the only two people who live.

"I missed you, you know." The words come out of Bella's mouth before she can stop them. They tumble out and there's no taking them back.

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Edward stops walking and turns to her. The passionate look on his face lets Bella know that he feels the same. He doesn't have to say it, but he does. He brushes his fingers along her cheek and Bella's face turns crimson.

"I missed you, too," he admits. "I'm sorry that I didn't call." His brow furrows and he swallows hard. Bella coyly looks down, unable to sustain the intensity of his eye contact.

"I understand why you didn't, but please don't do that again." More uncontrollable words flow from her traitorous lips.

Edward is silent, and Bella knows it's because he can't promise her anything. He can't promise that he won't break her heart.

"This isn't going to be easy, Bella." It's not an answer, or a promise, or a pledge, but at least he speaks.

"Well, I'm not expecting it to be...you're not living if you don't have scars," Bella muses.

Edward is taken aback at the statement, not just because it's Bella who said it, but because it is true. Waves of his new and deep feelings for her rise, and crest, and retreat. He doesn't want to be the one who scars her.

He slips his fingers between hers.

They continue to stroll hand in hand through the carnival. Bella stops short before the cotton candy vendor, and Edward doesn't even ask. He just buys her the pink sugar spun on a stick, and she smiles like a grateful child as he hands it to her. She immediately breaks off a piece of the sticky sweetness. A wave of contentment washes over her.

But the man beside her is still a relative mystery and, though just being next to him is so pleasurable, her curiosity about what is going on inside his head gets the better of her. She wants to know if he regrets what happened.

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"Do you ever wish that you hadn't come back to Forks?" She bluntly asks him the question that has been brewing in her mind all week.

He hesitates, and the thoughts that *he* has had all week flow from *his* lips, "If I wish for anything, Bella, it's to be worthy of someone like you."

Her heart somersaults and melts, and his hand squeezes hers.

"Do you ever wish that you still lived in Phoenix...with Jacob?" he asks her.

She is honest. "I have had that wish in my heart for a very long time, but I'm beginning to see that the love we shared wasn't right. It was...I don't really know how to explain it. Jacob was my whole life for so long. I just...I see things differently now."

Edward is glad to hear that she is moving past the hurt, but he can also hear in Bella's voice that she still feels love for her absent husband...and he doesn't like it.

Tanya walks through the maze of booths and rides. She's meeting a friend who is now very late, and she's becoming acutely annoyed. She doesn't like to be kept waiting. She scans the crowd looking for her friend, but someone else catches her eye.

He's with a woman, a plain girl who is obviously not good enough for the God she sees before her, but the man seems to be inexplicably enraptured by her. His muscular arms are confined in his shirt and Tanya wonders what could be confined in his pants. His face carries a light cover of stubble and Tanya feels a compulsion to touch him. Her attraction to him is powerful and immediate, like a thunderbolt. She wanders closer to the couple, seductively wiggling her hips, hoping to get the man's attention.

Edward follows Bella as she idly wanders to an out of the way bench with her puff of cotton candy. The stars of the night sky twinkle above where they sit. He's not close enough to her for his liking, so he slides over until their knees and elbows touch. Her alluring face looks at him with kindness, but he thinks

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he sees a hungry spark in her eyes.

He knows that look.

A small wisp of the pink sugar lingers on the corner of her mouth, and he brushes it away with his thumb, then licks the sweetness. He watches Bella as he does it, and yes, he *definitely* knows that look.

But then her eyes are distracted by something else, and Edward is immediately jealous of whomever or whatever it is--until he sees that it's a woman.

A leggy, long-haired blond is pretending not to stare at them, she's alone and Edward thankfully doesn't recognize her--she's not one of his plentiful previous victims.

Bella breaks off another hunk of cotton candy. Her eyes leave the woman and return to Edward.

"Do you want some?" Bella offers.

Edward answers with an open mouth, and Bella erotically feeds him.

"She's watching us, you know. That woman over there," Bella leans in and whispers to him.

He feels her breath on his neck and he has a powerful impulse to kiss her.

"Really? I hadn't noticed," he whispers back.

She looks in his eyes; she's so close to his mouth. "Well, *she's* noticing *you*. Maybe you should go talk to her," Bella teasingly suggests.

Edward laughs, but he sees that Bella is serious. He is flustered, baffled. Why is Bella suggesting that he go speak to a strange woman and leave her here alone?

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Then it dawns on him--Naughty Bella likes to watch. The Bella that followed him to the bar, that listened at his trailer door...

He can't believe she is suggesting for him to do this. Not to mention the fact that they are at a charity event, in the parking lot of the church adjacent to the school in which she works.

This scenario doesn't seem to daunt Bella's inner voyeur and Edward is slowly beginning to see that Bella is not as fragile and innocent as he thought she was--and this is turning him on.

But she can't possibly mean for him to actually *pursue* that woman. She just wants to watch him hunt.

Edward is aroused by her forward request and he is more than willing to accommodate her fantasy. "Bella, are you saying you'd like to watch me flirt with that woman?"

She bites her lip and crosses her legs. She doesn't speak, but nods.

"Don't go anywhere," he commands.

The strings of sugar dissolve into sweet syrup in her mouth and she watches Edward walk away from her. She visually devours his body and fantasizes about all of the things her emerging inner vixen wants to do with him. It is almost like time is slowing down to a crawl.

Bella glances toward the stone cross that tops the steeple of the church in the distance, and then back down at the anonymous woman Edward is approaching. She is just the type that Edward would pursue, and that threat and possibility heightens the thrill of this even further for her.

The dark flame that burns inside of Bella flickers. She is feeding it with her sinful request to watch Edward toy with this stunning woman. Bella is getting off on the fact that she gets to have him, and that woman doesn't. Bella watches her face. She clearly wants Edward, and who wouldn't?

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Bella can't hear what they are saying, but she knows that Edward is flirting, and Bella's body responds to the visual. He says something and the woman finds it amusing. Bella watches as she puts her hand on Edward's shoulder. Edward looks directly at Bella, and returns the gesture by seductively touching woman's hip as he speaks to her. His eyes are on Bella's, only on Bella's, he never even looks at the girl. He touches the woman but looks only at Bella...and Bella is on fire.

And here comes Mr. Gorgeous. He left the plain girl suddenly and is walking toward her, and Tanya is not surprised. She looks good tonight, and she knows it. She's used to receiving attention from all kinds of men and tonight she has struck gold.

He says hello, and Tanya can't take her eyes off of his full lips. He speaks to her in a deep and throaty, seductive voice. "I was just noticing you standing over here all alone, but you can't possibly be here all by yourself. Someone as tempting as you must be waiting for a date."

He moves closer. Tanya knows how to play this game. She touches his shoulder and giggles at his compliment.

Then she feels his hands on her and her skin tingles. Tanya is already thinking of where he will take her. She envisions herself riding him, his hands groping her breasts. She envisions his head between her legs. She yearns to make her dirty thoughts of this stranger a reality.

But he is distracted, and then Tanya sees why. A scuffle has broken out over near the Plain Girl. Before Tanya can even bat an eyelash, Mr. Gorgeous is gone. He's gone...and Tanya is infuriated.

This blond is like all the others he used to seek, and now that he is once again in this scenario, Edward truly realizes that he no longer wants to live this life. His sick need and constant craving for sexual release are still there, but the desire for the woman to be a random stranger is gone. Although he does not want to let the dark parts of himself touch Bella, he doesn't want to be with another woman either.

Righteous and Wicked

He stares at Bella, he wants everything about her. Her body, her heart, and her mind. This forced interaction is proving to him that she is the only woman he needs.

He follows through on Bella's request, flirting and touching and saying empty things. He looks at Bella, her legs clench together, he watches her flushed cheeks, she licks her lips...she is enjoying this thoroughly.

Then, his view is obstructed by two very large, very drunk men. They begin to argue, and then punches are thrown.

Edward doesn't think, he just reacts. He runs faster than he ever has before. He gets to Bella, and grabs her, lifting her out of harm's way. Once she is secure, he immediately tackles one of the men. He will do whatever it takes to keep Bella safe.

Bella is wet. The eroticism of watching Edward with this woman has incited her increasingly crazed craving. She takes another bite of the cotton candy and begins to envision Edward touching that woman, what it would look like if they were together. She imagines watching him fuck the hell out of that girl.

The self-inflicted jealousy she begins to feel over that false image overrides her lust, and then she imagines it's her that he is touching, it's Bella that Edward is inside of. She will have to seduce him tonight, she can't help herself. He may need to restrain from crossing over into the dark depths, but she can not.

Suddenly, two men walk past where Bella sits, heading in opposite directions. They bump into each other roughly. They are very intoxicated--two northwestern working men, probably loggers, and neither of them seem to know how to say "excuse me."

"Watch where you're going, asshole!" one of them shouts.

Bella stands to move out of the way of the inevitable altercation that is about to take place, but she is not quick enough. One of the burly men throws the first punch. Elbows fly and fists meet flesh and she feels a sharp thud against her

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chest. Bella is caught in the fray.

She stumbles back and tries to move, but she is trapped between the bench and the men. A blur whizzes up next to her, and she is filled with relief when she sees that it is Edward. He quickly lifts her up and moves her out of danger.

He sets her down. "Don't move," he commands, and heads back toward the brawl. Bella watches as Edward wraps his forearm around one of the men's necks, pulling him away from the other. The man has blood all over his face and Edward is shouting, "It's over! Relax, man, it's over!"

Edward has just displayed his speed, his strength and his ability to not only protect her, but to end a silly, macho altercation righteously. Bella's already boiling lust overflows. Her mouth falls open.

She needs to be with him. Now.

He marches toward her, his shirt is torn and he is out of breath. "We need to leave before I kill that fucking guy. How badly are you hurt?" Edward rubs Bella's chest where she caught one of the men's elbows.

It is sore, and she will have a bruise, but her tiny body getting caught in the crossfire of those cavemen could have been much worse. Edward takes her hand and walks her carefully and tenderly to his car.

Watching him flirt with the blond, and then break up a fight has completely driven Bella beyond the threshold of lust. In his car, she sits quietly, but wishes he would touch her. Once they are parked in her driveway, she wants to ask him to come inside, but she doesn't, and he doesn't offer. She is afraid he will refuse her. The silence is heavy and uncomfortable.

This is the first night they have spent together since they had sex in the backseat of the Jeep, and even though the air is charged with mutual want, they both hesitate. Perhaps it is fear of rejection, or fear of losing control.

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Edward leans in and kisses Bella's forehead, he touches her bruise. "You should put some ice on that and get some rest."

Bella nods. "Okay."

Although she doesn't want to, she gets out of the car and does as Edward says.

Edward takes off his shirt and changes into a pair of gray sweat pants. He ties the string and they just barely hang on his lean body. He grabs a beer from the fridge, and his book from the shelf. He lies back on the bed and does his best to distract himself from thoughts of Bella and her cotton candy.

He sips the cold ale and reads, then begins to gradually drift off to sleep. His eyes flutter closed and then open. He battles against their heaviness but eventually gives in. His book falls against his naked chest with a thud.

He jerks awake when he hears a gentle tapping on the door of his trailer. Groggily he rises, and swings open the door. He squints out into the dark night.

"Who's there?" he asks the dark.

Bella appears, dressed in a tiny eyelet nightgown. She is beautiful, an angel. Edward wonders if he is dreaming.

She steps into the trailer and greedily touches Edward's naked chest, then she rises up on her toes to whisper in his ear, "Edward, I need it."

Please review!

Sorry to leave you hanging, but such is the nature of this fic...

Have a happy holiday if you celebrate it. Please be sure to follow the blog for teasers, and head to the forums if you're looking to bond with other RaW addicts!

Links can be found on my author profile.

Thanks for reading!

Chapter 18: Forbidden Desire

A/N: Thanks to Team Wicked: Rpatzlawyer, Bleriana, and PlayingWithFire. B-thanks for helping even though you're not feeling well!

I really appreciate everyone who takes the time to vote for RaW in the Avante Garde awards and the Rare Gem awards!

Thanks to Ellie-BR for helping me with my Portuguese and thanks to Jadalulu for making a hot RaW poster!

You may wish to be alone with this chapter...just sayin...

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**"We always long for forbidden things, and desire what is denied us."
~Francois Rabelais**

And his lips crash against hers. He wants her body, he wants to make her feel good, but he is afraid of losing control.

"Bella, wait..." He didn't expect this, and he knows he should refuse.

"Edward, I can't. I need you. Don't you need me too? Don't you want to touch me this way? I can't stop thinking about you...about this. Please, Edward, please..."

His effort to resist has crumbled.

"I have to tell you something, but I need you to keep it between us okay?"
Rosalie whispers to Alice through her phone.

"Uh, oh. That doesn't sound good," Alice responds.

"It's about Bella, I'm worried about her."

"Why?" Alice asks.

"I saw her with someone," Rosalie waits to hear shock in Alice's voice, but she does not.

Alice assumes that it's Neighbor Guy. "You mean Edward?"

And now it is Rosalie who is shocked. "You *know* him?"

"No, I mean, I've never met him. *He's* the guy she's been telling us about. I only know that they are neighbors...and that she slept with him."

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"What? *Edward* is Neighbor Guy? She had *sex* with him?" Rosalie can't believe it. She is horrified.

"Yes, but I really wasn't supposed to tell you that," Alice winces at her indiscretion.

"Alice... I *know* him."

Bella unties his gray pants and they drop to his ankles. He is completely naked before her. Her hands slide down to his thick cock. She touches him, and his tongue is in her mouth. He moans, and squeezes her tightly against him.

He grips the back of her thighs and lifts her up, then spins around, dropping her down on his bed. She lies back, expecting for him to bombard her, but he doesn't. He paces the room, like a savage, like an animal toying with its fragile prey. She sees his eyes--they are changing. She sees the storm that gathers there and she knows that Edward will soon be gone. It will be Stormy that takes her, and she can hardly contain the carnal anticipation she feels.

Edward is struggling with the blackness that threatens to overtake him. He doesn't want to let his demon win. He wants to take his time, to treat Bella with adoration, instead of fucking her violently, like he did last time. She is so tempting, so delectable, and if Bella had it her way, he would let his demon take control. Edward knows that she liked it that night, she asked for it, but he wants this to be different. He has to find a way to meet his need and be himself with her. He doesn't know if it can be done, but he is sure as hell going to try.

He opens his bed side drawer and takes out the only weapon he has to fight against Bella the seductress, and his evil sickness.

He descends on her, kisses her, and rubs himself against her soft flesh. He slides her nightgown over her shoulders and down her body, then hooks his thumbs under the narrow waistband of her panties and removes them as well.

He takes her thin wrists in his hand and raises them above her head, then he handcuffs her to the bedpost.

Bella is lost and submerged in his mouth and his touch, he constricts her roaming hands, her wrists, and then she hears a click. Her hands are bound, she can't move. Bella's previous sexual experiences, before Edward, have been very vanilla, but she craves exactly this. She wants to follow Edward into the dark.

They are both nude, she is bound, and he kneels before her. His lips slowly curl up into a smile...and Bella smiles back.

"What are you going to do?" she asks in a raspy voice. She is nervous and her mouth is suddenly very dry.

"I'm going to make you feel good, Bella."

He makes that promise a reality as he buries his gorgeous face between her thighs. Bella's back arches when she feels his sweet mouth, and she falls into the satisfying bliss of getting exactly what she wants.

His hot, wet tongue and talented lips are in her most sensitive places. He is working her hard, pushing her closer. She feels her heart convulse in her chest...

And then he stops.

"How do you know Edward?" Alice asks.

"He's Emmett's best man," Rosalie tucks her phone into the crook of her neck as she speaks to Alice and takes the laundry from the dryer.

"You're fucking kidding me! That's crazy. Bella doesn't know that you know him? And Edward doesn't know that you know Bella?" Alice can't believe these circumstances.

"Yes, and there's something else..."

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"What?"

"There may be some things Bella doesn't know about *him*," Rose whispers.

"Well, she said he was strange," Alice recalls.

"That's just it-every time I see him, he looks at me...I mean, he obviously knows I'm engaged to his *friend*...but he still just...it's creepy Alice. He looks at me like he *wants* me."

Alice is in disbelief. "Are you sure you're not imagining that?"

"I'm telling you, Alice, I'm definitely not. And that's not all, Emmett told me that Edward got into trouble with the last couple he worked for in Brazil...he had an affair with the wife of some wealthy man. The man tried to *kill* him. Edward barely got away. That's why he moved back here. Alice, I'm really worried for Bella, she has had enough shit in her life, I feel like we need to warn her about this guy. I can't just stand by and let her get hurt."

"You do realize that she is an adult, right?" Alice doubts that smitten Bella will be convinced that Edward is wrong for her.

"Yes. But she's also our friend. We can't sit back and let this happen."

Edward leaves her tied up and walks to the fridge. She is chained, naked and powerless. All she can do is watch him, and burn for him.

He takes out a beer and opens it, standing naked in the glow from the refrigerator.

He walks toward her, gorgeous and erect. He sips the beer and watches her wriggling.

"What are you doing? Why did you stop?" she asks.

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"I'm going to take myself to the edge, Bella, and when I feel myself losing control, I'm going to have to stop. I want to be myself when I'm with you. I don't know how else to explain it. This isn't easy for me."

He pounds half the beer, his eyes roam her exposed body from head to toe as he drinks, and then he gets back in the bed.

"What if we set her up with someone? Edward's not her boyfriend, right?" Rose asks.

"She's still married, you know, Rose, I don't think she considers what they are doing to be a *relationship*, or maybe it's him that feels that way," Alice says.

"Does Jasper have any hot friends?"

"Um..." Alice thinks. "Actually...he does. There's this guy Eric that he hangs out with sometimes. He's single, I know that much, and he's not bad looking."

"Well, I'll just invite him to the engagement party and seat him next to Bella. There's no harm in that. Right?"

"Are you comfortable?" he asks as he lies down beside her.

She has never been this comfortable in her life, except for the burning ache between her legs.

"Yes, I'm fine. Edward, I want you, please...please kiss me."

He enjoys seeing her this way, so desperate for his touch...for only his touch.

He wraps his beer-kissed, cold lips around her nipple, and licks her until she is firm. His hands slide down her body and, when he finds her wetness, he slips his fingers inside. She moans and he sucks harder at her breast and pumps faster and deeper with his fingers.

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Bella feels lightheaded with the desire that courses through her. "That feels so good, please don't stop..." He is pleasing her, but she wants to feel him penetrate, to fill her. "Kiss me..."

He releases her nipple from his lips and then kisses her neck. He swirls his fingers and teases her clit with his thumb. Bella whimpers and groans and bucks her hips. She wants his lips on hers...then Edward mercifully covers her mouth with his.

The kiss is deep and filled with primal passion. She bites at him and he chuckles at her desperation. The handcuffs clink against themselves. He rubs his hard-on against her thigh and she can feel his wet tip against her skin. She cannot fathom how difficult it is for him to refrain from entering her, and fucking her into oblivion. She feels like she won't be able to stand it if he removes his touch again.

And then, abruptly, he withdraws his hand and his lips.

"He told us he's not even planning to stay in Forks, you know." Rosalie folds the laundry as she continues to reveal how evil she believes Edward to be.

"What?" Alice is confused.

"He's gonna build that house and sell it, and move on. That's what he does. He builds, and sells, and fucks up lives," Rose is beginning to shout into the phone.

"He's going to break Bella's heart..." Alice is beginning to see.

"Yes. He is."

Edward lies across the edge of the bed, propped up on his elbow, out of Bella's reach, with an open book at his side. His erection protrudes from his body, tempting and taunting Bella.

She remains restrained and writhing. Some may consider what he is doing to be cruel, but Bella is enthralled by his control, and her heightened passion. She

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never dreamed she could want someone so much. She is lost in her lust.

"Do you like poetry?" he asks her.

"YesYesIDo" she answers with rapid and slurred speech. Edward finds his power over her devilishly arousing. She is ablaze and he is fueling her with his body, his words, and his breath.

"Oh, you do, do you? I was reading just before you came over, actually. Just before I took off your clothes...and chained you to my bed...and tasted you...and touched you...would you like me to read to you right now, Bella?

She is wet and tormented with her fever for him, and Bella knows that he knows it. He is so sexy, and good, and evil, and hot, and sweet. And she is covered in sweat, and handcuffed to his bed, and aching to feel him inside of her...and instead of fucking her and making her come, he wants to read her a poem. It's his way of keeping himself here, of staying in control.

"Yes, Edward. Please, read to me."

He smirks and she watches his tongue dart out. She watches his chest move as he breathes and reads...

*I am not yours, not lost in you,
Not lost, although I long to be
Lost as a candle lit at noon,
Lost as a snowflake in the sea.*

*You love me, and I find you still
A spirit beautiful and bright,
Yet I am I, who long to be
Lost as a light is lost in light.*

*Oh plunge me deep in love - put out
My senses, leave me deaf and blind,
Swept by the tempest of your love,*

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A taper in a rushing wind.

The words meet Bella's ears and float into her heart. Her longing and her lust for him are singing inside of her. She stares into the stormy blue, her eyes water with the depth of her need and the overwhelming emotion she feels for him.

He feels it too. He carelessly tosses the book and kneels at her feet. He has successfully taken his time and tried his best to remain himself. Now the true test will begin. Once he is inside her, will he fail?

"Eu vou fazer você se sentir tão bem, você está me salvando Bella, eu mal posso esperar para te sentir. Você é única para mim," he whispers and hovers just above her body, his arms at either side of her head. He touches her hair, her face. He slides his fingers down her arms from where they are joined together, all the way down to her ribs. It feels like his fingertips leave shimmering trails on her skin.

Bella begins to quiver; she can not stand another moment of this delicious misery. "Please, Edward, please..." she whispers, she begs.

He lowers his mouth, and she feels his hard-on press against her wet lips, right at the center of her, right where she aches. He pushes himself inside, and his lips assault hers at the same instant. He fills her everywhere, and she is greedy.

He moves inside her and she wants to touch him, but cannot. He moves faster in a perfect, even rhythm, and he never breaks the kiss. She wants to scream, but she is suffocated by his tongue and his body. She is drowning in him.

Edward is giving her just what she wants, and he feels every sensation. He relishes the touch, the taste, the smell and the pleasure. The deep, dark cavern he usually descends into isn't there tonight.

He kisses her faster and harder. She is a delicious fruit and he is dying to completely consume her. His mouth is ravenous and unrelenting.

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She luxuriates in him moving inside her so hard and so good, flesh pressed against flesh in the dim light. She moans against him, and then she hears a click. He has released her, and she wastes no time. She immediately touches him everywhere, his scruffy face, his rippled arms and back. His firm ass that moves against her. Then she grabs his hair and eagerly deepens his still unbroken kiss.

He releases her lips, and then he rises up slightly to watch his cock moving in and out of her, and Bella watches too.

The image is so erotic, and intimate, and dirty. She feels herself reaching a peak. It's like something inside of her needs to break free. Her skin vibrates, and she comes. She comes so hard she whimpers, and digs her nails deeply into Edward's shoulder.

He doesn't give her any respite; he leans back and pulls her body on top of him into his lap. He kisses and sucks at her neck, and whispers, "This is me you're with, I'm here, I'm with you..."

And she knows what he means. She wraps her arms around his neck.

Bella lifts her hips off of his gently and rapidly, showing him her own rhythm. He groans and grips her ass, he likes the way she fucks him.

Then, he pulls her hair till her back arches. His mouth does amazingly pleasurable things to her breasts, and then his fingers slide down to her backside. He just barely touches her there, and she has never felt a man's hand in that place. It is new, and smutty, and she loves it.

"Where have you been, Edward? I feel like I waited forever to find you..."

And his mouth is on hers, and then her head is on the pillow, and her legs are wrapped tightly around him, and she feels him so, so deep inside of her.

"Ahh, oh my god..." she cries out. Edward holds on to the headboard and pushes inside of her rigorously. He still feels clear, the darkness is at bay. It is

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riding up behind him like an avalanche, but it has not touched him yet.

He feels everything inside of him concentrating, balling and coiling up--all of his need and his newborn love for her.

"Fuck, Jesus, oh, fuck... eu amo ficar assim com você, eu vou gozar" he pants as he thrusts and pulses against her bent and submissive body. Grunts and profanity fall from his lips as he climaxes.

Bella pulls his face down to hers, and she kisses him as he comes hard inside of her. He erupts and cries out, and is blinded by the rapture.

Then, they collapse, and the room is quiet.

For Bella, this was a soothing relief to the powerful burning ache, the lust and need she felt, and still feels for him. Cool water on her raging fire. Pure, wanton, pleasure. And yet she still craves more.

For Edward, this was a long awaited blessing, a finally answered prayer.

Translation: "I'm going to make you feel so good, you are saving me Bella, I can't wait to feel you. You are the only one for me."

" I love being with you this way, I'm going to come. "

The poem Edward reads: I Am Not Yours - Sara Teasdale

Please review!

Chapter 19: Small Things

A/N: Thanks to Team Wicked: Rpatzlawyer, Bleriana, and PlayingWithFire.

I really appreciate everyone who voted in for RaW in the Rare Gem awards! It won Rare Gem: "Most Seductive Tease"! Also, RaW received a fabulous review by The Perv Pack Smut Shack. I was seriously blown away, and I want to give thanks and a shout out to those ladies! xxx

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For Edward, this was a long awaited blessing, a finally answered prayer.

"We cannot do great things on this Earth, only small things with great love"

~Mother Teresa

Crickets chirp in the sweet night air, singing to the moon and to each other. Bella and Edward's limbs are tangled together; her body is anchored to his

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where they lay. She wants to stay with him, but she's not sure that he wants her to. She knows that being intimate isn't something that comes easily to Edward, but after the way he was with her tonight, she is beginning to feel that maybe he wants this to be different.

"Do you want me to go?" she asks, and braces for his answer.

His arm snakes around her and he holds tightly to her body, leisurely kissing the space between her jaw and her ear. His breath tickles her and she giggles. He speaks to her softly, "Bella, I want you to stay, and I want to wake up right here, next to you. Please, don't leave."

She closes her eyes, feeling utterly relieved and content after hearing words she only wished he would say.

His breathing becomes even against her, and she knows he has fallen asleep. A wave of emotion runs through her. Is this love that she feels? She touches his hair and looks at his sleeping face.

She rubs her thumb along his sweet lips. She's afraid that he will disappear... and she misses him, before he's even gone.

She sighs. She is lost in soft warmth and sunshine. She opens her eyes and runs her hand along the bed where Edward should be.

But he is not there.

She sits up in a panic. "Edward?"

No answer.

She leaves the empty bed with his sheet held over her breasts and she peers out the window.

His car is gone.

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She shakes her head from side to side in disbelief. She scans Edward's small living space. He left no note. The devastation she felt the morning that Jacob left falls over her like a dark shadow. A pain she can't live through again.

Frantically, she dresses, and runs home.

As she crosses through the path and up the yard in nothing but her nightgown, every movement reminds her of last night, her muscles are preciously sore from their tryst. She hears her phone ringing and bolts into the kitchen to pick it up. "Edward?" she asks the receiver.

"No. Bella, it's Rosalie."

Edward drives quickly. He's looking for something he can't quite find, a place he can't quite remember. He slows once he emerges into the village, and then he sees what he was searching for.

"Oh, hey. What's up? How are you?" Bella asks, but she is distracted and still panicked.

"I'm fine. I saw you at the carnival last night," Rose answers.

"You did? I didn't see you?" Bella would rather not be having this inane conversation right now. She wants to know where Edward went.

"I saw that you were with someone and I didn't want to bother you," Rose explains.

"Yes, that's Edward, my...neighbor," Bella says, delicately.

"Bella I have to tell you something..." Rose musters the courage to begin.

ThumpThumpThump

"Rose, I have to go. Someone's at the door. I'll call you back." Bella callously hangs up and runs to the front door.

The bell rings as Edward enters the coffee shop, and he is reminded of Bella's wind chime. He smiles at the automatic thought and steps to the counter.

Immediately, he feels like a fool. He is face to face with Jessica, a victim he had a one time encounter with and found in this very place.

The memory of her lips on his cock flashes across his mind. Because of his sickness, his body finds this vision arousing, but he hates himself for reacting this way.

She sees him, and his former self is reflected in her eyes. It is sickening. He doesn't want to be that man anymore.

"Hey stranger," she greets him, trying her hardest to be sexy.

Edward is polite, but cold. He orders and she flirts. She touches him and he can't help but subtly flirt back. It's like he's floating above himself, watching the train wreck happen, but he is powerless to stop it. The road to his recovery stretches before him, and he realizes that without Bella near, he easily falls back into his disgusting loathsome habits. He wants to get away, to get back to her safe haven as soon as he can. Jessica bags up his order and he wishes he could fly, he can't get back to Bella fast enough.

He pulls onto his street, and a white car passes him that he does not recognize. He finds this odd. He and Bella are the only people who live on this street. The sunshine glares off of the glass and he can't see the driver. The white car disappears in his rear view mirror, and he wonders who it could be. As he pulls into his driveway, the thought floats away from him.

He gets out of the Jeep and walks toward the trailer with a brown paper bag in his hand. It is filled with bagels and pastry, and he smiles as he opens the front door, expecting to see sleeping Bella curled up in his bed.

Instead he finds it empty, and his heart sinks. Fear creeps up his spine, and he turns to run up the tree lined path as fast as he can.

"Bella, wait..." *Damn.*

Since she saw Bella with Edward there has been an annoying little splinter in Rosalie's mind, and now that she has the go-ahead from Alice, she simply *has* to warn Bella. She can't wait another minute.

She calls Alice and tells her to get ready, then hangs up and goes up to her bedroom where her fiancé is still sleeping.

"Em? I'm gonna shower and run over to Bella's for a bit, okay?"

"Yeah, all right babe. See ya.." he grumbles and goes back to sleep.

Bella opens the door.

It's Edward...and she says a silent prayer of gratitude.

She jumps up and hugs his neck. She immediately thought the worst of his unexplained absence, and is grateful that she was wrong. Her physical craving for him is intense, but he has a firm hold on her heart now as well, and the feeling that this could all melt away at any moment scares her to death.

What she doesn't know is that Edward feels exactly the same way.

"Where were you?" she asks.

"I just went to get us breakfast." He sighs into her hair, "You were gone...don't do that again."

She looks up at him with watery eyes, and he knows what she is feeling because he feels it too. The fear that this just cannot last. The looming unhappy ending that neither of them will acknowledge.

After being with her, and truly being *there* with her, feeling her against his body and in his heart....finding his bed empty this morning was crushing. He

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has kept his life free from bonds to others for a reason. The less people he has in his life the less chance there is for hurt. Hurt done to him...or done *by* him. He is well versed in keeping his selfish heart cold and unaffected by others. But Bella has irrevocably changed him.

He knows that they are walking a perilous line because of his sickness, and even though he is progressing toward some semblance of recovery, he knows one day she will not be this happy to see him.

"Come in," she says.

Edward makes coffee and slices bagels while Bella goes upstairs to change. He waits for her, but becomes impatient, and then he goes to find her. Her door is open a crack, and her back is to him. He watches her dress in the bright early morning light. He sees her smooth back and the crease at the bottom of her plump, round cheeks...

The floorboard creaks and she startles.

"Sorry," he says, looking like a bad little boy. He enters the room uninvited, and Bella watches him staring at her bed.

He walks slowly, looking at her things while she dresses. He fondles a dream catcher that hangs above her bed.

"What's this?" he asks.

"Um, that was a gift...from Jacob."

Edward lets it drop. Even though he shouldn't, he feels envious and almost angry. It's a small thing, but it seems enormous to Edward.

He looks down and walks to the door. "Breakfast is ready, let's go."

The table is set, and Bella smiles at the small feast Edward has prepared. She sits with him and they begin to eat. The air is laden with the weight of what has

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changed and passed between them.

"How did you know you were in love with Jacob?" he suddenly asks her, his eyes on his food.

She is thrown by the random question. "Um...I'm not sure when I knew. I guess it was something that fell over me...us...gradually. It wasn't like time stopped or anything...but once it was there it was...it was like it hurt when he wasn't beside me, and I guess that's how I knew."

Edward nods like he understands, and maybe he does.

"It hurt to be away from him, and it was like I was whole when he was there. So I guess that's what love is...when someone completes you that way. Like that old myth of men and women being two halves of one being...but then when that piece of you is gone forever, its like your life ends. I never want to feel that way again," she thinks out loud.

She sips her coffee and steals a glance at him. He picks at his food, but he does not look at her.

"Have you ever been in love?" she asks, and again she's afraid of his answer.

Having no frame of reference, it is hard for him to label what he feels for Bella. He thinks it must be...it *has* to be love that he feels. It deeply hurts him to be away from her, but he is unsure of how she will react if he tells her. He answers her truthfully, thinking of his life before her. "No. I haven't."

He sees her flinch and immediately regrets what he has said, but he cannot take it back. He's not ready to tell her what is truly in his heart...not yet.

"There's somewhere I'd like to take you today," he says, changing the subject.

"Where?" she asks, clearing his empty plate and hers.

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"It's a surprise." He stands and magnetically follows her to the sink, wrapping his arms seductively around her waist, and pressing himself against her as she washes the dishes. Although he was just with her last night, and his thirst should be at bay, it rises up inside of him, and he begins to dream of the next time he will be able to be with her that way.

With her back to him, he feels safer revealing the thoughts inside his mind. "Bella, I want you to know that last night...that was very...different for me."

"It was different for me too," she whispers.

He speaks of the flame of new love in his heart and the way she is saving him.

She speaks of being bound to his bed, and toyed with...but the newness and the change for both of them is equally profound.

"I'm going to tend to your yard. It needs to be mowed," he says and kisses her neck. For a moment, she thinks that this must be some sort of euphemism, until he lets her go and walks out the backdoor to the shed.

She watches him gingerly avoid the bees nest and pull out the mower. She is touched that he is doing this small thing for her, and she smiles to herself as she puts the dishes away.

Bella and Edward are playing house.

The sun is hot even in the early morning, and the vibrant green of late spring blankets every visible thing. It will be an unseasonably warm day.

Bella sits on her porch and watches Edward pushing the mower, it hums, and his arms flex. He looks like he's concentrating on something very, very important.

Bella bites her lip as she watches this fantasy come true.

Stormy Eyes, working and sweating in the sun--for her audience of one.

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She hugs her knees, and enjoys the view.

He works hard, and Bella passes the time by sweeping the front steps, avoiding the gaping crater that remains from when she fell through the wood slats.

She hears the mower cut off and Edward rounds the corner of the porch. Upon seeing him, she feels the spark inside her flicker and flame. He freezes where he stands and they are silent with eyes locked. The breeze picks up and she can hear a single crow cawing in the distance. The pull between them is magnified not only by their deep attraction, but by growing emotion. Edward's blue pierces her soul. He approaches, and she wants him, she needs him again.

"You're filthy," she says when she gets a look at him up close. He is covered in dirt and grass from the yard.

"Now, Bella, I don't think you need to call me names," he sweetly teases.

She laughs and he runs his dirty fingers down her arm, leaving a gritty black trail. "You're dirty, Bella. You need to take a shower."

Her mouth falls open, and then the world becomes inverted.

Edward throws her over his shoulder and marches upstairs to the bathroom.

Rosalie turns down the radio of her convertible as she and Alice pull into Bella's driveway.

"I don't know about this, Rose. What if she freaks?"

Alice is on the fence, but Rosalie is not. "I'd rather she was angry with us then left broken hearted. I can't watch her suffer again. Not when I know that we can try to stop it."

The front door of the house is open a jar and they let themselves in.

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The house is eerily quiet, but Alice can hear the faint rush of water from the shower.

"Bella?" she calls out but gets no answer.

She and Rose creep up the stairs. What they hear when they reach the top makes them stop dead in their tracks.

"Shit...yes...just like that...oh, God...yes....yes..."

It's Bella's voice, but Rose is shocked by the words that are coming out of her mouth. *Can that really be her?*

"You like that? What about this..." It's a man's voice. Edward's voice.

Alice covers her mouth to stifle a gasp. They can hear the sounds of wet skin rhythmically meeting and slapping together.

"Oh...yes...don't stop, Edward...shit...never stop...God..."

Alice squints her eyes, and grips Rose's arm to keep from squealing.

"You are so fucking good, Bella, holy fuck...I love being inside you...God, you feel so good..."

Rosalie is flushed and frozen. She can not believe what is happening. She clearly knows absolutely nothing about Bella. Everything she thought was true, is false.

Sweet, Catholic, lonely Bella is getting her brains fucked out in the shower, and she's begging for more.

She stares at Alice, and they share a moment of unspoken understanding. Then, they run from the house.

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Steam encircles their naked, wet, bodies and Edward is walking the fine line between falling into the black, and being in the moment with Bella. He struggles against his old habit and ritual, but avoiding the darkness seems to get easier every time he is with her like this.

He doesn't *want* to fade away.

He wants to watch her skin in the warm glistening water of the shower, he wants to taste her sweet lips, and hear her voice. He wants to feel her heart beat; he wants to feel her come.

While Edward strains to keep his head above water, Bella lets herself sink into the sensation.

When she feels him against her, inside of her, she wants nothing else. Though it may be a sin, she experiences unspeakable peace. She feels like herself for the first time in her life. The bond between her heart, her body, and his grows stronger.

He holds her to him, her back against his chest, his hands cupping and rubbing her breasts. His lips are against hers, his cock buried inside her. When he kisses her he feels his heart swell. She is his, and his alone.

The hot water streams down his back and Bella breaks the kiss, gasping for air. Edward looks down to watch his cock moving in and out of her, a sight that has quickly become absolutely vital to him.

"Shit...yes...just like that...oh, God...yes....yes..." she cries.

He stops playing with her breasts and uses two fingers to touch and tease her clit.

"You like that? What about this..."

Her knees almost buckle when he touches her there, but he holds her up, and pushes inside of her harder and faster...and Bella loves it. She doesn't come as

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easily as his other victims have, and that feeds his fire for her.

"Oh...yes...don't stop, Edward...shit...never stop...God..."

Her words and her desire for him...the pleasure she lets him give her...the pleasure she gives him....it's almost more than he can take. He closes his eyes and feels her sweet tight warmth...he feels himself falling down into the evil depths...the dark...

But then he opens his eyes, and slides his arm up to her face, turning her wet mouth to his. He kisses her with eyes open, watching her face contort with the pleasure he's giving her.

Bella is pulling him back out of the depths.

"You are so fucking good, Bella, holy fuck...I love being inside you...God, you feel so good..."

She screams, and grips the tile wall. He slides his hands all over her slick skin, holding her hips and fucking her faster as she leans forward. She is greedily taking what he gives to her. She pushes back against his thrusts, always craving more and more.

The heat from the shower is nothing compared to the heat he feels inside of him for this woman.

He rises and reaches a peak, then his climax takes him. This time when he closes his eyes, it is her face that he sees.

"Now what? I seriously feel like I need to wash my ears out. That was...damn..." Alice supports her head with her hand, leaning against the passenger window.

Rosalie tears down the winding street like she is being chased by a wild animal. "Maybe we should just leave this alone..." she wonders.

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"I have never known you to leave anything alone, Rose."

"I mean, I'm not gonna totally drop it, but, maybe there's a way to help her without telling her the truth?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, he's a dirt bag. I'm sure he will show his true face to her eventually. The best we can hope for is that this Eric guy floats her boat and she forgets about Edward."

"I don't know Rose. It sounds to me like Edward will be a hard act to follow." She shakes her head and laughs. "I mean *damn!* That was some *seriously* dirty talk coming out of *Ms. Swan's* mouth. She sounds happy, Rose. We should just let her be."

Rosalie is sure that Alice is right, and Bella does deserve to be happy, but when she closes her eyes she sees Edward standing in her foyer, undressing her with his eyes with her fiancé just feet away.

She has to reformulate how to deal with this. She just can't shake the feeling that Edward is evil.

The white car creeps slowly down the street again, like a prowler, waiting and watching. It parks on the shoulder of the dirt road and the driver lights a cigarette, staring at the old house, and enviously wondering what is going on inside.

Please review!

Thanks for reading!

Chapter 20: I'll Be Your Mirror

A/N: Thanks to Team Wicked: Rpatzlawyer, Bleriana, and PlayingWithFire. I am excited to welcome Rose Arcadia as a pre-reader! Woot!

I really appreciate everyone who so fiercely loves, and promotes this fic. Thank you!

There will be a "read along" tomorrow (12/12/10) on Twitter starting around 11AM EST. You should join in! Fun on a rainy Sunday! PM me any questions.

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From the previous chapter:

The white car creeps slowly down the street again, like a prowler, waiting and watching. It parks on the shoulder of the dirt road and the driver lights a cigarette, staring at the old house, and enviously wondering what is going on inside.

*"When you think the night has seen your mind
That inside you're twisted and unkind
Let me stand to show that you are blind
Please put down your hands
'Cause I see you
I'll be your mirror"*

~The Velvet Underground

Righteous and Wicked

Bella dries and brushes her damp hair, wandering through her bedroom, dazed with the bliss of just having had Edward...in the shower. She sighs, and the smile will not fade from her face, it feels permanent. Her face almost hurts from smiling so much.

She glances at the calendar, and becomes aware of the date. She takes it down to flip the page over to the new month.

May 1st.

Edward unlocks his bike, eager to return to Bella's side as soon as possible. He is excited about the surprise he has for her today. He pauses to look up at the home he has built, now on the verge of completion. He allows himself a moment to dream of filling that house with happy things. He indulges in a vision of truly peaceful days and long nights there, with Bella.

But the impossible image dissolves and melts from his mind, like turpentine splashes on an oil painting.

They race each other down the wooded trail, sunlight dips and flutters through the vegetation.

She follows and he leads. He follows, she leads. They ebb and flow together like waves, familiar with the voyage, until Edward steers her down a different and hidden path.

It is narrow and overgrown. They have to dismount their bikes in order to maneuver in a single file through the brush. He frequently looks back over his shoulder to check on Bella, and fights a smile when he sees her awkwardly stumble and fight a losing battle against a thorn bush.

Ahead, Bella can see a structure take shape amid the trees. It is a small stone cottage, crumbling from the passage of time. The roof is covered in thick moss and numerous layers of vines have taken over the walls, and what were once

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windows. The ivy almost completely conceals it in a green cocoon.

They drop their bikes and Edward holds his hand out to her. She takes it, and when his fingers cover hers, her whole body tingles. He leads her around the ancient and abandoned home.

"What is this place?" she asks.

"I found it one day when you were at work. It must date back to the 1800's. I thought it was...sort of...romantic. And I wanted to show it to you."

Bella's heart thuds to her feet- Stormy Eyes just said the word romantic.

He opens his backpack and pulls out a blanket, then sits and invites her to join him.

He lies down, pulling her into his chest, and they lay quietly, looking up at the patches of blue that peek through the trees. They are silent, and Bella feels the urge to ask him more about himself. She wants to know all there is to know-to see every piece of him.

"Why don't you speak to your family?" she asks.

He hesitates. "I told you before, I didn't really know my father...and my mother...my mother drank, as I said, and she was a different person when she was drunk, which was almost always. I think she was pissed at my father for never being there, and she took it out on me."

"What do you mean 'took it out on you'?"

He exhales a sigh that is familiar to Bella. A labored sound that can only come from the soul of someone carrying an immensely painful wound. "I don't like to talk about this, ever...but she beat me, Bella. I was abused by her for years. It was never the physical damage that got to me, it was the look on her face..." He stops. His body is tense, and Bella can feel how difficult it is for him to remember.

Righteous and Wicked

"That's why Maggie was so special to me. She did her best to bear the brunt, to try to divert my mother's wrath onto her." Edward stares blankly into the air at the ghosts he speaks of. "Maggie used to purposely break dishes when my mother was on a bender, just so she would get the heat instead of me," he fondly remembers his childhood nanny- the only person who cared for him.

Bella rubs her hand across his chest. "That's so awful."

"It's over, Bella. It's the past. I don't think about any of it anymore, and that's why I don't speak to my family. As far as I'm concerned, I don't have any."

Bella knows what it's like to feel that way. Rejected. Like you don't deserve love...like you're not worthy of it. She clings tightly to him, wanting to take the pain away, but knowing she cannot. Pain that runs that deep never ever goes away, no matter how far you get from it, it lingers, refusing to diminish.

She knows the only effort she can make is to show him a small piece of her own.

"You know, the longer I was with Jacob, the less I knew who I was. It was like my true self faded away and I had become what *he* wanted to see. Like a caricature come to life, a distortion of what was real." She feels Edward's fingers softly stroking her arm until goose bumps rise. And the memories of her failed marriage flow from her lips. "I remember, he once bought me a pair of shoes for my birthday. They were too big for me, and he was irrationally angry that my feet didn't fit into them. I thought about how symbolic that was, you know? That I could never fill the shoes he laid out for me. I was never good enough for him...never perfect. It's funny the things you ignore when you're trying to make something work, or make someone happy."

Edward listens, and he hates the way she sees herself. He wants to show her that, to him, she *is* perfect. He sits up and pulls Bella with him, so she straddles his lap. He pushes the hair from her face, and looks deep into her eyes.

"Bella, you are good. Being good to you is *so* easy, you deserve so much more...you are *good*, Bella,"

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The adoring look he gives her almost makes Bella gasp. She can't remember the last time she was looked at the way. She silences him, covering his mouth with a loving, languid kiss.

"So are you..." she whispers softly against his lips, wrapping her arms tightly around him.

The sun crawls across the sky, as the afternoon hours slowly pass. Flowers imperceptibly bend and move toward it, helplessly drawn to its life-giving light. They can't help themselves, they need it.

The couple tangled together beside the stone cottage in the wilderness cannot help it either. Things that have grown inside of them, things that cannot be said with words, are told with touch. They kiss and caress...and their clothing is slowly discarded. They moan, and sigh, and rock and move against each other beneath the golden rays, amid the sweet breeze and the visceral green. Their bodies make promises to each other. Easy and urgent, solemnly joyful.

They have become each other's sun.

They ride home as light is fading, and walk their bikes side by side down the dirt road toward Bella's house. Edward stops, and Bella looks up to see what he sees. A white car is driving away from them.

"Who is that?" she asks him.

"I don't know. I'm sure it's no one," he answers her, not letting his anxiety show through. Someone is trying to break into their little world, and Edward doesn't like it.

"I need to do some work while it's still light. I'll see you later?" he asks.

She nods, and he cradles her face, leaving her with a hauntingly tender kiss.

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Bella enters her empty house and checks her cell phone. A text from Rose:
Meet me at the cake shop at 6?

Bella remembers that she was supposed to call Rosalie back earlier, and feels guilty for forgetting. She responds: *See you then.*

"You're not dating anybody, right?" Jasper asks Eric as they walk to the elevator. Their ties are loose around their necks as they leave work, not happy to have been in a meeting on a Saturday.

"No, why?" Eric answers, as he fusses with his Blackberry.

Jasper pushes the call button. "My wife has a friend- Bella. She's a sweetheart. She's a teacher, smart...pretty...you would like her,"

"Yeah? All right, give me her number."

"I can get it from Alice, but actually, some friends of ours are getting married, and they're having a little get together, Bella will be there, and they wanted me to invite you."

Eric puts his phone in the pocket of his suit and steps into the elevator beside Jasper. He is far too busy for a relationship, but a blind date with a pretty girl could lead to something physical, and *that* definitely interests him. "I'll let you know," he arrogantly replies.

Bella enters the bakery and finds Alice and Rosalie seated at a small table. Several pieces of cake are laid out before them.

"Hey," Bella greets them. "Tasting for the wedding?"

"Yeah, Em will eat anything, as you know, so I thought you girls could give me a more discerning opinion," Rose explains.

Righteous and Wicked

Bella sits, and notices that Alice seems uncomfortable. She looks at Rose, and her face holds a similar expression. "Okay. What's going on?"

Rose begins, "Bella, I saw you with Edward at the carnival. I have to tell you...I know him."

Bella is immediately panicked. *Is Rosalie one of his ex-conquests?*

"How?" Bella demands.

"He's a friend of Emmett's. He's his best man in the wedding."

"No way." Bella cannot believe it, but she is exceptionally relieved that her fear was untrue.

"Yes. Bella, do you know where he was before he came here?" Rosalie asks.

"Brazil," she answers.

"And do you know why he left?"

"He just said things stopped working out for him there."

"Bella, I think you should know...I mean, I don't know how serious you are with him...but he's not planning on staying." Rosalie finally drops some of the weight from her shoulders.

Bella feels a chill of terror. "What?"

"He told Emmett and I...when the house is complete, he's selling it. He's going to leave. I don't know what your relationship is like with him, but I had to tell you. I didn't want to see you being used...getting hurt..." Rose reaches out to touch Bella's hand, to try to comfort her.

Bella swiftly pushes back from the table. "That can't be true! You don't know him...you can't know him the way I do..." She feels rage. Her rage distills into

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sadness, then to pain.

Her eyes fall closed, and she runs.

Edward is capitalizing on the last few hours of daylight. His hands are covered in paint as he works on completing the exterior of the house. He feels happy, and it is so strange. No nagging need gnawing at his soul. No battles. No bargaining. No hate. Just happy.

He hears a car, and stops. Pulling down his driveway is the white car.

He picks up a rag to wipe his hands, and saunters over to the strange vehicle.

The door opens and out steps a woman.

The blond from the carnival.

Tanya.

Bella speeds down the street, her eyes blurry with tears. She doesn't believe it. She doesn't want to believe it. But Rose has no reason to lie.

Who is Edward anyway? What do I really know about him?

Bella feels so foolish. She has trusted a man she barely knows. She *slept* with him, while she is still married to another man.

She's a fool and she hates herself.

She has to confront him, but she needs to clam down. To clear her mind. She passes the church. Will it give her any comfort now? Should she confess her sins and her stupidity? She pulls into St. Robert's hoping for some kind of guidance, some kind of sign.

Righteous and Wicked

But the stone building is cold and empty.

Her heart is not.

"Remember me?" Tanya asks, with a wicked smile on her face

"What are you doing here?" Edward stands in front of the beautiful girl, arms folded across his chest. Her presence is unwanted.

"My name is Tanya Denali. I'm a real estate agent. I was wondering what you're planning to do with this home. Are you going to sell?" She steps toward him. He looks so sexy, and after following him around, waiting for the other woman to leave, she desperately wants to capitalize on this chance to be alone with him. He has possessed her unstable thoughts since she saw him, and seeing him again has become a mission for her.

"I'm Edward," he coldly tells her, shaking her hand. He can sense she has other motives, and he's not going to play games. "You're not really interested in this house, are you, Tanya?"

She misconstrues his confrontational manner, mistaking it for flirting. "Well...I *am* interested in the house," she touches his arm, "but I'm more interested in *you*," she admits.

Edward licks his lips. Tanya wants to kiss him so badly, her mind is playing out unspeakably raunchy fantasies. She wants him, and she won't rest until she gets him.

Edward smirks at her. It wasn't long ago that he would have immediately taken this woman. He would have stripped her bare and fucked her right here against her car. She's a perfect victim. She wants it, and he can almost taste it, he can see her spread legs and her naked breasts. Flashes of dark and dirty possibilities race through his mind's eye.

Righteous and Wicked

But the idea of touching her would be violating what he has with Bella. Tarnishing that which is now sacred to him. Though he is physically attracted to Tanya, and his demon would love to show himself to her, Edward no longer has a desire to be with anyone else. Edward is in control of his need, and he craves only Bella.

"I'm sorry, but I'm...involved with someone," Edward says, taking a step away from her.

"I thought you would say that, but I can be discreet, you know...she wouldn't find out..." She is trying to tempt and persuade him, but it is not working.

"I'm sorry. You can give me your card, and I'll call you if I decide to sell. But that's all. I'm not that kind of guy," he says, and he feels overwhelming clarity when he says those words, because for the first time ever--they are true.

Tanya is pissed. She is not accustomed to rejection. She steps toward him, so that she is just a breath away from his face. "I think you *are* that kind of guy, Edward. I think that deep down, you *know* it. Call me when you're ready to admit that to yourself. You won't regret it, I *promise* you. "

She slams the door of the white car and reverses rapidly out of Edward's drive, almost colliding with Bella's truck.

Bella passes the strange car and descends through the mud of Edward's driveway. He is standing in front of the house, and she stops. She turns off the engine, but doesn't get out. If she gets out, the agony becomes real.

Edward stares at her through the windshield, and Bella wants to die. The idea of him not standing there anymore...the idea of him leaving...she wouldn't be able to bear it. Her heart beats in her chest and she knows that it belongs to him.

Bella is in love.

Righteous and Wicked

He looks into her eyes and sees pain. He sees fear.

He is terrified that she saw Tanya and thinks the worst. He wants her to know the truth.

He stalks toward her and opens the door of the truck, helping her down.

"What's wrong?" he asks. His concern for her pours out of him, he tries to kiss her, and she turns her head.

"Who was that woman in the white car?" Bella asks.

"A real estate agent," he answers truthfully.

Bella drops her head, dejected.

Rose was right.

"Edward, I was just with Emmett's fiancée, Rosalie."

Edward's mind flashes back to all of the sick fantasies he has had of that woman, and he feels his stomach roll with nausea at the memory.

Somewhere deep inside his mind, Edward knew that Rosalie and Emmett knew Bella. Ever since that day in their driveway when Rosalie said she was going to meet up with "Bella". Deep down he knew.

He just didn't want to let anyone disturb this little bubble he has with her. He didn't want to let anyone else in.

"And..."

"And she told me..." Bella fights a sob. Her eyes water and Edward feels himself ripping apart. He cannot stand to see her in any kind of pain. He sees himself reflected in her eyes, and he knows that he is making her feel it. He cups her chin so she cannot look away from him.

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Bella meets his gaze. There is no storm, only Edward.

"She said you're not staying here. She said you're selling this house and leaving." She can barely say the words. "Is it true?"

Edward's plan was to build and sell, and move on, like he always has. But everything is different now.

"It was."

"Are you leaving or not? Answer me now!" She is angry. She pushes him away and covers her face with her hands. She is hardening her heart, preparing for the worst.

Edward pulls her hands down, holding them in his own. "No. I am not," he answers her.

She pulls away again, and he searches for the words to tell her what he feels. "Eu não vou embora. Eu não posso sair. Eu não quero ficar longe de você porque...eu te amo, Bella."

His eyes water, and he presses his forehead against hers. He lingers there, taking in her sweet scent and softness. He tries to swallow down the emotion he feels right now, but he cannot. He has to let it out.

"Eu te amo..." he whispers.

"Edward, what does the mean?" she asks.

"It means...I love you."

He feels her grip his shirt in her fists, pulling him closer, always closer. He threads his fingers in her hair, cradling her face. He covers her mouth with his, his tongue touching hers, her lips against his. "I love you," he says again, pressing his body against hers, kissing her pale neck.

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Bella is afraid to say the words. She fears that once she says them, the world will fall apart again. But she can't keep them inside any longer.

"I love you, too," she tells him. "I love you, Edward."

Their love creeps like a vine, winding and wrapping tendrils around their hearts. Their lips meet and part, and taste and touch. They kiss until they feel they are floating above this earth, completely detached from any ties to reality. They kiss until it seems that are the only two people in the world. The first people that have ever truly loved. They kiss until their hearts meld together, and her tears mingle with his.

"Say it again..." she begs of him. His calloused hands struggle to stay gentle; he wants to touch her everywhere.

"I love you." He says it willingly, treasuring the freedom he now feels.

She sighs into him, and then her feet leave the earth.

Edward lifts her body up, and her legs wrap around his waist. He wants nothing more than to be inside of her. He could take her right here, but where he truly wants her is in his bed.

Sigh

Translation: "I'm not leaving. I can't leave. I don't want to be apart from you because...I love you, Bella."

Song that inspired the chapter: "I'll Be Your Mirror"- The Velvet Underground

Gold stars to those of you who guessed that it was Tanya in the white car.

PLEASE REVIEW xxx

Chapter 21: Hallelujah

A/N: Thanks to PlayingWithFire and Rose Arcadia for their work on this chapter. Without them I wouldn't be able to get it to you all on time!

There will be a "read along part 2" today (12/19/10) on Twitter starting around 11AM EST. You should join in!

Thanks so much to all who continue to read, promote, and review this fic. Love ya!

This chapter requires solitude and a glass of wine

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From the previous chapter:

Their love creeps like a vine, winding and wrapping tendrils around their hearts. Their lips meet and part, and taste and touch. They kiss until they feel they are floating above this earth, completely detached from any ties to reality. They kiss until it seems that are the only two people in the world. The first people that have ever truly loved. They kiss until their hearts meld together, and her tears mingle with his.

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She sighs into him, and then her feet leave the earth.

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Edward lifts her body up, and her legs wrap around his waist. He wants nothing more than to be inside of her. He could take her right here, but where he truly wants her is in his bed.

"Maybe there's a God above
But all I've ever learned from love
Was how to shoot at someone who outdrew you...
and It's not a cry you can hear at night
It's not somebody who has seen the light
It's a cold and it's a broken Hallelujah."
~Leonard Cohen

They share and hold an unbroken and passionate kiss. Eager and desperate...but thick with the love they have confessed. Edward could not have dreamed that those words would ever fall from his lips, but they flowed from his heart so easily. The earth did not shatter and collapse in on itself. He was not struck by lightning. It was...a relief. Unfathomably cathartic to give the feelings that have grown, and are now living inside of him, a name.

Love.

He stumbles to the door of the silver trailer. The unpredictable rush of a spring wind blows through the trees. It twists around them, almost chasing them, bringing with it some secret threat that does not yet have a name. They take shelter from it, and once through the door, they only make it as far as his kitchen counter. Still kissing, Edward puts Bella down on the edge. A dish slips and falls. It shatters loudly, but neither of them notice or care. Bella imprisons him in the vice of her long legs, keeping him trapped against her, holding him in place. She feels his hands on her body, his heat presses against her. She is trying to let the terror she felt at the thought of him leaving fade from her mind.

"Edward...I don't know what I would do if you left...you can't leave..." She begs against his lips and slides his leather belt open, hungry to feel him in her hand.

Righteous and Wicked

He wants to take her fear away. "I'm not leaving...this is the only place I want to be...only with you..."

He struggles to unbutton her shirt, but gets frustrated and yanks at the fabric. He roughly tears it with his hands and buttons fly across the floor. He runs his palm along the lace of her bra, feeling her warm skin beneath it. Then his mouth is on her neck.

She reaches inside his pants and strokes his hardness. She feels her lust rise. The desire to be the only one to possess Edward flows through her.

"You're mine...this is mine," she whispers. She says it like she is trying to convince herself that it's true.

Edward tenses at her firm touch. "Fuck, Bella..." He lifts her off the counter in another effort to make it to his bed, but only gets as far as the bookshelf. He presses her up against it, and loose books drop to the floor with a thud. Her foot bangs into the lamp and the impact causes the shade to crash to the floor. His tiny trailer is suffering under the urgency of their aggressive need to physically show each other what is now in their full hearts.

Bella wriggles her arm behind her back and unclasps her bra, baring her breasts to him. She looks at him, and sees the change happening, she sees Edward fading. The Storm is rising over the horizon, ready to rage.

She welcomes it.

He looks at her breasts, then her eyes, then her lips. His tongue pokes out and Bella holds her breath. Then he drops to his knees.

Edward unbuttons her jeans and pulls them over her hips, taking her panties off with them. He tosses her clothing to the side and she is completely bare. Her eyes are wide, and he sees the innocence that still lingers there. The element that initially attracted him to her.

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"What do you want me to do to you?" he asks, removing his own remaining clothing.

She doesn't hesitate. "I want you to touch me," she pants through heavy breaths.

"Where, Bella?" He eyes her body like it is a treasure.

She slides her thin white fingers down her abdomen, over her lips, and then she slips them inside. "Here..."

He grips her thigh and smiles up at her. Watching her touch herself this way is flaming his thirst to an explosive level.

She starts to remove her hand and he stops her. "No."

Her teeth peek out over her lip as she bites it slightly, and then he slips his fingers inside along hers. He follows the rhythm of her hand with his own. "Oh, God...oh shit..." she groans.

He feels her stretch around his hand and he is so hard for her. He loves the way she feels inside, with his fingers covering and slipping against hers. She continues to touch herself and he loves watching it, but he wants to taste her too.

He pulls her hand away, but holds it, and laces his fingers with hers, staring at her wet pink flesh. He salivates when he looks at that part of her. "I need to fucking taste you..." He covers her swollen lips with his mouth, kissing her and licking her hot, wet clit with his tongue.

"So good..." she whispers. He watches her face melt into ecstasy and licks her again, slowly, teasing her with the tip of his tongue.

"I want you, Bella...so fucking much..." He slips his fingers inside again and ravenously works his mouth against her, as his other hand grips and kneads her ass.

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Her head falls back against the shelf and he can't take his eyes away from her exquisitely contorted face. She pulls at his hair and he is so turned on by her rough touches.

"Edward..." she speaks. "The white car...the woman...did you...did you want her?" Bella asks, knowing that he may well have. She searches his eyes, hoping to find truth.

He thinks that this may be Bella the Voyeur emerging, but then he realizes that she only wants to be reassured. She wants to know if he was able to resist temptation.

His hand is inside of her, but he removes his lips to speak. "No. Only you, Bella. I only want you this way. Só você." He stands and grabs her shoulders, kissing her passionately, and lifting her legs around him. "Only you..." He promises again.

He finally makes his way to the bed and lays her down on his sheets. She pulls him with her, still clinging, not wanting to let go. "So beautiful..." he says, covering her body with his, blanketing her flesh with his.

He looks down at her, and in her eyes he sees the dreams that rest there. The *trust* he sees there gives him pause. In spite of his admitted love for her, he fears he will be unable to fulfill those dreams, but he would rather perpetuate them, than be honest about how truly undeserving he is of her. She will find out one day.

He presses his hardness against her soft entrance, and they both moan. He pushes inside and the feeling of being wrapped around each other heightens the depth of what they feel. They are both overwhelmed with the new levels of pleasure that threaten to overtake them.

She kisses him, holding his rough face in her delicate hands. Her lips drag across his stubble ridden jaw to his ear. "Edward, last time...when you...tied me up...can I...can I do that to you?"

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He stops. He loves to see inside of her this way-that she shows her own rising darkness to him.

"I will do anything you want, Bella. Anything you want from me...it's yours." He reaches in the night table drawer and finds the object that she seeks.

He dangles the handcuffs in front of her and his little smirk emerges. She takes them and swivels her hips until she is kneeling over him. He is all too eager to allow her to constrict his wrists over his head. She chains him to the bed, and now he truly is hers...only hers. If not forever, for now.

"What are you going to do?" he asks her.

"I'm going to make you feel good, Edward." And now Bella's newborn demon takes its throne.

She lowers her head and her hair falls and trickles over his muscled stomach. Then she takes his hard-on in her mouth.

He jerks at the sensation of her mouth surrounding him. "Ah...fuck...Bella. Yeah..."

She works hard to take him in, to give him unselfish pleasure, to show him she can give him everything he could ever want or need. She savors his taste and the way he feels, the beauty of this part of him. She looks up at him and he's watching her. Bella is submerged in the devilish desire that now so frequently shows its face. "I fucking love your cock," she tells him and his eyes are wide in disbelief.

"Bella, I'm gonna fucking come in your mouth if you talk that way..." He struggles against the handcuffs, and Bella is wet watching his fever for her increase.

"So hard and so good, Edward. I love the way you taste..." She takes him in again, deeply. She uses her hand to stroke him and his hips flex with her movement.

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"Fuck, Bella. You looks so fucking sexy with my cock in your mouth...that's right...shit...just like that...fuck..."

She stops.

She kneels over him. Her skin is shimmering with sweat. "I want you inside me. I want to fuck you, Edward. Do you want me to? Tell me."

His eyes are possessed. She can see that this is new for him, to give up control to someone else like this. She can also see that he likes it.

"Yes, Bella. Fuck me," he demands.

Bella smiles. She holds his cock in her hands and straddles his hips, then lowers herself slowly onto him.

Her hips rise and fall, as her hands run seductively over her breasts, into her hair. She rides him hard and her eyes close. He watches her turning completely over to her darkness, lost in sensation and the pleasure she feels. He sees a piece of himself in her. "That's right. Let it take you, Bella. Ride me harder, Bella...faster...fuck..." He is on fire watching her body.

Letting go of control has previously caused him discomfort, but watching her like this...becoming his equal...is an acutely erotic experience. He watches her skin, the way it glimmers in the soft light as her full pert breasts swell and undulate.

"Oh...so good...so fucking good..." she speaks to him and to no one. She speaks to the unchained prisoner that has been locked inside of her soul for so long. Now free, at the hands of Edward.

The wind slams against the trailer. It echoes the teaming pleasure that is on the verge of blowing through each of their bodies.

His climax is approaching, but he keeps it at bay, needing for her to release his hands from the cuffs. He has to touch her.

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As if seeing inside his mind, she bends over him; her hips still working, her wetness still sliding against and enveloping his shaft. The cuffs clink and drop to the floor.

He isn't free for a moment before he rises up against her, and takes her lips in his. He tangles himself in her mane of hair, and pulls her head back. Bella loves the feel of his strong arms around her. He is possessed now, his own demon has surfaced, but to keep him safe, he has to keep his eyes on her angelic face. Her beautiful body...her eyes.

He pushes her down on the bed and grips her knee, pulling it against his hip. He pounds into her and she cries out.

"Edward, you're the only one who makes me feel this way...so good...harder...yes..."

He is all too willing to oblige her request.

"Uh...ah...uh," she groans.

"Oh...shit...yes...Bella..." And so does he.

He feels her pulsing and he watches her face, and her body, intently as she comes and cries out. Then his own release is finally free to flow through him, to flow out of him and into her.

"I love you. I love you..." he tells her. His heart beats hard as the blood in his veins thuds and races through him. He collapses on her chest. She threads her hands through his hair and holds him to her, his throbbing member still buried inside her.

They can barely breathe. Bella has been in love before, but she has never felt *this*. She has never felt this intensely connected to anyone-ever. No one has ever truly seen who she is. "Edward, I was so lonely before you. Even when I was with *him*...I was always so lonely. No matter who I was with, or who was around me...I was always so alone."

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He hears pain in her voice and he can not bear it. His hands caress her face, his lips ghost tenderly over hers.

"...but I'm not anymore," she whispers. "You see me, Edward, I know you do...and...you *love* what you see."

She kisses him and his living, beating heart may burst. "I do. I see you. I love you, Bella. No one else matters now. You are the only one I see, Bella--the only one I want--the only one I love. Eu te amo tanto."

They lay together, kissing and touching, as close as two people can possibly be. They feel love. They feel peace. They feel the sweet relief that they both have long searched for.

But more than anything else...they feel so grateful.

The violent and random wind that has been assaulting the old and new homes on this street seems to follow the white car as it stalks toward Bella's house. The driver is unaware of the physical and heartfelt declarations that are being made inside the silver trailer. Tanya is single minded and unfazed by Edward's rebuff. She creeps down the street once again. The scorned and unstable woman pulls into Bella's driveway. She peeks in windows and tries doorknobs. She is searching. Searching for whatever this woman has that she does not. Whatever it is, she will get it.

Song from this chapter: Hallelujah- Jeff Buckley

Translation: "Only you." "I love you so much."

The next chapter will be delayed because of the holiday, but I promise I will get it to you as soon as I can.

The best present you can give to me, is a review!

Merry Christmas! xxx

Chapter 22: Beauty Truth Love

A/N: Thanks to Team Wicked, especially RPatzlawyer, PlayingWithFire and Rose Arcadia for their work on this chapter. Bleriana is working her little booty off making a vid for RaW, and I've seen some of it. It's "way hot" as Alice would say. I will have it up on the blog as soon as it is complete!

Thanks to all who got in on the read along, especially Bleriana and SL_2030 for hosting!

The GOLDEN LEMONS are open for nominations people. Just sayin...

Thanks so much to all who continue to read, promote, and review this fic. Love ya!

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From the previous chapter:

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"For every beauty there is an eye somewhere to see it.

For every truth there is an ear somewhere to hear it.

For every love there is a heart somewhere to receive it"

~Ivan Panin

There are forces in this universe that seek out that which is good and work toward its demise. There is no rhyme or reason behind this force. It slithers like a snake in the grass, tainting and rotting some lives, but not others. It soils that which is clean, it ruins what is pure. When the pendulum swings too far to the right, when everything is perfect, it inevitably must swing back.

Something sinister is at work against Edward and Bella. Is it a vengeful God? The Devil? A force of Nature? Why do bad things have to happen to good people? Why must that which is true and beautiful become tarnished and

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poisoned?

Edward and Bella will soon face these age old questions, and the answers will elude them.

Bella awakes constrained in Edward's arms. They tether her in place, and she does not object to the sensation. She sighs with contentment and snuggles deeper beneath the blankets with him, but then a horrible reality makes itself known.

It's Monday.

She rolls over to face him, and immediately his lips are on hers, though his eyes remained unopened. Bella giggles at his zealously. Even in sleep, he wants her.

Her laughter wakes him. The first thought Edward has is a wish to wake up to that sound from this day on. Such beauty. He squints at the clock, then flops his head down on the pillow, knowing that Bella will have to leave.

"You should quit your job," he says, and then yawns.

Bella gets up out of the exquisitely comfortable bed, leaving her place beside the even more exquisite, and gorgeous, half-naked man.

She pulls his t-shirt off of her body and tosses it at him. He holds it to his nose and breathes in the lingering fragrance of her.

"And do what? Become your personal sex slave?" she teases him.

"Yes, Bella. That is *exactly* what you should do. Clearly it is your calling in life," he teases her back, but then he becomes serious. "You should call in sick. Stay with me, Bella."

The way he speaks to her, it is so tempting. The way it sounds when he says her name...it sounds *different*. Like she has never really heard it spoken before,

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by anyone, until now.

After several failed attempts at saying goodbye, she dresses and makes her way home through the blanket of the early morning mist.

Bella takes out her keys to open her front door, but it is unlocked. *That's odd.* She thinks. She is sure that she locked it.

She goes up to her bedroom, and finds her closet door open. *That's odd.* She thinks. She is sure that she closed it.

She looks inside and sees that the wooden box which bears her old initials is uncovered. It glares at her. A chill runs up her back, but she shakes it off. *I must have opened it and forgotten,* she thinks, but she is lying to herself.

"Ally, I can't just un-invite him now. You asked me to do you a favor, I did. Eric said he'd be there," Jasper speaks severely to Alice, as he straightens his tie and prepares for work.

"I just want to kill Rosalie right now," Alice answers as she zips up her boots. She is irritated that they are in this position, and having this conversation. She dislikes fighting with Jasper, it happens so rarely.

Alice has no choice but to hope that Eric's presence at the engagement party won't affect anyone. "Fine. Forget it," she says as she grabs her purse and kisses her husband goodbye. "I'm sure that it won't be a problem."

The truth that Alice has yet to see is that, it will be.

"I can't concentrate on anything. I'm standing in front of my girls and I'm supposed to be teaching them something, but I'm thinking about him. I'm just... *consumed* with him," Bella says to Alice as they walk through the parking lot to their cars. Alice smiles at the dreamy look in Bella's usually dreamless eyes.

"Sounds like love to me, Bella. I'm really happy for you, you know..." she says truthfully.

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"Thanks, Alice. What do you think Rose will say?" Bella is afraid of how Rosalie will react to her relationship with Edward, after what happened in the cake shop.

"Who gives a shit? She dislikes Edward for some reason, but I told her, you're a big girl. You can handle it."

"I trust him, Alice. Maybe that's naïve. Maybe I'm stupid, but when I look in his eyes..." Bella gets distracted thinking about his riveting stormy blue.

Alice allows Bella to indulge in her revelry before responding. "I know. I get it, Bella. No one else knows what it's like when you're alone together. Only the two of you can ever know that. And that's all that matters." She smooths a stray hair behind Bella's ear and does her best to reassure her friend.

"Well, what do you think his intentions are? It seems obvious that he's just interested in something physical. He is obviously using her. And you know how Bella is. She's sweet and kind to a fault." Rose says as she carries two plates of food to the kitchen table.

"Rose-babe- I love you. And I love how loyal you are to everyone in your life, but you can't control how this is going to play out. Just let it be." Emmett grimaces as he forces the cork from a bottle of wine.

"I wonder why Edward never said anything to me about her," Emmett sits, and muses over dinner.

"Well, he didn't know that we knew her. He doesn't seem like he wears his heart on his sleeve anyway." Rose sips her wine.

"We talk, Rose. He's my friend. He just never said anything about being with Bella. Honestly, I think it's a good thing. Maybe she can tame the beast, keep him grounded. We should all hang out. Us, them, Alice and Jasper...it would be good."

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Rosalie cannot imagine in what universe that would be good. But because she loves her husband and her friend, she will do it.

She grabs her phone and types out a text to Bella. "This Friday. The Golden Door. Bring Edward."

It's past midnight. She stealthily turns off her headlights, now familiar with the street. Butterflies flip through her stomach, nervous tension burns and riots through her...and she likes it. Because of her beauty, she has never had to work hard for a man's affections, but she has also never had a relationship for very long. This is due to the fact that her partners have discovered that she is walking the thin line between sanity and madness. At the end of each of these short-lived loves, Tanya has exacted her scornful revenge, either on the man himself, or on the new object of his desire.

Tanya has sought what she considers to be vengeance on plenty of women who have things that she wants.

Tonight, the focus of her demented schemes is the Plain Girl. The mousy haired, pasty woman named Bella Black. Tanya searched her home for secrets, but only found out her name, and a box with a picture of a man. A man that may have been her husband once, and who may be the father of Bella's child. A child who is currently nowhere to be found. Nothing else that Tanya rummaged through in that house seemed to hold any clues about who the Plain Girl is. No other monsters in her closets.

Tanya hopes that that information will be of use to her eventually, but for now, her instability has motivated her to make Bella's present life as uncomfortable as possible. So unpleasant, that hopefully Edward will become annoyed with Bella's paranoia, or lose interest in whatever it is they have between them. And then he will see the light- that he is wasting his time with the Plain Girl when he could be enjoying what Tanya wants to give to him.

It is late, and the lights are off inside the decrepit white house. She shuts her car off and leaves it on the shoulder of the road, then creeps down Bella's drive. Tanya slowly takes a knife out of her purse, and then violently jabs it into all

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four of the tires on Bella's truck.

ThumpThumpThump

Edward opens the door to his trailer, surprised to be disturbed at this early hour, but he knows it must be Bella.

He opens the door and her pretty face immediately makes him smile. He was forced to be without her last night, because she claims she can't get any rest when she stays with him...and it's true.

But right now her pretty face looks afraid, and Edward is at her side in seconds. "What happened?"

"My...my truck. The tires...someone... *slashed* them. Who would do that?" Bella's mouth is gaped open as she shakes her head from side to side rapidly. She is completely stunned.

For some reason, Edward's mind flashes to the white car, the unrelenting blond...

The sinking feeling he has in his stomach tells him that his instinct is correct. He puts his arm around his girl and guides her into the trailer, his eyes scanning the woods.

"Let me grab a shirt. I'll drive you to work."

"The only person I haven't met is Alice. I don't know why you're nervous." Edward speaks to the mirror as he carefully slides the razor along his delectable jaw. "It will be fine, Bella. I can be very charming, you know," Edward peeks around Bella's bathroom door and winks at her, where she sits on the edge of her bed. "Besides, you're very good at keeping me on my best behavior."

Bella has worried all week about having Edward meet her friends. The leftover pieces of her former self, her innate need to please everyone all the time, still lingers inside of her. Bella slips on her heels and walks toward him. He is

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shirtless and covered in shaving cream. A sight which immediately incites Bella's blazing fire for him.

"There are other things I'm good at, you know," she teases him, running her hands over his bare waist. She feels his flesh prickle at her touch and his face changes from sweet to vulgar.

"So show me," he answers.

Bella is thrilled at the distraction. Just being so close to Edward, just touching him, sets her mind at ease. She smiles, then slowly opens his pants and drops to her knees.

He watches her please him, something she is very good at, and he touches her long layers of sinfully luscious hair. He feels his heart pound. It beats rapidly in his chest as her mouth and her lips work and slip over his hardness. He can feel the dark rising. Abruptly, he lifts her up to him. "Show me something else," he breathlessly demands from her.

Bella turns around and lifts her skirt, then bends over the sink. "How about this?" she asks. Edward has had many women in this position, but he can't remember a single one of them right now.

"Yeah...you know I like that." Edward slides her thong to the side and runs his palms over her round ass. He feels her with his fingers. She moans, and he knows that she is ready for him. He hisses as he enters her, overcome by the indescribable sensation. Then he moves so, so slowly inside of her. Edward likes to drive her insane. He likes to see her need for him course through her. He likes to watch it overtake her. Her complete submergence in lust gets him off.

Bella watches Edward in the mirror; their eye contact is fleeting but erotic. Edward wants to stay like this with her, to make her feel good over and over again, but tonight they are in a rush, they have somewhere to be. Edward touches her where he knows she wants to be touched, he says the words that he knows she wants to hear. The words that will make her come for him.

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"Ninguém me faz sentir do jeito que você faz, eu te amo tanto."

He works her body expertly, and quickly, but doesn't leave Bella unsatisfied. His hands on her hips, in her hair, down her back. His hips meeting and grinding against her.

Moans of pleasure reverberate off the bathroom walls, and in spite of their best efforts, they are very late to meet the other two couples at the club.

The black Jeep enters the parking lot and pulls up at the valet. Edward relinquishes his keys and takes Bella's hand, her heels click against the pavement as he leads her through the golden door of the club.

It is dark and loud. Edward has been here before. He remembers the reason and feels shame. He wore black then, but tonight he does not. He squeezes Bella's hand tighter, trying to remind himself that he's not that man anymore.

He pauses and scans the crowd, then quickly moves forward when he spots Emmett.

Rosalie sees Bella walking beside a smirking Edward. An angel and a devil. She swallows back the bile she feels rising at the sight of him, and wills a calm expression onto her face.

Emmett kisses Bella on the cheek and hugs Edward. Rose narrows her eyes. Edward steps toward her and puts out his hand, but the perverted and smug expression he usually wears is absent from his face. He looks...normal. "Hello Rosalie," he politely greets her. Rose returns his greeting and he coolly moves on to speak to Alice and Jasper.

The conversations are pleasant, but muted for Rosalie. She is somewhat astonished by this unforeseen turn of events. She was sure that Edward would continue to give her the creeps in spite of his involvement with Bella. But he has not. No trace of it.

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Rosalie is thrilled, but a shadow still lingers over her perception of him. She will not be so easily convinced of his motives. He will need to prove himself to her.

"Um, wow. He is way hot, Bella. I would high five you right now if we he wasn't sitting right next to you," Alice whispers.

"Thank you. And shut up," Bella blushes as she replies.

The three couples sit on plush couches in the dark bowels of the club. The waiter brings bottle after bottle to them, all at Edward's generous expense. They are becoming increasingly intoxicated. Everyone except Bella, who is elegantly nursing her first drink. She proudly watches as Edward easily fits in to this picture. Jasper enthusiastically interacts with him, which is rare, as he is usually very reserved. Edward has made Alice snort-laugh on more than one occasion, and although this is *not* a difficult feat, it is no less satisfying for Bella to hear.

She has intently been watching and gauging Rosalie's reaction to Edward, but so far it seems that she is tolerating, if not almost enjoying his company. Bella leans against Edward, and his arm slides up her back. She exhales a truly peaceful and contented sigh.

Everything about this moment is perfect. She wouldn't change a single thing.

Edward loves the feel of Bella's body next to him, and even more than that, he loves the happy look on her face.

He kisses her forehead. "I'll be right back."

He leaves her side, and Bella unconsciously embraces herself. His absence leaves her with a haunting chill.

Edward walks through the crowded dance floor, past the bar, toward the bathroom.

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He enters a narrow hallway lined with several graffiti covered doors. One of those doors is open, and a woman is leaning against the jamb, staring at him.

She is blond. She is beautiful.

Edward knows her.

It's Tanya.

He is livid. He reacts to her unexpected presence by grabbing her arm and dragging her through the open door. He eyes his surroundings and sees that they are in a small coat closet. He doesn't want to be seen with her, but he has to know if she was the one who slashed Bella's tires.

"What the fuck are you doing here? Are you fucking following me?" he gruffly asks her.

"Jesus, you can be a bit aggressive, huh?" Tanya slips her fingers over his where they tightly grip her arm. "You're flattering yourself if you think I would actually follow you. This is a popular club, *Edward*." She smirks at him, and Edward knows that look.

He lets her go when he sees she is enjoying his touch. "Then why are you fucking lurking in the shadows back here?"

"Lurking? I'm just checking my coat....I don't know what you're implying..." she bats her eyes and feigns innocence as she answers him.

He steps closer, so his face is just an inch from hers. His anger seethes through him. "Don't give me that shit. I know you fucked with Bella's truck, and I'm telling you, *stay away* from her." His tone is coarse, almost a growl.

"I have no idea what you're talking about." She looks him dead in the eye. He can see that she truly believes her own lies. *Dangerous*.

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"That's bullshit. You fucking slashed her tires!" He grips both her shoulders in his hands.

"What makes you think it was me? Maybe it was her *husband* who did it? Did you ever think of that?"

He pushes her back against the coat rack. He is shocked that Tanya would know such a personal detail of Bella's life. "How the fuck do you know about that shit?"

"People talk in this town, Edward. I know plenty." Tanya licks her lips. She is enjoying seeing him this worked up, red-faced and shouting. He is vulnerable, and she wants to use it to her advantage.

She slides her hands to his waist. "I'll stay away from her, Edward. I promise. Just stay here with me for a little while." Her hands are on his chest. "I can make you feel good. Just give me a chance. Stay with me, here, and I'll leave her alone."

A few weeks ago, this scenario would have ended with Edward fucking the shit out of Tanya in this coat closet. He remembers his former self so easily. He sees the events play out in his mind. Edward's body is enjoying the feel of Tanya's hands on his skin. Edward's body is reacting to her touch. His demon wants her.

His mind and his heart do not.

She leans in to him, to brush her lips against his, but he jolts back and grips her wrists, removing her hands from his body. He holds her roughly. He can see that his touch is hurting her, he can see discomfort in her eyes, but he can not stop himself. The violent storm inside of him still lives, and will rage one way or another. He will fight to the death to protect the haven he has with Bella, to keep her and what they have between them safe.

"I'm--not--fucking--around. Leave her alone." He grips her harder, tighter.

Righteous and Wicked

A tear slips out of the corner of Tanya's eye, but she is smiling. "Of course, Edward. Whatever you say."

He walks out of the closet and into the bathroom. He takes deep gasping breaths and splashes water on to his face. He stares at himself in the mirror. He feels the familiar regret and nausea that comes after he indulges his demon, but this time it is violence, not sex that he regrets. Fear, not relief that he feels.

Translation: "No one makes me feel the way you do, I love you so much."

Happy New Year! Hope 2011 is amazing and healthy for you.

Please review!

Chapter 23: Righteous and Wicked

A/N: Thanks to Team Wicked: PlayingWithFire, Bleriana, RoseArcadia and our new addition- eglantine16!

Bleriana made a gorgeous RaW vid, which is up on the blog! Go watch! Thanks for reading!

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From the previous chapter:

She leans in to him, to brush her lips against his, but he jolts back and grips her wrists, removing her hands from his body. He holds her roughly. He can see that his touch is hurting her, he can see discomfort in her eyes, but he can not stop himself. The violent storm inside of him still lives, and will rage one way or another. He will fight to the death to protect the haven he has with Bella, to keep her and what they have between them safe.

"I'm--not--fucking--around. Leave her alone." He grips her harder, tighter.

A tear slips out of the corner of Tanya's eye, but she is smiling. "Of course, Edward. Whatever you say."

He walks out of the closet and into the bathroom. He takes deep gasping breaths and splashes water on to his face. He stares at himself in the mirror. He feels the familiar regret and nausea that comes after he indulges his demon, but this time it is violence, not sex that he regrets. Fear, not relief that he feels.

"It is a statistical fact that the wicked work harder to reach hell than the righteous do to enter heaven."

Righteous and Wicked

~Josh Billings

The black Jeep waits for them, and Edward helps her inside. "Did you have a good time?" Bella benignly asks as they begin to drive home from the club.

He has an impulse to tell her what has happened, and he probably should, but he won't.

If he tells her what happened, the way he handled Tanya, he fears that Bella will be appalled - and she damn well should be.

Edward is ashamed by his inability to control himself. Although he did not give in to the temptation to satisfy his sickness with Tanya, what he did to her was no less sick. He has been rough with women while pleasing them, but he has never been violent. He has never allowed that shadow from his childhood to surface within himself. And though Tanya may have deserved it, and though he may have left her with only a bruise, he is no less repulsed by himself.

Edward reaches across the dark car and takes Bella's hand, then pulls it to his lips and leaves a gentle kiss. "Yes, amorcita. I did."

Bella awakens to the sound of banging. On a Saturday. She forces her eyes open and feels the empty space next to her, where Edward should be. She sits up. Her body is sore and her hair is a ratty mess. She is topless, in only a pair of black lace panties. The top sheet is tangled around her body, and the bottom sheet has pulled away from the four corners of her mattress. She rubs her eyes and sees that her comforter is on the floor along with scattered, strewn clothing. Her bra hangs from the desk chair, and one of Edward's socks is dangling on her lampshade. It looks like a bomb went off...or a storm hit.

She smiles remembering how her bedroom got this way...

Kisses and whispers, and his mouth and his hands and his body. Eyes closed, eyes open, his tongue and his fingers and his breath and his hair. Over and over again.

Righteous and Wicked

She sighs and lies back down, but her smile fades as she remembers something else about last night. The way he was with her...there was something different about it-- as though he were making a memory of her, as though he were trying to grasp onto something that he fears will soon float away.

Beside the passion, there was fear in his eyes.

She feels unsettled and grabs her robe. She rushes downstairs, anxious to shake that image of him from her mind. She finds Edward in her kitchen, the counter cluttered with dirty bowls and dishes. It smells like sugar and warm butter.

"Hey," she greets him.

He turns around, spatula in hand. "Hey. I'm making pancakes. Well, I'm trying to...I sort of suck at this."

He laughs softly at himself, and Bella can't help but smile. She approaches him slowly. His blue eyes are on the frying pan, then the floor...and then his eyes are on hers. Even after all they have shared; she still has to stifle a gasp when she looks at him. She stands so close, but does not touch him. She watches as he swallows hard, his forehead creased. The look of worry, or fear, or whatever it was that she saw last night, still lives on his beautiful face, and it is breaking Bella's heart.

"Edward, what is it? What's going on inside your head? Tell me, please." She takes the spatula from his hand and rests it on the stove, then shuts the burner off.

His eyes are downcast and she takes his tortured face in her tiny hands. "Look at me...what is it?"

He speaks slowly, deliberately. "Bella, have you ever wished you could undo something?"

"Edward, you *know* that I have. What is it that you want to take back? You are *so* different now. You're not the man you used to be. What is it that you want

Righteous and Wicked

undone?"

He doesn't answer, but brings his lips to hers. He kisses her, and she accepts this reply.

His strong hands and long fingers wrap around the satin that covers her bare back. The kiss still holds the desperate fear she saw in his eyes last night, and all Bella can do is try to make it go away with her touch.

He hums against her skin as he kisses her deeply. His hands open her robe, and then her robe is on the floor, then *she* is on the floor, and his sweet face is hovering over hers.

He kisses her neck and her breasts. She watches him, and his lips. His hand finds its way between her legs, and his mouth is at her ear. "I want to change it all, Bella. Every day before I found you. I want to wash it all away, make it better, make it clean, make it good for you. I want to deserve you, Bella. Eu quero ser tudo para você, tudo que você deveria ter, e muito mais."

His voice is laden with heartfelt sincerity. Bella can hear that he truly believes he is undeserving of her.

"Edward, you are all I want. Don't say those kinds of things. I'd never change you. You are all I want... you are perfect, just like this...." Her hands pull his clothes off of his body. Then his tongue in her mouth, and he's buried deep inside her. Her dark hair is splayed against the pale tiles. Her soft flesh is pressed against his hard body. Her legs wrap around him, and her back arches against his hips. He increases his pace from languid to hurried. He rocks and pounds against her, and it feels so good. She gasps for breath and holds his rough jaw in her palms. "Look at me, Edward..."

His eyes are open, and they hold her gaze. She does not see the fear now. She sees deep inside of him, where her name is etched on his soul, and it fills her with more happiness than she has ever known.

Righteous and Wicked

He kisses her, and his hands cradle her head. He moves roughly where she wants to feel it, but he is gentle as well. He forgets the evil that is trying to enter his heaven. Bella is the most beautiful, and precious treasure he has ever found. His chest may burst from what he feels inside. No darkness, just her. Just her, just Bella, just love.

She steps out of the shower and runs her hand over her wrists, over the thumb shaped bruises. A small piece of him. Tanya treasures it.

An attraction has bloomed and twisted into obsession. She feels proud that she was able to get Edward to experience such intense emotion, and she is confident in her ability to force him to reach that peak again.

He stands back, his work boots are covered in paint. He wipes his hands on his jeans as he admires his work and lets out a deep breath. The house is finally complete.

It's beautiful. He is proud, but the feeling is fleeting. Creating has always been his form of penance, and he continues to need absolution. The fact that he wants to be better, and the reality that he is not, incessantly plagues him.

He has been checking over his shoulder, his ears trained to listen for the sound of the white car. He dreads Tanya's return, but he is sure that it is inevitable.

He closes his eyes and focuses on something better. Bella. His heart warms, and he smiles, but the voice in his head reminds him that in spite of her reassurances, he will never truly be deserving of her. He will never be good enough. He will never be the kind of man that she needs. If he left, would she be able to find that man? Is it selfish for him to persist in his desire to keep her when she could have so much more? Someone truly gentle and kind who is not constantly fighting against the dark?

He doesn't have the strength to stay away from her, and that weakness, that failure to do what is right, saddens him even more.

Righteous and Wicked

He turns away and gets in the Jeep. He has decided his course and he is on his way to get a present for the woman he loves.

ThumpThumpThump

Edward knocks on Bella's door, flowers in hand. The wind picks up and assaults the chime. He turns to look at the silver cylinders that once drove him insane. He now loves the sweet tones that they emit.

She opens the door, and she is lovely. Her hair down in soft waves, her body contained in a creamy rose-colored strapless dress. Her face carries a blush that matches the shade of the fabric that is barely covering her sweet smooth skin. She is gorgeous.

"You look...very pretty." Edward reveals what he has concealed behind his black suited body. Red roses--for her. The gift that he has for her is hidden in his coat pocket, and he will wait for the right moment to give it to her.

She giggles and fidgets and takes the flowers. The couple is adorably awkward. If someone were watching them, that person would think they were on their very first date. If someone were watching them, their heart would melt at the sweetness of this moment.

If that someone were sane, they would think that our Edward and Bella are absolutely perfect for one another. But the person who *is* watching them thinks none of these things.

"Thank you. Let me put these in water and then we can get going," Bella says, and Edward follows her inside. She puts the bouquet on the kitchen table, right next to the open invitation to the engagement party. Then Edward takes her hand and they are on their way.

This is the night that will change everything.

Eric slips his cuff links on and combs his dark hair. He grabs a condom and puts it in his jacket pocket. He is set on having his way with Bella. He is so

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confident in his game, and he rarely fails to get what he wants-the luxury of being a wealthy and handsome man. She will be helpless against his charms. She'll practically beg for it. He gets in his Mercedes and speeds down the highway.

The Moonstone restaurant is situated high on a bluff overlooking the Pacific ocean. Edward and Bella approach in his Jeep, just as the sun is setting. Pink and orange saturate the sky. It is breathtaking as it melts down into the sea. But to the East, dark clouds billow and gather, and the early evening sky is lit with a flash of distant lightning. A storm is coming.

They enter the candlelit foyer, and Bella finds their place card. They walk to their seats and see that Alice, Jasper, Rose and Emmett are seated with them, as well as a man Bella has never seen before.

"Bella, Edward, this is Eric," Jasper formally introduces them. Edward shakes Eric's hand thinking nothing of it, but he is shocked when Eric brings Bella's delicate fingers to his lips and kisses her hand. His smug expression makes Edward uneasy.

Bella's face flushes at the unexpected contact, and Edward feels envy and irritation rush through him. He snakes his arm around her back and jostles the table as he does so, knocking over an empty wine glass. He clears his throat and composes himself. "Bella, would you like to dance?" Edward asks a rhetorical question, and guides her to the dance floor.

Once they are alone, it is easy for Bella to shake off the creepy vibe she got from Eric, but it is not so easy for Edward to let his jealous anger fade.

Bella rests her head against his chest, and the couple dances silently, happy to be alone together in a crowded place, isolated in their bubble, like plastic figurines in a snow globe.

Edward sighs against her as their feet and their bodies move together in tender unison. "Bella, if I never dance with anyone else, ever again, I will be happy forever. Só você, amorcita."

Righteous and Wicked

That promise of eternity makes Bella's eyes fall contentedly closed, but they flutter open when she hears thunder rumbling in the distance.

Tanya watches from her secluded position in the woods as a green rental car pulls into Bella's driveway.

A man gets out. He is tall and lean with jet black hair. She sees him knock on the door and peek in the windows of the white house.

Tanya smiles, knowing that she can be of service to him. Or more truthfully, he can be of great service to her.

"Hello," she greets him, and the large man startles at her voice. She ascends the porch steps so that she is standing next to him. "Are you looking for Bella? Me too." She gestures to the window. "See that invitation on the table? She's at a party. The Moonstone restaurant. I can tell you where it is."

Translation: "I want to be everything to you, all you should have, and more." "Only you, my love."

Bella and Edward are dancing to: "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" - Roberta Flack. You can listen on the blog!

Short chapter, did my best with the holiday weekend. PLEASE REVIEW!

xxx

Chapter 24: A Thousand Times Over

A/N: Thanks to Team Wicked: PlayingWithFire, Bleriana, RoseArcadia and eglantine16!

I am giving you a tissue warning for this chapter.

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"Some choices we live not only once, but a thousand times over, remembering them for the rest of our lives."

~Richard Bach

Righteous and Wicked

The warm air that hangs over the pacific ocean rises. It is pushed upward by swift gusts of wind. The warm air rapidly rises and meets with colder temperatures. Warm and cool battle against each other, trying to equalize the imbalance. The oppositional air masses press and smash against each other creating aggressive thunder, spectacular lightning, and punishing rain.

Eric watches the couple dance. He has been misled, and his pride is bruised. He is annoyed that he was brought here on a supposed blind date, and the girl is already with someone else. *She must be a whore*, he thinks. He smiles to himself at the possibilities which that reality would afford him. His eyes roam her legs and he thinks of all the things he'd like to do to her, but clearly he won't get the chance tonight. Eric shoots Jasper a nasty and disappointed look, but Jasper is too busy whispering to his wife to notice.

Eric sinks back into his seat. He contemplates leaving, but then he sees a tuxedo clad waiter.

Free food, open bar. If he isn't going to get lucky, he might as well get exceptionally drunk, and let Bella and her man bear the brunt of his irritation with this fucked-up situation.

Edward is on his fourth glass of scotch, and the waiter brings him another. Bella can smell the alcohol on his breath. He has had *way* too much to drink. His leg jostles up and down violently with tension. It shakes beneath the white table cloth. Bella eyes him warily. He seems off, he seems angry, and she knows that it is because of the man sitting to her left.

Eric is drunk, and has made several unwarranted, snide, and rude comments, but Bella and Edward are the only ones that have seemed to have noticed this display. Bella caught Eric unabashedly looking at her cleavage and the only assumption she can make is that this man is attracted to her, and is envious that she is here with Edward. *Why else would he be so insulting? Is he trying to get a rise out of Edward?*

"So you're a teacher, is that right?" Eric asks Bella as he sips his seemingly endless drink.

Righteous and Wicked

Edward stuffs a forkful of food in his mouth in an effort to hold his tongue.

"Yes, at St. Robert's School for Girls," Bella replies.

"And you find that rewarding?" Eric shifts his body to face her. His knee is touching hers and the proximity makes Bella uncomfortable.

"Yes, I do. It's an amazing experience, making a difference in a child's life. I love what I do."

"The pay must be pathetic, especially in a Catholic school. Doesn't that get under your skin? Working so hard for such little money?" His tone is confrontational.

"Um, it's not really about money for me. That's not why I do it. I enjoy helping people, especially children," Bella attempts to politely explain.

"You should just have a child of your own and give it up. You're basically just a professional babysitter anyway, right? You know the expression, those that can, do- those that can't, teach."

Bella feels like the wind has been knocked out of her. She has heard that expression a million times from many small minded people. *That* is something she can shake off, but the jab about having a baby hurts her deeply.

And Edward knows it. She sees Edward's fist clench so hard that his knuckles turn white. This is not going to end well.

Edward stands. He walks around Bella's chair and looms over Eric. He is struggling to keep his rage contained. He almost whispers to him. "I think you need to apologize to my girl for being such a rude fucking prick." He is seething, but his appearance is still calm, Bella can see that he is about to boil over.

Eric stands. The copious amount of alcohol he has imbibed causes him to sway. "Why don't you fuck off? I'm talking to her--not you."

One more fucking comment and I'm gonna break this guy. Edward has tolerated Eric's bullshit out of respect for Emmett and Rosalie, but now he has crossed the line. Edward feels himself fading away--any semblance of decorum, or calm, or sanity. It all evaporates and is replaced with an acidic, corrosive, violent impulse.

He draws his clenched fist back and it flies. He has no control over himself. He does not feel the sharp impact of his fist meeting Eric's face. A thud assaults his stomach. His pulse pounds. He hears screams, and glass breaking...and Bella's voice.

The sweet sound almost pulls him back, it almost drags him out of the blackest depths. But even she can not save him now. The dark impulse that lives deep inside of him, the monster he constantly tries to constrain, has risen to the surface.

He wants to kill Eric. To end his life for hurting the person he loves. All of the hurt she has suffered in the past is something he can't change, but he *can* change this. *This* moment. He can break this mother-fucker's bones, and split his flesh, and make him bleed. He can repair all of the wrongs that have even been done to himself and to Bella by beating this enemy senseless.

Something wet splatters on his face and he is on the floor. A quick, sharp pain to his head. Then, he is on top of a lumpy mass. And his fist and his fist and his fist. He kneels over the distorted flesh and jabs and jabs over and over again. Cracking bones, and knuckles sinking deep into the object of his hate.

More screaming, and "Stop it!" and "No!" and Bella's voice. "Edward! Edward! Edward!"

And then her voice shrieking in pain.

Then a hand is on him and the light spins around him, and he can't move.

Righteous and Wicked

She knew this would happen, but it is no less shocking when it does. He moves like an animal. He is a blur.

In the blink of an eye, Eric is sprawled out on the table. Glasses fall and shatter on the floor.

Someone screams- is that her own voice? The whole world slows and sounds are muffled. She can't move.

Eric punches Edward and she wants to rush to him, but she is frozen.

Then Edward tackles Eric, and they slam to the floor. He is completely out of control. It's like he has become a different person, an untamed beast, a savage. A mess of fists and grunts crumples together. Bella can not believe her eyes as Edward beats Eric. He punches his face mercilessly, blood splatters all around him. Eric has his arms crossed in front of him in an effort to shield his face and defend himself. He is no longer trying to fight back, but that does not affect Edward's destructive hands. So violent, so cruel.

Bella is horrified.

It feels like forever, but it has only been moments. Finally, Bella snaps out of her shocked trance and her feet move. She rushes toward them and tries to grab Edward, to get his attention. She knows that if he looks in her eyes he will come out of his rage. He will stop his unwavering assault.

She reaches for him, but Edward will *not* be stopped. He swings at Eric again and again; his elbow flies back and catches Bella forcefully in the eye. She staggers in pain, her palm pressed against her aching eye socket. It immediately begins to swell. She is dizzy, but through her blurred vision she can see that Emmett has pulled Edward off of the destroyed, bloody, mangled mess that was once Eric's face. Bella feels betrayed by Edward's actions. Though it was unintentional, she never dreamed he would hurt her this way. She never thought he was capable of inflicting this kind of pain.

Righteous and Wicked

She falters and someone grabs her, shielding her and dragging her out of harm's way. The arms that hold her feel oddly familiar. "It's okay, baby. I've got you."

And that voice is familiar.

She most definitely knows that voice.

Jacob enters the restaurant, alone. The blond woman directed him here by drawing a map on a scrap of paper he found in the rental car. She was sweet and helpful, and he is thankful she was there. Otherwise, he would have been forced to wait for Bella at the house for God knows how long.

He is anxious to see her. To hold her. To beg her for forgiveness.

He tentatively ambles inside. Couples are dancing and some are seated, soft music plays. His eyes search for his wife's fair features. Her luminous skin, her long shimmering hair. And her eyes. He can not wait to see her eyes.

A commotion catches his attention. Jacob sees a tall man in a black suit suddenly attack another. The brawl is exceptionally violent, the disarray is a surreal vision in this elegant location.

He walks toward the men, hoping to stop them.

And then he sees her.

She is distraught, screaming and crying. Her hands are on either side of her face, and her shocked and pained expression causes him to rapidly run to her. She is attempting to grab on to one of the men with her tiny hands, but her effort to make peace is futile. An elbow flies and she stumbles, holding on to her head. She is in obvious pain. Jacob is lucky enough to pull his wife away before she is injured further.

The feel of her frame in his arms is instantly soothing. She feels like home. "It's okay, baby. I've got you."

Righteous and Wicked

He vows to never leave her side again.

"Edward! Fucking stop it! Are you crazy?" Emmett shouts in Edward's ear, snapping him out of his bloodthirsty trance.

The adrenaline that courses through Edward's veins enables him to feel no pain, but he looks down at his battered and blood covered hands...then at Eric's smashed face...then at Bella.

She is buried in the chest of another man. A man he who wears an expression of nothing but deep rooted concern and love. A man that Edward instinctively knows is Bella's husband. They look like a couple that have held each other this way for years and years. They look like they belong together.

Jacob slides his hand over Bella's hair; he whispers to her and tries to comfort her. She looks safe in his arms.

In this moment, Edward sees that loving her is not enough. He knows that what he has in his pocket is a dream. It was all a dream, and now he is waking up.

Edward surveys the once pleasant room. The scene before him is a chaotic catastrophe.

And he is the cause of it.

Finally, Bella looks up. Her cheeks are tear-stained, her right eye is bruised and swollen shut. So much pain, all because of him.

A flock of guests are tending to the beaten man on the floor, Jasper and Alice among them. They all look at Edward with disgust.

And he deserves it.

An ambulance siren screams in the distance. "Edward, you should probably get out of here," Emmett warns him.

Righteous and Wicked

His heart is pounding, and his drunken state returns in a flood as the adrenaline fades from his blood. His stomach convulses with nausea. He is sickened by himself. He is evil. He will never be good. He will never be right for her. Everything he thought could be true is forgotten.

A look of apology and sorrow is all he can give to her.

Emmett releases him from his grasp, and then he runs.

Jacob. My Jacob.

She has dreamed of this. She has longed for this moment. When he would return and take her pain, *their* pain away. She prayed for so long that he would come back to her one day and want to heal from their loss together. Her prayer has been answered. She breathes in the scent of him, and she is lost in his soft and protective touch. The touch that was absent from her life when she needed it most.

Then, a crack of thunder booms and drags Bella back to reality.

Edward. My Edward.

Her eyes find his, and she gasps in horror. He is covered in blood. The Storm that she has seen so many times is now dominating his whole body. Rioting and pulsing through him. He is shaking, confined in Emmett's thick arms.

Her head swims. She can barely see straight, but she is dying to go to him, to take him away from this place.

But the prison of Jacob's arms refuses to let her go.

The look she saw last night is nothing compared to what she sees in Edward's eyes now. Whatever fear he had then has been realized. Emmett lets him go, and he begins to run.

No.

Righteous and Wicked

"Edward! Edward, No! Wait! Wait for me! Please, don't go...don't go!" she screams a desperate plea and struggles to escape Jacobs embrace. Finally, she is successful, but he catches her hand in his.

"Baby, where are you going? Stay away from that freak." Jacob clutches her hand.

"No! Let me go, Jacob, I have to..." she halts.

It is not his hand or his words that stop her; it is the feel of something hard, pressing into her hand. The object that has bound her to Jacob in so many ways.

His wedding ring.

It digs into her hand as her grips her tightly. The band of gold magnetically holds her to him. It pulls her back; it pulls her down, like an iron anchor dragging her to the bottom of the cold, black, sea.

She looks into Jacob's deep, dark eyes and she sees the past. *Their* past. Every moment of their life together is reflected there, and she knows she can't leave. She is afraid for Edward, and she is angry at her husband, but she won't turn her back on him the way he turned his back on her. She is stronger now, she is better, and she owes it to herself to get some answers from him. An explanation for why he abandoned her in her their most sorrowful hour.

She watches Edward disappear through the door, and though it hurts her to let him suffer the night alone, she must. She has to make peace with Jacob, so that her heart can finally and truly be free.

Tomorrow. I will go to him tomorrow, she thinks.

But fate may have other plans.

Edward bursts through the door and out into the rain-soaked parking lot. He is drunkenly staggering, his hands are sticky with blood, his ears ring from the

Righteous and Wicked

shouts and adrenaline. He slumps over, and places his hands on his knees to catch his breath. He hears his name being called over and over again. "Edward, wait, wait, Edward. Stop!"

He does not heed this call. He pushes forward through the rain toward the black jeep.

The person who is running after him is not Bella.

It is Rosalie.

"Edward! Wait!" Her heels click against the asphalt as she chases him; she wants to stop him from leaving and breaking Bella's fragile heart. But he is in his car, and then he is gone. All she can see through the pouring rain are red tail lights and a soaking-wet, small and crumpled white box in the now empty parking space.

Rosalie stoops down to pick it up the box and then opens it. A small gold key and a note are inside.

" You have the key to my heart, now here is the key to my home. A home that I hope will not only be mine, but ours. I love you more than words can say, amorcita."

Any ice Rosalie had in heart for Edward has melted. A tear escapes her eye, and she cradles the small white box in her hands.

Edward swerves along the slick road, barely making it back to his trailer. He avoids his own reflection in the rear view mirror. He can't even stand to look at himself. The temptation to drive off a cliff is significantly tempting. He pulls into his driveway and finds the white car parked there.

He slumps his shoulders in defeat, lets out a labored sigh, and then gets out of the car. Tanya stands in the rain before him.

He says nothing.

Righteous and Wicked

She says nothing.

He unlocks his front door, and Tanya smiles as she follows him inside.

Sometimes in our own lives we wonder *why* people do the things that they do. When reading fiction we are afforded the decadent luxury of seeing inside the minds and hearts of characters and the "why" questions are answered for us. Sorry for the heart fail. This chapter was hard to write.

Song that inspired the chapter: "Sunburn"- Muse

Please review.

Chapter 25: Tremble My Heart

A/N: Thanks to Team Wicked: eglantine16, Bleriana, RoseArcadia and Playin With Fire! They are unbelievably awesome and supportive.

Although I do not have the time to reply to many reviews, I do read all of them and the feedback is very important to me, so thank you for taking the time to write them.

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He says nothing.

She says nothing.

He unlocks his front door, and Tanya smiles as she follows him inside.

"Who said love would be constant?
Who said love would be effortless?
I used to see with a blindfold,
I used to speak in a whisper.

Righteous and Wicked

Who said love could be trusted?
Who said love couldn't fail?
I was guided by a tremor
to leave the beaten trail.

I left my heart unguarded
for a second or two
and now I'm back where I started-
with a feeling untrue.

Who said love would be stronger?
Who said love would prevail?
I was guided by a shooting star.
I was ready to set sail."

~Amandine

To have faith is one of the biggest challenges that life can present. To believe without seeing, to trust without knowing.

To continue to hold on to those beliefs and to that trust, when everything else is telling you not to--to keep faith when the world is collapsing around you, and you are faced with things that you do not understand--to have faith in those moments is truly brave.

Floating above himself, Edward looks down at the scene before him. The drunken fog around him is thick, and he is lost in it.

Floating.

He watches himself open the fridge and take out an ice cold beer. He watches himself hold it to his sore and swollen cheek. He watches, as he rinses the thick and sticky blood from his hands. The water runs crimson, then soft pink, then clear. The blood washes away but the searing pain in his heart does not.

Edward watches, from his floating place, as Tanya sits down on his bed.

"What are you doing here, Jacob? How did you find me?" Bella asks, amid the chaos that was once her friend's engagement party.

Jacob dotingly holds a napkin filled with ice to her bruised eye. "I came back to Phoenix. Your...Renee told me that you had come back here. She was about as happy to see me as you seem to be, Bella. I realize that I deserve any wrath you have in your heart for me, but please know that I am here because I love you...and I'm sorry," he says with contrition.

She aggressively grabs his wrist, and he lowers his hand from her eye. "You're *sorry*? Jacob, you *destroyed* me. How can you expect me to ever forgive you for that?" Her voice is a venomous whisper.

"I don't expect this to be easy, but we need to work through this, baby. I want to fix this. I miss you. *I need you*, Bella." He leans in to kiss her forehead.

She moves to avoid his lips. Her head throbs with pain. She can't do this. Not here. Not now.

"Jacob, just take me home."

Edward leans against the counter. His head still floats, disconnected and numb. Tanya sits on his bed, but he sees Bella. He looks for Bella in her eyes.

He feels himself unraveling like a discarded spool of thread; he is spinning completely out of control. He stands there looking at the blond woman on his bed, the architect of this outcome, ready and waiting for him. He feels himself splitting in two.

Two choices. Two paths. He looks down both of the roads that he could take. One is dark, and one is light. He lets himself imagine the outcome that each of these journeys would provide...

... Tanya could make this feeling go away. He could have power over her, over something. He could let his dark self rip her clothes from her body. He could

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make that smirk on her face melt into a look of ecstasy. He could taste her mouth and then make her taste him. He imagines the feel of her mouth around his cock. He could hold her head there until she finished, until she swallowed what he gave her. That release would just be the first. He could let his lust dominate him. He would bend her and fuck her a million different ways. He could slam his body into hers until this sick, sinking feeling went away...

...He could leave. He could run through the muddy path to Bella's door and wait for her. He could grab her and hold her and kiss her wounds. He could try to take her pain away. He could make love to her. To the woman that he loves. The only person who has ever seen the good in him. Their love would outshine any past she has with Jacob. Her husband would leave when he saw the life that Bella has now--with him...

... He could stop fighting this fucking endless battle. He could just finally surrender and never look back. He could stop trying to be something that he is not. Let the abyss envelop him. He could let himself sink inside of Tanya, her wet heat all around him. Her cries of passion a siren song luring him further away from the life that he tried, and failed , to lead...

...He could take Bella away from the decrepit and empty home which she is lost inside of. He could give her something new. Something not yet touched by the evil of this world. And in that new place, that new home, he could continue to hold on to the strength that she gives him. He could try to hold his head above water with her by his side. With her hand in his...

... Just touching, just feeling, just owning her body. And when she is spent and he has used her for what she is, he could hunt for more, and never stop hunting...

...He could never hunt again. Never hurt anyone again. Fight against the black need and the violent impulses...

Edward floats, and watches as he travels down these divergent paths. One is easy. One is hard. One he deserves. One he does not.

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He stands, staring at Tanya. Her lips move but he does not hear a word she says. She begins to disrobe. She unbuttons her shirt, her body damp from the rain. Her skin glistens with moisture and her rain-soaked, golden hair falls across her haunting face.

Edward moves. He comes away from the floating place and walks toward the willing woman who sits, half naked on his bed. Her face anticipates the devious indulgence, the desire to experience dark sin is written all over her face and body.

Edward takes painfully slow steps toward her. The beautiful blond, the snake with the apple. His temptation. A woman like all of his other victims, ready to be taken, ready to see the dark mark on his soul.

He takes slow steps. He licks his lips as he approaches her, and takes her bare shoulders in his hands. He guides her off the bed so that she is standing before him, her shirt unbuttoned, her pants undone. He looks at her breasts, then at her eyes. She smiles.

But Edward does not smile back. "Get - the *fuck* - out - of my life." The words come out of him, laced with the disgust he feels for her.

Tanya's jaw drops. Her face falls. Her expression turns into a scowl. She jerks away from his hate filled hands and pulls her shirt closed. She grabs her things in a livid haste, enraged at the rejection she has just endured.

She grabs the doorknob, but stops before she opens the door. She turns and looks at the gorgeous man that she now knows she will never get to have. If he wouldn't turn to her now, in this most lonely hour of his life, than he never will. She has failed.

"Let me ask you something, *Edward*." She says his name like it is a loathsome and dirty word. "Do you really think that she will ever give you what you need? Little Miss Prim and Proper? Someone like *her* will never be enough for someone like *you*. You'll get sick of her. *She* will get sickened by *you*. I know what kind of man you are. You'll wake up one day and look at her, and you

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will feel empty. She can't fill you. She'll wake up one day, and look at you, and wonder why she wasted her time. It can never work, Edward. The smartest thing you can do is to get the fuck out of here. Happily ever after is bullshit, and you fucking know it." She throws open the door and then she is finally, finally, gone.

Edward sits down on the edge of his bed and rakes his long fingers through his damp and disheveled hair. He closes his eyes...and he is floating again. He does not want to believe that she is right.

A third path presents itself to him.

This path hurts. This path is hard. But suddenly, he knows that it is the path he *must* walk. This path will lead him where he needs to be. The path that will save not only Bella, but himself. The righteous path.

He stands and grabs his coat. He has to go to her. He walks up the path toward her house. The last few stubborn rain drops fall on his head. He sees the light from the porch. It casts the driveway in a yellow glow. A green car is parked next to Bella's truck, and Edward knows who it must belong to. The better man. Bella's savior. He is inside with her, and Edward is on the outside looking in.

Dejected, he returns to his trailer. He opens a drawer, takes out a pen and paper, and forces his nearly broken hand to write.

Jacob holds Bella's body to his as he shields her from the rain. They ascend the porch steps of her house and the wind chime clatters in the wind, the song that rings out is almost urgent. It is like it is trying to warn her.

She takes off her shoes and sits down at the kitchen table. Remembering his wife's favorite drink, Jacob fills a tea pot and places it in the stove, then he joins her.

Bella takes a deep breath. "Jacob, I have something I need to tell you. This may be shocking. It may be hard for you to hear..."

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He interrupts. "Baby, I know now, that there is *nothing* that can keep me from you. Nothing that could make me love you any less--"

Bella shakes her head at his pledge. "Stop! Just listen to me please. I--I met someone...I met someone else..."

He stands. He is angry. "What?"

"Jacob you left me..." she tries to explain.

"So that means you violate your vow to me? I left because I needed some time. I have not touched another woman, Bella. I have not even *looked* at another woman! You are my whole life. How could you do this to me? To us?"

She stands. "Me? You *abandoned* me! What the fuck did you think was going to happen?" she screams.

Jacob is shocked by his wife's use of profanity. He has never heard her speak like this. He wants to know what man has stolen her from him. "Who is he?"

"His name is Edward. He's--he's the man that beat the other tonight." She looks at the floor, studying the pattern of the tile, afraid to meet his eyes.

"You *have* to be joking. That man is a monster, Bella. I could tell from the second I saw him. No good man could do what he did. Beating someone within an inch of his life? Hurting a woman, and then running out? Yeah, he's a real prize." Jacob is shocked that Bella would associate with that man.

"You don't know him Jacob. He was here for me when *you* weren't." Bella thinks of Edward, alone in his trailer right now, hurting. She wants to go to him so badly.

"Baby, I know I messed up. I'm sorry for what I said just now. I'm sure that he was good to you, when I wasn't here. I know that I should have called you, I should have explained. Baby, it just hurt *so* much. I was grief stricken. Please, Bella. You *have* to forgive me. I'm ready to try again." He walks toward her

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and grips her waist. He presses his forehead against hers.

Lips that she once loved, and craved linger just a breath from hers. A part of her wants to kiss him, to feel his familiar lips. He leans into her...it would be so easy...

But she resists. She pushes him away. "Jacob, I *love* him."

He places his hand over his heart as he backs away from her. His face reflects the pain he feels. Pain from the wound she has just given him. He stares at her blankly.

"I love him, Jacob. And I--I want a divorce." And with those words a ten ton weight is lifted.

Jacob shakes his head. He can not accept this. "You don't know what you're saying, Bella."

"Yes I do," She insists, confidently.

"I'm not giving up, Bella. I won't." His words don't match the sound of defeat in his voice.

The look on his face tugs at Bella's heart strings. It is so hard for her to hurt him. Her best friend. Her love for so long. She shows him some mercy. "Just stay the night, Jacob. We can talk more tomorrow."

Jacob walks out into the now clear and moonlit night. The storm has passed, but the smell of fresh rain lingers in the air. He opens the trunk of the rental car and takes out his luggage. The sound of screeching tires startles him. He notices Bella's mailbox is open, and he walks toward it. Inside he finds a white envelope.

It is simply labeled, "*My Bella.*"

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He looks at the white house. The lights are off, and he knows that Bella has gone to sleep. He wavers for a moment, but he cannot resist the temptation. He opens the letter and reads:

" My Sweet Bella,

I know that I have made promises to you. It may seem like I am now breaking those promises, but you have to know that I am doing this because you are the best thing, the most important thing in my life. And keeping those promises is all that I want to do.

I want to be better. I want to give you everything that you deserve. I want to give you the best parts of me, and I don't want to have to fight against the darkness inside me any longer. I want our lives to be filled with light, and in order for me to make that dream come true, there are some things that I have to do. And I must do them now. I have to do them alone.

Maybe I am making a mistake, but, Bella, I have to try. For you. For us. It may seem like I am a coward, but I please believe me when I say that leaving is the most courageous thing that I will ever do. I need you to know that I am not running away, and I am not asking you to wait for me.

You owe it to yourself to search for happiness, and I owe it to myself to try to get better. And if that happens, then and only then will I return.

I want to come back to you, but I won't until I am certain that I deserve to hold on to your heart.

I am leaving mine with you.

With infinite love, I am yours always-

Edward"

Jacob grips the letter in his hands. He knows what he has to do.

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The sun rises over the mountains. A harsh yellow light greets the deep, lush, green. Edward grips the steering wheel. He drives with purpose. He drives faster than he should down the winding mountain road. Bella's face is all he sees, and the ache inside of him is sharp and deep. It consumes him and he knows that it will not soon go away. Maybe it never will.

Bella's beautiful face owns his mind. Her smile, her laugh, her hand in his. It hurts him to know that her heart will keep beating without him. That beautiful smile of hers will continue to grace her face long after he has disappeared. He is not sure where he is going, but he knows what he hopes to find.

He winds down the mountain. The road stretches, vast and empty before him.

He is alone.

Bella wakes and feels the place beside her bed. Edward's place. There is no one there, but she feels a presence in the room. She opens her eyes to find her soon to be ex-husband sitting on the bed, staring at her.

"Jacob, what are you..."

"I need to give you something Bella." He swallows hard and hands her the letter he found last night.

Bella opens it and reads.

She reads about heartbreak. She reads about love. She reads about strength and fear. The words she reads touch her deeply, and tears escape from her eyes. She reads words written in script that she recognizes.

Jacob's handwriting.

"... I want to come back to you, but I won't until I am certain that I deserve to hold on to your heart.

I am leaving mine with you.

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With infinite love, I am yours always-

Jacob"

Bella mistakenly believes that this is the note Jacob intended to leave for her when he ran away from their life together. She wants to believe it. She has wished for this, and though it is late, it is here. The words she reads fill a hole in her heart. She wipes the tears from her eyes, and embraces Jacob, but in her heart, she wishes that it were Edward.

Jacob breathes in the sweet scent of her. What he has done is a sin. It is deceitful. But right now, he doesn't care.

I know that readers are nervous about HEA. As an author, I do not want to give away the ending to the fic. I am asking you to have faith. Thanks so much for sticking with me and these characters. xxx

Song that inspired the chapter: "Heart Tremor" - Amandine

Please review!

Chapter 26: Bitter Blessings

A/N: Thanks to Team Wicked: eglantine16, Bleriana, RoseArcadia and Playin With Fire.

Righteous and Wicked is nominated for three Golden Lemons "Best Voyeur Moment" "Best Go-To Lemon" & "Best Banner"(by Jadalulu). I appreciate you taking the time to go to the site and vote- (goldenlenonawards[dot]com).

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From the previous chapter:

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Jacob's handwriting.

"... I want to come back to you, but I won't until I am certain that I deserve to hold on to your heart.

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Bella mistakenly believes that this is the note Jacob intended to leave for her when he ran away from their life together. She wants to believe it. She has wished for this, and though it is late, it is here. The words she reads fill a hole in her heart. She wipes the tears from her eyes, and embraces Jacob, but in her heart, she wishes that it were Edward.

Jacob breathes in the sweet scent of her. What he has done is a sin. It is deceitful. But right now, he doesn't care.

"What seem to us as bitter trials are often blessings in disguise."

~Oscar Wilde

Something is wrong. Different. With Jacob's arms around her, Bella feels like she is betraying not only Edward, but herself. The strides that she has taken to become the person that she is now shrink and retreat. The spark inside her dies a little at his touch.

She gently pushes him away. "Jacob, this letter...this was something I really needed to hear from you. But you should know that it doesn't change anything. Everything is different now, and I just...I can't go back."

He grinds his teeth. Bella can see that he is frustrated.

"Fine. Bella, I wish you would give me another chance, but I see that I can't force you. Let me at least take you out to dinner tonight, before I leave. Let me say goodbye the right way this time." Jacob knows that she will soon find that her...boyfriend...is gone. He knows that this discovery may change her mind.

Bella's heart twinges at Jacob's request, and she concedes to his wish with a nod. A piece of her still belongs to him, and however small it may be, it is trying to fight. Bella knows that it is in vain.

Right now she needs to see the man that owns not only her heart, but her soul.

Edward.

She walks through her yard toward the dirt path. The path that Edward made, for her.

She is almost ashamed that she was not able to be with him last night, but she knows that he will understand. He will forgive her.

The sweet and gritty smell of rain-soaked earth meets her nose, and her eyes look for the familiar sights of the new wooden house, and the silver of Edward's trailer peeking through the leaves. The house begins to make itself visible, but something is missing. No flashes of the tin trailer glimmering in the sun. She steps gingerly, like a skater testing out new ice on a frozen pond, afraid that it will crack, and she will be submerged.

She enters Edward's yard, and what she sees doesn't make any sense. Tire tracks and dead grass are all that remain in the place that was once Edward's temporary home.

Empty, like he never existed.

This can't be real.

The world spins around her. She feels heavy, like she is trapped in quicksand. She can't breathe. Her lungs gasp for air, but they are filled with lead.

He left.

Her shaking hands grasp her cell phone. She struggles to find him in her contacts. She presses send and it rings, but the sound is like a shout into an empty canyon. She wants him to answer, and she is *so* afraid that he won't.

"The number you are trying to reach is not in service. Please check the number and dial gain. The number you are trying to reach..."

The automatic and robotic voice reverberates in her head, over and over again.

Righteous and Wicked

He's gone.

She looks back at her white house. The house that holds her husband and her reality. It's like Edward was a dream.

She does not cry, or drop to her knees.

The lump in her throat swells to epic proportions. She lets out a mournful wail. It fills the wilderness with her unspeakable pain. Her song of heartbreak.

There are no words for this.

"I saw him run out after the fight, and I found this." Rosalie shows Emmett the note and the key.

He reads and shakes his head. "Wow. I-I got a voice mail from him, Rose. He said he needed to take off, but that he left Bella a letter. He said he's sorry about the fight, if that means anything to you."

"I'm not angry with him, Em. I understand why he did what he did. We should've invited Eric. I figured it would be a bit awkward, but I never dreamed it would end so violently. At this point, I'm just worried for Bella. This is going to kill her."

"Are you going to give her the box?" Emmett asks.

"Do you think that would help? I don't know what I should do." Rosalie rakes her hands through her hair.

"What would you want if you were her?" Emmett asks. "Wouldn't you want to know?"

Bella is a zombie. She sits in the restaurant opposite Jacob. She stares blankly into space and Jacob watches her.

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Seeing her suffer is not easy, but he knows it is necessary. He knows that she will get past it. She will forget.

She will move on with her life, and he will do anything to be by her side when she does. Jacob is pretending to be supportive and caring, but he is a wolf in sheep's clothing. A shape shifter. Selfish to the core. His own desires are a constant priority. And right now, what he wants is Bella.

She does not eat the food placed in front of her. He tries to talk about reconciliation, and their future, but Bella is unresponsive.

Jacob takes her home. He holds Bella's arm as she gets out of the car. She stops. He watches her stare at the motionless wind chime that hangs on the porch.

He watches as her corpse-like state deteriorates. Bella stomps up the stairs and yanks the object down with a grunt. She looks at it, as if it could answer some unspoken question. He watches with confusion as she drops the chime into the dirt behind the Lilac bushes that line the moonlit porch.

Her behavior is odd, but he shrugs it off and follows his wife inside.

Bella runs up the stairs to her bedroom and slams the door. She never wants to hear the bittersweet sound of the wind chime again.

Edward drives until he can barely see. The silver trailer follows his jeep like a shadow.

Tired and hungry on an endless road. A man without roots, without a home; yet not completely detached. For the first time ever, leaving a place is hurting him.

Voices battle inside his head...

" You can turn around right now. Go back to her."

" You need to do this alone. You can't keep living with this burden..."

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An invisible thread is connected to his heart. It pulls and stretches as he gets further and further away...but it does not break.

And he does not turn back.

"What did the letter say? Because this key business...this is just heartbreaking. We *have* to give this to her Rose. Like, yesterday," Alice says from her seat at Rosalie's kitchen table.

"I know. I haven't talked to her yet...I don't know what the letter said. Emmett said Edward left it in Bella's mailbox, and Edward said he was sorry..."

"Do you think he's going to come back?" Alice asks.

"Would you? He fucked up. He saw Jacob. Would you come back?" Rosalie asks.

Alice folds her arms across her chest and pensively looks out the window. "I would if I was in love," she finally answers.

Rosalie nods her head. "So would I."

Bella sits in church with Jacob. The pain she feels over the loss of Edward has handicapped her. She has asked Jacob to leave, but he refuses. He insists that she needs him, and he says will not abandon her again. She is too tired and too distraught to fight against Jacob's will, so she sits beside him in a place that once brought her comfort and peace.

Every day that passes is the same. Jacob sleeps on the couch every night. He makes her dinner. He makes her breakfast. He talks to her, but she doesn't hear a word he says. She goes to work, and she comes home, and he is there.

He pretends that nothing is wrong.

Bella cannot pretend.

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She is sleepwalking.

Edward wakes in his hotel room. Every day is the same. For a moment, he has no idea where he is. He sits up, and gets his bearings. He is disoriented. It feels like a piece of him is missing.

He knows that it is better if he stays away, but he's not sure if he can do it. He leaves his hotel and walks through the streets of Portland.

He wanders aimlessly.

He ambles down a side street that is lined with posters and flyers. One catches his eye . *Dr. Jane Daryn, Recovery Specialist.*

He tears it down from the paper covered wall, and he is no longer aimless.

Yet another Sunday without Edward. Bella sits in church with her unrelenting husband. Jacob has tried to tell her that she will find her answers here. He has insisted that holding true to her faith will illuminate what is meant to be in her life.

She listens to Father Carlisle's words. "From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another..."

She looks at the devoted parishioners. She sees a mother seated in the pew across the aisle. She holds her baby to her chest, and it sleeps peacefully. That woman is blessed.

Bella is not.

Rosalie waits in the parking lot of St. Robert's. Knowing that Jacob still lingers, she wants to speak to Bella alone.

Bella exits the building burdened by a tote bag overstuffed with papers. She looks lost, disheveled. Her shoulders are slumped and Rosalie can't stand to see her in this much agony.

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"Bella!" she shouts.

Bella's head snaps up and she narrows her eyes, then a small, slight smile of recognition floats across her face.

"Hi Rose. What are you doing here?" Bella asks in a gravelly voice.

"I need to talk to you, do you have a minute?" Rose asks.

Bella gets in the passenger seat and lets out a heavy sigh. "Edward is gone."

"I know. Emmett told me," Rose says softly.

Her head perks up. "Has Edward called him? I tried to call him a hundred times, but his phone is disconnected..."

"He called Em right after he left. He said he needed to leave. And that he left you a letter."

Bella looks confused. "I didn't get any letter from him. He just left me, Rose." Her voice cracks and she softly sobs.

"Bella, I found something on the night of the party. When Edward ran out, I chased after him, and he dropped this." She hands Bella the crumpled and beaten box.

Rosalie watches her face as she reads, and fondles the key. Bella does not react the way she expects.

She crumples the note and angrily grips the key. "Why? Why would he say these things and then disappear? I feel so empty, Rose. So lost..."

"Bella, I think he left because he was ashamed. I'm sure that he'll come back..." She reaches for Bella's hand.

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Bella unleashes her fury on Rosalie. "What makes you think that? Just because your life is perfect doesn't mean everyone else's will be. It's fucking over, Rose. He's gone. And my stubborn, almost ex-husband is my roommate. My life is a joke."

"Bella, your life is not a joke. Aren't you always telling me that things happen for a reason? Even if we don't see why immediately...it will all become clear when it needs to be..."

Bella wipes her tear-streaked cheeks. "I just don't know if I believe that anymore." She grips the key until it digs into her palm. Until it hurts. Until she bleeds.

"Bella, I know that you have had promises broken, and I'm sorry that you are hurt. But you have a choice- you can sit in the bottom of the well and wait for someone to throw you a ladder, or you can climb out by yourself. What's it going to be?"

Edward has done nothing but eat, sleep, and go to his appointments. Twice a week. It feels like bullshit. It *felt* like bullshit. But now it is making sense.

He sits on the couch and fidgets. His leg bounces nervously as he waits for her to enter.

She is dressed conservatively, and with good reason. She does not tempt his heart, but she tempts his body. His impulses. His sickness. His all consuming need for control. And that is why he is here.

"How have things been?" she asks as she sits in her armchair, her clipboard dutifully placed in her lap.

Edward leans back, exasperated. "I fucking miss her. That's how I've been."

"Then why don't you go back?" Jane asks as she adjusts her glasses.

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"You know why I can't go back. She deserves happiness. She doesn't need my poison." Edward drags his hand through his hair.

"Do you think that Bella thinks you are poisonous?" Jane asks.

"I don't know. Probably not...she said she loves me." Edward remembers her voice and her smile, and her lips. He gets lost in his mind for a minute.

"And *you* love her..." Jane adds.

"Yes. So much," Edward admits. "I let her in...she let me in..." He tries to think of the right words to explain the bond he feels to her. "When you show someone a piece of your...pain...you share it with them. They take it and keep it with them, and it's like a part of you is theirs forever. I don't feel whole without her."

"Edward, part of loving someone is loving *all* of them - good and bad. You love *all* of Bella. What makes you think she doesn't love all of you? You're trying to protect her, but from what you've told me, she doesn't seem *want* protection. She wants *you*, Edward."

His heart fills with these words. He wants them to be true. He wants to give in and go back, but his mind won't let him. "That doesn't make it right."

"Who says love is right? Who says love is perfect? You resisted Tanya, you have not been with any other woman, you have not given into your addiction since you have committed to Bella. She seems to be all you crave, and she craves *you*. You need to try to let yourself be happy. Even if you think you don't deserve it."

She leans forward in her chair, forcing Edward to look her in the eye. "Edward, I'm telling you that you *do*. You deserve happiness. You are worthy. "

Bella drives home from work. She has a vision of never coming back to this place. She approaches her street, and wonders, *What if I just kept going?* She thinks of searching for Edward. She envisions herself pressing her foot to the

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gas pedal of her old truck and leaving with just the clothes on her back.

But she doesn't go through with it. She slams the brakes and turns onto her lonely street. Every day she passes Edward's empty wooden house. It is now beginning to become overgrown with tall, early summer grass.

Every time she passes this once precious place she holds her breath, like she's passing a graveyard. She closes her eyes as if that will make the pain go away.

The hurt she feels is slowly morphing into anger, and today she does not hold her breath, or close her eyes. She abruptly turns down Edward's old driveway. She is finally going to use the key he gave her. She is hoping for a sign. A clue about where he has gone.

She takes her keys from the ignition and runs her thumb over the gift that Edward never got to give her. The key that has lived unused on her key-chain for weeks.

She steps up to the front door of the house that Edward built.

As she slides the key into the lock, she hears a sound.

A car.

A chill of hope runs through her blood. She doesn't want to turn around, but she hears the car get closer.

It drives up behind her, and stops.

Song that inspired the chapter: "Gong Endir" - Sigur Ros

I would like to thank those of you who have been so supportive of this fic and of me as an author even though things have been angsty and lemonless lately. You have kept your faith in me and if I could, I would hug you- or send Stormy over to do it for me.

Righteous and Wicked

Just a few more chapters left...

Please review!

Chapter 27: Upward Over The Mountain

A/N: Thanks to Team Wicked: eglantine16, Bleriana, RoseArcadia and Playin With Fire.

Righteous and Wicked is nominated for three Golden Lemons "Best Voyeur Moment" "Best Go-To Lemon" & "Best Banner"(by Jadalulu). I appreciate you taking the time to go to the site and vote- (goldenlenonawards[dot]com). Voting closes 2/7.

Also my first fic Darkness is nom'ed for "Best AH" in the Shimmer awards! Thanks to whoever nominated me.

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From the previous chapter:

The hurt she feels is slowly morphing into anger, and today she does not hold her breath, or close her eyes. She abruptly turns down Edward's old driveway. She is finally going to use the key he gave her. She is hoping for a sign. A clue about where he has gone.

She takes her keys from the ignition and runs her thumb over the gift that Edward never got to give her. The key that has lived unused on her key-chain for weeks.

She steps up to the front door of the house that Edward built.

As she slides the key into the lock, she hears a sound.

Righteous and Wicked

A car.

A chill of hope runs through her blood. She doesn't want to turn around, but she hears the car get closer.

It drives up behind her, and stops.

"So may the sunrise bring hope where it once was forgotten."

~Iron and Wine

Restless, he tosses and turns. Sleep has been a stranger, and the empty side of the bed taunts him. His heart wants to fill it with Bella.

The empty side of the bed. His demon would fill it with a victim. But Edward's strength and resolve to get better now overshadow those impulses.

Still, he cannot sleep. Thoughts of the house he has built float through his mind's eye. He sees it standing empty beside Bella's. A constant reminder of his absence. Breaking Bella's heart every day. He feels helpless.

He looks out of the window of his hotel room at the rising sun. His dreams fade further from him with each day that passes. Dead dreams are not new to him, but *this* hurts more than the others have. The warmth from the early light sinks into his skin. He closes his eyes, and it's her face he sees.

Though the future is uncertain, he is not completely helpless. He can make some of her pain go away.

He paces his hotel room, struggling with hesitation and indecision, and then he picks up the phone.

Bella lets her hand drop, leaving the key still lodged in the lock of the unopened door. Slowly, she turns.

Her face flushes. Her hands shake.

Righteous and Wicked

She remembers the person she sees. The blond woman standing next to the white car.

It's the woman from the carnival. The woman who came to see this house...or to see Edward.

"What do you want?" Bella demands.

Tanya does not answer, but opens her trunk, and pulls out a long stake with a sign attached to it. It is as if that stake is sinking into Bella's battered heart.

The sign says "For Sale".

"I'm here to put this house on the market. *Edward* has decided to sell it," the blond says.

Lead lungs. Blurry eyes. "What?" Bella shakes her head in disbelief.

Tanya steps toward her. "This house is for sale...and *you* are trespassing."

Sharp, shooting, searing pain. "He-he called you? You spoke to him? What did he say?"

Tanya shrugs. "He said 'things just stopped working out for him'."

Anguish. Burning, crimson, primal, rage. She cannot speak. She bites her lip and tears sprout in her eyes.

"Aw, don't look so sad, sweetie," Tanya says. Her words are daggers. "I guess you just weren't enough for him."

Something inside Bella snaps, and for some reason, all she can think of is Rosalie. " *You can wait for someone to throw you a ladder, or you can climb out of the well yourself.*"

Righteous and Wicked

Something snaps, and Bella is beginning to claw her way out. She stalks toward Tanya defiantly. "You wanted to fuck him, didn't you? You little *whore*."

Tanya is shocked by the words coming out of this seemingly benign woman, but she knows how to play this game. "How do you know that I didn't?"

Bella steps even closer, so close she can smell Tanya's skanky, cheap perfume. "Because anyone who gets fucked by Edward never looks the same again. I can tell just by looking at you, you most definitely never got to feel that pleasure."

She's so close that she can whisper, the spark that burns inside speaks for her. "He can make you come so hard...his cock does *unbelievable* things. See this smile on my face? It's there because I know what it feels like to have him inside me. He fucks *so good*."

Bella can see that Tanya is shaking.

"W-well, it couldn't have been that good for *him*. He did *leave you* after all..." And Tanya drops a bomb.

Before Bella knows what has happened, her hand flies and she slaps Tanya. She hauls off and smacks her so violently, so forcefully, that she falters and lands on the hood of her white car. Blood drips from her lip and leaves tiny red specks on the hood.

Tanya cowers and all she can muster in response is a whimper. She drops the sign, slams her car door, and speeds away.

Bella feels exhilarated, but the feeling is fleeting. She looks down at the seven letters on the sign and they are the final nail in the coffin.

He is never coming back.

Bella will not allow this truth to destroy her any longer.

Righteous and Wicked

She picks up the "For Sale" sign from the grassy ground. She raises it above her head, and then plunges it into the soft earth herself. Then, she grabs her keys from the unopened door and walks away.

Bella is climbing out.

"So, you feel in control?" Jane asks.

"I feel like it's not a *need* as much as it is a *want*." Edward answers, his leg jostling nervously.

"And what do you want?" Jane asks, peering over her glasses at him.

"You know what I want. I want *her*. But this... *demon*... that chases me, that *chased* me. It has ruined my life. It has ruined everything."

"No, Edward. *You* ruined everything. You, Edward. *Your* choices. You have to own it, *own* those choices."

He shakes his head, and clenches his fist. He feels like a broken record. "I just want to be good for her. I love her so much..."

"Love is not what's lacking here, Edward. Do you really think that *you* are ready?"

Bella climbs the rickety and ragged porch and bursts through the ancient front door. She tosses her purse, then slumps down on the couch. Her hand hurts...but the pain feels good.

She stares at her father's record player, and thinks of Edward. Reminders of him linger everywhere. The first time he kissed her...

She kneels down before it, and flips through the dusty albums. She reverently examines each one, and then places her selection on the turntable.

The soft notes waft through the room, and Bella's lips mouth the words...

Righteous and Wicked

"I was just sittin' here thinkin'

of your kiss and your warm embrace,

*When the reflection in the glass that I held to my lips now, baby
Revealed the tears that was on my face*

*And baby, baby, I'd rather be blind, boy
Then to see you walk away, see you walk away from me..."*

The music's vibrations ripple through her, and she turns the volume knob all the way to the right. She sways to the music, alone. She plays it as loud as it will go, thinking of Edward... but she knows it will never be loud enough for him to hear.

Then a hand is on her back, and she startles. She jolts and abruptly turns around to find Jacob standing behind her.

He speaks, but she can't hear him over the music. "What?" she asks.

"I said TURN IT DOWN," he shouts at her, and Bella instantly obeys his command.

Then she stops herself. Her coma is breaking. His hold on her is dissolving. She stares at him. "No."

"What?" he asks.

"I said NO. This is *my* house, Jacob." Bella places her hands on her hips, challenging him.

"Bella, this is *our* house. *Our* life. When are you going to see that? Edward is gone. He's not coming back." Jacob retaliates.

"Don't talk about him like you know him, Jacob, because you don't!" Bella shouts. Her face is on fire with anger.

Righteous and Wicked

"I know that he's a coward. I may have left you, Bella, but it wasn't out of cowardice. It was a hard decision for me to leave you, and I regretted it every day."

"You left me Jacob, because it was what was best for *you*. Edward left because he thought it was what was best for me..."

And suddenly, something clicks inside of Bella.

"I want to be better. I want to give you everything that you deserve. I want to give you the best parts of me, and I don't want to have to fight against the darkness inside me any longer."

I want to come back to you, but I will not until I am certain that I deserve to hold on to your heart.

I am leaving mine with you."

Words echo in her mind. Words that Jacob claimed. And now Bella finally sees.

The letter that Edward left. The letter she never received. Jacob stole it. He used Edward's words as his own.

"You--you ... that letter. That was *Edward's*. Jacob, how could you do that?" Bella is disgusted.

He begins to back away from her slowly, head bowed in shame. Then his shame retreats. "So what if I did? That doesn't mean I love you any less, Bella. I know what's good for you, don't you see that?"

It's like she was walking around with a veil over her eyes for God knows how long, and now that veil is burning, and she can finally see.

Everything is clear.

Righteous and Wicked

"Jacob. I want you to leave. Right now."

"Baby, you're angry..." He tries to touch her.

"You're fucking right I'm angry, Jacob! I DON'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE."

He is shocked. "Bella, you don't know what you're saying."

"Yes, I do. Jacob, I was asleep. I was sleepwalking, and Edward woke me up. He woke my *heart* up. I can't go back to sleep. I can't live like that again. It doesn't matter if Edward is here or not, I *don't* love you anymore. I don't want you. Please, just go."

He folds his arms across his chest and narrows his eyes at her resolution. "A part of you still loves me, Bella. And it always will."

"I feel nothing for you." She closes her eyes and wishes he would disappear. When she opens them again, she does not see Jacob. She hears him gather his things, and then the click of the door, and he is gone.

Bella stands on the old warped floor boards of her porch, next to the still present crater. She takes a deep breath of sweet grass and lilac. The only sounds she hears are that of the wind flirting with the trees, and the quiet song of a lone gull calling out.

It is like the first breath she has ever taken, the first breath after a coma.

Bella stands on the porch of her decayed, desolate, and empty house.

She is alone...and it's okay.

Jane's words echo in his mind. Is he ready?

Can he be true? Can he accept that what he has to give is good enough?

Righteous and Wicked

It has been so long since he touched her. His longing for her crawls over his skin. It lives in his soul. His need, his *want* is only for her. Living without her is not living at all.

The steam from the shower swirls around him. The water slides over his skin. It drips from his thick hair. He thinks of her body, and what he wants to do to it. He thinks of things he has already leans against the cool tile and holds his hard cock in his hand. Her lips, her skin, her breasts. The way her legs bend around his body. He strokes himself and thinks of her tightness surrounding him. The way her face constricts and then relaxes as she comes. The skin on her thighs. Her taste. He strokes himself harder and faster. Visions of her flood through his mind. The sound of her moaning and crying out when he touches her. Harder, and faster, and finally, a release.

Edward stands with his towel just barely covering the damp skin of his hips. He is staring at a suitcase. He picks up an old t-shirt and holds it to his nose. It smells like her.

He tenderly folds it, and places it inside.

A moving truck. A family. Laughter. Children.

Bella watches them from her kitchen window.

Edward's house has been sold.

She turns her attention back to her dirty dishes. Her eyes flutter closed with memories. And it's okay.

It would be so easy to fall back into the darkness, but she doesn't.

She goes outside, picks flowers from her garden, and walks down the thick, green path to meet her new neighbors.

Night changes over to day. The sky knows the sun is near before it can be seen.

Righteous and Wicked

Deep, thick, blue fades and reluctantly relents to lighter shades.

The birds sing the dawn chorus. They know what is coming, and they cannot contain their joy.

The horizon simmers and gives way to orange, pink, yellow...

Finally the first rays break free and shake off their slumber, bringing with them promises and hope.

A fresh beginning.

A brand new day.

ThumpThumpThump

Bella wakes to banging. On a Saturday. Her day off. Her day to sleep. *Is this some sort of sick joke? This cant really be happening.*

ThumpThumpThump

She won't allow herself to indulge in the sweet chills which that sound used to send through her. *It's gotta be Alice. Or one of the Uley kids*, she thinks, and grudgingly throws the sheet off of her.

ThumpThumpThump

She yawns, and stops at the top of her stairs. That sweet chill is fighting to make its way through her blood. The shadow she sees on her porch is familiar.

But it can't be.

She takes each step slowly. She descends, getting closer and closer to the source of the banging sound that woke her. Then she hears a sweet melodic tingle. A sound that almost shimmers. She knows that sound can only come from one thing. Her wind chime.

Righteous and Wicked

With a shaking hand, she turns the doorknob.

She gasps and then her breath leaves her in a rush. She blinks slowly, testing her eyes, not believing what she sees. His back is to her, hammer in hand, he slams it against the nail again and again. He has saved the chime from its exile behind the lilac bush, and he is hanging it back up where it belongs.

She wants to hold him, and kill him, and stab him, and fuck him all at the same time. But all she can manage is one whispered word...

"Edward."

Bella is listening to "I'd Rather Be Blind" - Etta James

Song that inspired the chapter- "Upward Over the Mountain"- Iron and Wine

Thank you for reading and supporting this story.

Please review!

Chapter 28: The Fire and The Tenderness

A/N: Thanks to Team Wicked: Bleriana, RoseArcadia and Playin With Fire for their work on this chapter.

Righteous and Wicked won TWO Golden Lemons! "Best Voyeur Moment" & "Best Banner"(by Jadalulu). I can't tell you how much it means to me to have been chosen, so thank you! xxx

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Righteous and Wicked

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"Edward."

*Tomorrow we will only give them
a leaf of the tree of our love, a leaf
which will fall on the earth
like if it had been made by our lips
like a kiss which falls
from our invincible heights
to show the fire and the tenderness
of a true love.*

~Pablo Neruda

He hears her whisper his name and the hammer drops to his side. Still, his back is to her and his eyes are on the chime.

He wants to look at her, but he is afraid of what he will see. Will it be joy? Will it be rage? Love?

His hand grips the hammer even harder and the silver chime rings out like a clock tolling the final hour.

The pull she has felt since the moment she saw him rises within her. She longs to touch him, to breathe his scent, to feel his hands.

She longs to see his haunting blue eyes. Again she whispers "Edward."

He turns toward her, so slowly. The look on his face makes Bella's longing overflow, but she fights to conceal it. Underneath her love and her longing there is hurt.

Righteous and Wicked

He hurt her.

"What are you--what are you doing?" she stammers a demanding question.

He smirks at her. His lips won't let the smile that wants to creep across his face fully take over. "The, um...the wind chime...it must have fallen. I was just...fixing it."

He awkwardly fidgets with the hammer in his hand and runs his fingers through his hair, then he slips the tool into the back pocket of his jeans.

He takes a step, and Bella takes a breath.

She puts her hand up to stop him from moving further. "Wait."

He freezes, and in his face Bella can see that it is killing him to stay away. She knows how badly he wants to touch her, because she feels exactly the same. But right now she needs answers. He *owes* her an answer.

"Where were you?" she asks.

"Portland, Oregon," he answers.

"What were you doing there?"

He looks so vulnerable...Bella feels her heart ache for him. Her body moves toward him in spite of her pride telling her not to. He gazes at the paint-chipped and rotten wood beneath his feet. "I was...getting better."

She steps closer and he looks up. If she reached out her arm, she could touch him, but she doesn't.

"Are you?" she asks.

He eyes her body from head to toe. He makes her feel naked, even though she is clothed.

Righteous and Wicked

"Am I what?" he asks.

"Are you...better?"

"I believe that I am." He moves even closer to her, and now *her* eyes are on the floor boards. If she looks at him, she will drown.

She stubbornly folds her arms across her chest, fighting the urge to touch him, to forgive him so easily. She lets her resentment and her grief flow. "I hope it was worth it, Edward. Do you know how badly it hurt me to be here without you? To see that *bitch* sell your house...you have no idea how much that hurt me."

His hand reaches for her and makes contact. He just barely touches her hip.

"Bella, I'm sorry. Eu lamento mais do que você pode saber. "

He slides his fingertips over the satin of her tiny blue nightgown. He can feel the heat of her skin. He can see that she is trembling. Yet, she won't look him in the eye.

Another step, and his hips are pressed against hers. He slowly reaches for her soft cheek, and tilts her head up. Finally, he sees the blush of her skin. Her sweet lips. Her warm dark eyes are moist with the tears she is holding back.

"Bella..."

He leans in slowly. He wants to savor this kiss...to drink her...to taste....

"No." She pushes him back, shaking her head. "You should have called me. You should have stayed. You never should have left!" she shouts. The flood of feeling she has been trying to move beyond bubbles over.

She's angry, and Edward knows that he deserves this. "Bella, I had to."

Righteous and Wicked

She reaches for him, but it is with aggression, not affection. She thumps and pounds her fists against his chest. "No you didn't! You should have stayed. You should have stayed here and stood beside me and fought whatever it is you needed to fight against. You should have fought for *me*, Edward! For *this* love. You should have stayed and fought instead of leaving me here alone!"

She is shaking with anger, but Edward is angry too. She has no idea how hard it was for him to leave...and to stay away. He grabs her wrists, restraining her from pummeling him further, and shouts back at her. "You don't think I wanted to? I *did* fight Bella. I fought every day. Don't you see that I *had* to do this? If I didn't, I would have just kept fucking things up for us. I didn't want it to be like that. I wanted it to be right. Fuck. Please, Bella..."

He releases her and leans against her, but she backs away from him across the porch. Edward does not relent. His advance meets her retreat. He won't let her do this, he won't let her push him away. She backs up against the house and stops. He places his hands on each side of her head, trapping her against the wall. She can't escape him now.

Her breasts rise and fall with gasping breaths. Her face laden with the anger and agony she feels. She keeps her hands pressed against his chest so that he can't come any closer to her. They are locked in battle.

"What do you think is gong to happen, Edward? Do you think I'm just going to take you back? Like nothing happened!" she seethes.

His face is an inch from hers and he meets her furious fire with his own flame. "What do you want me to do? Just give up? Are *you* giving up on us? Because I can't do that, Bella." If she refuses him now, his trials will have been in vain. Nothing matters to him without her.

Tears flow down her face and he can barely swallow with the lump in his throat. He steps back, and breathes. Then, calmly, he speaks. "Bella, I did fight for you. You couldn't see me, but every moment I was fighting for *this*." He places his hand on her chest where her blood pulses beneath her skin. "And now I want you to open your heart, and welcome me home."

At these words, her animosity melts into passion. She grabs his face and pulls his mouth to hers. Her lips are hungry and angry and loving all at once. He eagerly returns her initiation with his own desperation. His hands are on her face, her hair, her back. He lifts her up, and she eagerly wraps her legs tightly around him. He presses his hardness against her and she moans against him.

He breaks the kiss and pushes her hair from her eyes. "Do you forgive me?" he asks. He wants nothing more than this.

She coyly smiles at him. "No."

A devilish grin spreads across his face. "I can make you," he teases.

Bella runs her fingers over his scruffy jaw, down his chest, and then stops when she feels his hard cock through his jeans. "Try me."

He groans and carries her into the house, and up the staircase. He makes it as far as her bedroom door. Then he presses her against it. He grips her nightgown, and pulls it over her head.

He tosses her panties and then takes both her breasts in his hands. He massages them gently, eyeing them with a deep and burning desire. Then he descends on her flesh with his ravenous lips, kissing and sucking at her skin and nibbling at her small, pert nipples.

"I was so sure I would never see you again..." she whispers.

Bella feels herself getting wetter, and hotter. She thought that she would never feel his touch again, and now that he is here, her body and her heart are unspeakably grateful. Her ache for him has reached its peak. She takes his hand and places it between her legs.

"I could never stay away from you, Bella." He utters, and gives her what she wants, thrusting his thick fingers deep inside her. "I love you too much, I could never stay away..."

Righteous and Wicked

She throws her head back and it bangs against the door, but she feels no pain. He sucks at her breasts harder. His thumb rubs against her clit, as his long fingers slide in and out of her. She grips his arm to steady herself, and she can feel his muscles ripple with the force of how hard he is fingering her.

His hand and his lips are relentless. Bella can barely contain the passion she feels. Her body responds to him so intensely, her orgasm already just moments away. Her breast tingles as his tongue encircles her pointed pink flesh. He bites at her and she starts to feel faint. Her legs tremble and quiver, she threads her hands into his hair to try keep steady. "Oh, fuck, I'm gonna come, Edward...shit. I'm coming...fuck...so good..."

"God, I fucking missed this..." Edward moves his lips away from her breasts, and up to her delicate neck. He breathes in her sweet perfume, then licks and sucks at her ear.

She wraps her legs around him and he covers the soft flesh of her bare ass with his palms as he holds her in place.

"Take out my cock," he whispers to her. For a moment she is stunned by his words, but she readily obeys.

He kisses her neck, down to her collarbone, still squeezing the round flesh of her bottom. He freezes for a second when the heat of her hands finds his painfully swollen hardness.

His pants drop to his ankles and he pushes against her. Bella's hot, wet lips slide against his shaft. "Eu vou te foder tão bem agora." He slides his finger down the cheeks of her ass to the space in between, and he teases her there with a feather-light touch. Then, he pushes his hard, throbbing cock inside of her tight lips as deep as he can go.

She gasps, and screams at the sensation. He stays inside of her, not moving, just feeling her. "Each second without you was fucking torture," he whispers, and he roughly thrusts inside of her again. He pulls his face away from her neck and looks into her eyes. He wants to know that she feels the same.

Righteous and Wicked

"I missed you every second of every day, Edward," she whispers and holds him tightly to her.

He swivels his hips against hers, and leans back to watch her breasts move with his rhythm. He sees how hard she is biting her lip, and how heavy with lust her eyes are. He moves inside of her faster. He is finally fucking her, he is finally feeling her body against his, and it is what he wants, not what he needs.

"Tell me that you forgive me, Bella."

She groans and he fucks her faster, harder, her back slamming into the door. They both pant and gasp for breath as he moves inside her.

"Say it." He rubs his thumb along her parted lips, and his fingers slide down her neck, then he squeezes her hard nipple between his fingers. He slides his arm down her back, and then grips both of her hips in his rough hands.

"Uh...oh...shit...n-no...not until you...make me...come again..." she challenges him though her moans of pleasure.

He kisses her deeply; her tongue meets and tangles with his. Her lips are firm and soft at the same time. He cradles her face, and pounds against her flesh. Their bodies burn together, and the wooden door whines against the pressure. He pumps into her and kisses her hard and long. A deep kiss that binds them together even further. There is no distance between them now, and the love they feel surges and overflows. He moans and she whimpers against him. Her skin is damp with sweat, and he knows that she is close again.

He breaks the kiss, and then runs his finger over her mouth. "Suck," he commands her. She looks timid, and he almost regrets letting himself be this rough with her. He is showing her all of him now, without holding back. This is who he is, and she is what he wants. There is no compulsion, only his desire to be with her...only her. He slows his pace, so that he is just barely moving inside her. Her tongue tentatively darts out to lick the tip of his finger, then he pulses his hips against her harder, pulling her body against him, forcing his cock deeper inside her. "Oh, God!" she cries out, and then eagerly takes his

Righteous and Wicked

finger inside her mouth.

She sucks and licks, and then Edward withdraws his wet finger. He finds his way to her ass, and he teases her there again, before slowly sliding his finger in. It slides in and out of her in time with the pulsing of his hips. She closes her eyes and her face tenses. He has her on the edge once more.

"Come for me..." he begs her, and he feels his own release speeding toward him. There is no blackness, only the flames of the fire he has for her. His thighs burn and he feels himself tightening, constricting, before he unleashes himself.

"Edward, shit...kiss me...please," she pleads.

He seductively licks her lips with his tongue and then warps his mouth over hers. The deep kiss causes her to tighten around him as she comes, and his whole body jolts. His cock convulses and throbs inside of her. A violent force that brings unspeakable bliss. He cries out with pleasure. Then rests his head against hers.

He can barely stand. He is dizzy with satisfaction. He opens the door to her room, and then lays her down in bed, collapsing beside her.

Bella lies on the cool of her sheets, naked, next to the man she loves. She is exhausted, but satisfied, and completely in awe of him. In awe of the way he makes her feel. In awe, that he has returned to her. Her heart could not be more full than it is right now. She runs her hand through his sweat soaked hair, as they struggle to catch their breath.

"Edward, can I ask you something?"

"Anything," he says with eyes closed.

"Why did you...sell the house?" She wants to know, but she fears his response.

He opens his eyes and looks at her tenderly. "Because that house was not my home."

Righteous and Wicked

She looks away from him, hurt that he does not see their life together the way that she does.

Edward grips her chin and pulls her eyes back to his. "Bella, that house was not my home. My home is with you. Wherever you are." He touches her heart, then presses his ear to her chest. He listens to it beating and speaks the truest words that have ever left his lips. " *This* is home."

Translation: "I am more sorry than you can ever know."

" I'm gonna fuck you so good right now."

Please review! xxx

Chapter 29: Rise

A/N: Thanks to Team Wicked!

This chapter is dedicated to a member of the fandom that passed away recently. Her name was Aini but we knew her as Uber_Vamp. One of the beautiful things about being a part of the Twilight fandom is the people you meet, and she will be greatly missed. This chapter is also dedicated to a life that ended before it could begin. May they both rest in peace.

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She looks away from him, hurt that he does not see their life together the way that she does.

Edward grips her chin and pulls her eyes back to his. "Bella, that house was not my home. My home is with you. Wherever you are." He touches her heart, then presses his ear to her chest. He listens to it beating and speaks the truest words that have ever left his lips. " *This* is home."

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*"Such is the way of the world
You can never know
Just where to put all your faith
And how will it grow*

*Gonna rise up
Burning back holes in dark memories
Gonna rise up
Turn mistakes into gold"*

~Eddie Vedder

She closes her eyes and lets his words sink into her soul.

"Bella, I am so sorry for leaving." He places his head beside hers on the pillow and tenderly strokes his hand along her face. He swallows hard before he speaks. "I know how much...pain...you have been through. You have to know that I never wanted to make you feel that way..."

She nods. "I know, Edward. I know that you had to leave...and I forgive you."

She sits up. Her bare back is to him and her pale skin is illuminated by the early morning sun. She hugs her knees, and Edward sits up beside her.

"It was hard. Being without you. It *did* hurt." She is quiet for a moment, lost in her thoughts. "You know, when I...lost the baby...I was sure that nothing could ever hurt more than that. That feeling of loss...grief...I was sure that I would never, that I *could* never feel whole again. I just couldn't understand why that had to happen to me."

She turns her head so she can look in his eyes. "It didn't make sense...but now I see. I see why it happened, Edward. I have the answer. I know that it had to happen so that I could find *you*. I never would have come back here if I hadn't lost the baby. I would still be with Jacob, and I never would have known you."

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Her voice cracks and he wraps his arms around her. He lies back on the bed, pulling her with him, holding her tight to his chest. He holds her close, but he does not speak. He doesn't know what to say.

"Edward, when you were gone, it hurt, but I knew there had to be a reason for my pain. Even though it seemed impossible, I had faith that you would return. No matter how much suffering I endured, I kept my faith in God, or the universe, or whatever you want to call it. Knowing that there was a reason helped me to keep my faith, but *surviving*...living through that pain...that gave me faith in myself."

Edward is in awe of her. Her bravery, her faith...her ability to love...and to forgive.

"Bella, I love you," he whispers.

She looks up at him, and smiles. "I know. And I love you too."

He softly kisses her lips. "I don't deserve you."

She slides her long leg up over his hip, and he pulls body her closer to him. "Yes. You do."

Their lips touch softly, their hands greedy to touch each other everywhere. Each of them feel a deep desire to get closer. To never let the other go.

"I want this to be forever, Bella. Tell me that you want it too..." He holds her fragile face between his palms and looks into her eyes...her soul.

"I do. Forever," she answers.

She feels his body become more and more rigid beside her softness. Like magnets, their hips join together and then he is inside her.

He lingers over her lips, kissing her softly. Her hands grip his neck as he moves inside her, slow and deep. He looks down at her body, at her delicate

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neck, her breasts, and where their bodies join together. His passion becomes more furious, and he can't move slowly anymore.

He slides his hand into her hair, and holds tight, pulling her body down as he rises up inside her. "Bella, tão difícil ser gentil com você. Eu sonhava com a sua pele, suas mãos, seus pés, seus lábios ... toda noite."

She doesn't need to understand his words to know what he means, and she lets him know that as she moves her hips in tandem with his. He buries his face in her breasts and her neck, fighting against his body, trying to restrain himself so that he can make her feel good, before he comes.

She doesn't make it easy for him, her fingernails drag across his back, leaving tingling trails. Her body meets his again and again, she rises up off of him faster, and he can't help but moan at how good she makes him feel.

"Do you like that?" she asks him.

"Please, amorcita, if you talk that way..."

She swivels her hips, so that she is on top of him. She wants to show him how much she loves this, how much she wants him, always.

The light from the window bathes her whole body, and Edward watches with delight as she leans back, her hands running through the deep, dark waves of her hair. The slight sweat on her body glistens and she almost looks like she is sparkling. *So beautiful*, he thinks.

He reaches to touch her in places that he knows will please her, but she grabs his hands, and leans over him. "No..let me do this for you..." she whispers. She holds him down and rides him faster, her breasts are at his lips and he kisses her there. Sounds of pleasure stutter from her lips as she slides up and down his stiff shaft.

Edward has to fight hard against his need to dominate her. He wants to throw her down on the bed and give it to her, but what she wants to give him is more

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important than his lust, and he lets her know.

"That's it, Bella. Just like that...you feel so good...so fucking good, Bella..."

His words ignite her fire and she wants nothing more than to make him come. She releases his hands and leans back, arching and bending her body. Her hands on his hips, her skin meeting his as she moves even more rapidly. She looks him right in the eyes as she fucks him and the intensity of what she feels pours out of her. She cries out as she reaches her peak, and she sees Edward watching her. Then' his face and his body constrict as he releases himself deep inside her.

"Oh shit, Bella..."

He pulls her down against his heaving chest, and Bella smiles. She lies in Edwards arms, spent and completely at peace.

She looks around her room, and her eyes stop on her open closet...and the wooden box that is buried at the bottom of it. "Edward, there's something I need to do today, and I want you to be there."

"Sim, meu amor," he pants. " Anything for you."

Edward sits, shirtless, on the porch of Bella's house, surveying the state of disrepair that it's in and making plans in his mind of ways that he wants to remedy it.

Bella emerges from the front door in a bathrobe with two cups of coffee in her hand. She sits beside him and offers him his cup.

He sips, and watches her take a breath of the sweet morning air. The scent of lilac, and honeysuckle waft around them. Edward sees her smile, and her beauty overwhelms him. "Bella, minha linda, seu sorriso mudou minha vida. Come here, you're not close enough." He holds his arm out for her to crawl underneath.

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She moves closer, fitting perfectly beside him. "One of these days you're going to have to teach me some Portuguese."

He laughs. "No way. I like it like this," he teases her.

A warm wind blows over their skin. "Feels like its going to be hot today," Edward muses.

"Hmph," Bella mutters.

Edward is puzzled by her grumble. "What is it?"

"It's just funny, now that I really look around, summer is almost over, and I barely noticed." She looks at the sky and lets the sun bathe her face. They sit in silence for a long time before she speaks. "It felt like winter. Do you know what I mean?"

Edward squeezes her tight. He knows exactly what she means.

Giggles and little footsteps and suddenly Edward and Bella are no longer alone.

The Uley children are making their first appearance of the day. Since they have moved in, Seth and Leah have made a habit of visiting Bella. They are drawn to her. She is always happy to see them, and her genuine kindness is not lost on the perceptive children.

The children ogle Edward, apprehensive of this stranger. "Who are *you*?" Seth asks Edward.

Before he can answer, Leah smacks her brother. "That's *rude*, Seth!"

Bella laughs and interrupts their little quarrel. "Leah, Seth, this is Edward."

Edward smiles and waves at the unexpected guests. "Hi."

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Leah focuses her attention on Bella and hands her a box wrapped in construction paper. "This is for you, Bella. We made them, me and Seth did." The small children are bursting with pride and excitement over the gift they have made for their neighbor.

Bella opens the box, and places the contents in the palm of her hand. "Oh my goodness! These are just beautiful!" She gushes over her treasure.

In her hand, Bella holds several brightly painted rocks. "I'm going to go put them inside with the others," she says, and winks at Edward as she stands and goes into the house.

Edward is left alone with the children. Leah nervously fidgets with her hair and Seth randomly stamps at the dirt. "Where did you come from?" Seth asks, and shields his shoulder from his sister's attempt at another smack.

Edward shakes his head gently. "Its okay to ask me questions. I used to live where you do. I built that house," he says, pointing down the path that used to lead him to Bella.

"You did?" The children are shocked and in awe.

"Why did you build it?" Leah asks him.

Edward looks at the house that he built, then at Bella's kitchen window, then at the children. "Well, I think I built it so that you could live there, and be happy, and make pretty presents for my Bella." He smiles, and quickly charms the children.

They nod at Edward's answer. It makes perfect sense to them.

Bella watches from the kitchen window. She places the painted rocks on the windowsill. And it makes perfect sense to her too.

Bella's truck winds up the rocky road. The raging Pacific Ocean is at her left, and the wooden box is on her lap. She feels anxious and some part of her feels

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sad. This is long overdue, but a chapter of her life is closing, and an array of emotions flow through her.

A sense of finality overcomes her as she parks at the top of the cliff. There was a time when this scenario would have been tempting to her, in a very dark way. But those days are over. The numbness and the despair are strangers to her now. The ghosts that haunted her are gone.

She gets out of the truck, and stands at the edge of the rocky cliff. She grips the box, and opens it one last time. She rubs her hand along the picture, but she sheds no tears. She is ready to say goodbye.

His breath is at her back. Edward says nothing, but he is there. He is there for *her*.

She closes the box, and then she drops her memories into the black water below.

"Hand me the Phillips head," Edward puts his hand out to Bella.

She shakes her head. "Okay. I have absolutely *no* idea what you're talking about."

He laughs. "The screwdriver with the yellow and black handle, the tip has a little cross on it."

Bella rummages through the tool box with a furrowed brow, and after several long seconds, she finds what Edward needs.

Bella sits next to Edward where he kneels on the porch removing and replacing the rotten floor boards. In the distance, Leah and Seth are playing tag in the too long grass. Bella loves watching them, their innocence and hope are contagious.

They abandon their game and run toward the couple. "Bella can you come and play with us?"

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"I can't right now, but maybe later? I have to help Edward."

The children hunch their shoulders with disappointment, but then get distracted by Edward's activity.

"What is he doing? What are you doing Edward?" Seth asks.

"I'm fixing the house," he answers as he works.

"Why? Can't you just build a new one?" Leah asks.

He stops his work, and considers the question. "I could do that. I could make something new, but sometimes its better to fix what is broken, instead of starting over."

Edward smiles at Bella and she thinks about how hard they both have worked to fix broken things.

He kisses her cheek, and returns to his work. The sweet summer wind blows through the thick green leaves. The wind chime sings, and the children laugh.

And Bella is happy.

Translations: " Bella, it's so hard to be gentle with you. I dreamed of your skin, your hands, your legs, your lips...every night." " Yes, my love." " Bella, my beautiful, your smile changed my life."

Song that inspired the chapter: "Rise" by Eddie Vedder

One chapter left...

Please review! xxx

Chapter 30: Sigh No More

A/N: Thanks to every single member of Team Wicked. Please read my note at the end.

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From the previous chapter:

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"Love - it will not betray you, dismay or enslave you - it will set you free."

~Mumford and Sons

"You've got to finish that up before Bella comes down. She'll be mad if she knows I gave you that much sugar," Edward says. He stands at the sink

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washing out a blender...in a tuxedo.

"But it's yummy. Mommy never gives us milkshakes and donuts at breakfast," Leah protests and returns to dutifully slurping at her straw.

Heels click on the wood of the stairs, getting louder as Bella approaches. She stands in the doorway, her hands are on her hips, but she's smiling. "Seriously? Emily and Sam are going to kill me when two hyper kids return to them."

"Wow...you look really pretty, Bella," Seth says.

Edward turns away from the sink, and his eyes widen when he sees her. She's dressed in silk taffeta, a deep mauve--the color of a blooming azalea. Ruffles at her delicate neck, plunging down into a deep v...shoes a shade lighter than sun bleached driftwood adorn her tiny feet.

She awkwardly runs her fingers through her hair, and fidgets as his eyes roam her body. Bella clears her throat, and Edward remembers that there are children present.

He wipes his hands on a dish towel. "Okay meus anjos , time to go."

The children grumble and Leah asks, "Where are you guys going?"

"Our friends are getting married today, and we're going to the party," Bella answers.

"Mommy and Daddy are married." Seth states in a very serious five year old voice.

"Most mommies and daddies are," Bella says as she enters the kitchen.

Leah considers this as she kicks her feet beneath the table. "Why?" she asks.

"Um...well, sometimes people do that when they love each other." She clears the children's empty glasses.

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"Are you and Edward going to get married?" Another question from the inquisitive child.

Bella is taken aback, and nervously laughs. "I don't know. Do you think we should?"

"Yes. Because you love each other."

"You're a very wise little lady." Edward interrupts and picks Leah up so that he can look into her eyes. "But you have to promise that *you'll* be there."

"Do I have to wear a dress?" Leah crinkles up her nose in distaste.

"You can wear anything you want," Edward promises.

"Okay."

She squirms and Edward sets her down, then she and Seth clamber out of the kitchen shouting goodbyes over their shoulders.

Edward approaches Bella at the sink, and wraps his arms around her waist. They stand together silently and watch as the children run home.

The bright summer day is filled with a charge of anticipation and a poignant wave of an emotion that can only be simply described as love. A word that defines something so layered and complex... and different for everyone. A wedding is an opportunity to bear witness to that love. Just as the bride and groom are bound to each other, each guest becomes bound to the couple, carrying memories of solemn vows and true happiness in their hearts.

Edward holds the door for Bella as she gets out of the jeep, and kisses her forehead softly as they say goodbye. He watches her walk away from him in search of the bridal suite, and then walks in the opposite direction to locate Emmett's groom's room.

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After much preparation and many cocktails, the bridal party arrives at the church. Rosalie's typically jagged edges are softened on this day. Her ivory dress is draped perfectly around her body, ruched and fitted to her torso, then flaring out at her waist in delicate layers of organza.

The doors to the church swing open, and Bella is greeted by familiar sights and sounds...stained glass filtered light, the large and looming crucifix, and the hollow and notes of the organ. It is time, and she takes the first step into the seemingly endless aisle. This journey echoes the emotional one that she has just taken. Long and exhausting, but not without reward.

She smiles when she thinks of him, and then, suddenly, he is there. She looks straight ahead, her eyes now focused on the man waiting at the end of the aisle beside the groom.

Edward. He is smiling too.

The fixtures of this church that have been crutches and ladders for Bella all blur and fade from view. He is all that she can see. The sight of Stormy in a church makes Bella blush. He is adorably out of place, and he winks at her as she takes her place on the opposite side of the altar.

Rosalie looks beautiful as she takes momentous steps, steps she will never forget. All eyes are on her, but Edward and Bella do not notice. They only see each other.

Father Carlisle steps forward and greets the guests, then begins the ritual of this holy sacrament. Bella listens, but does not truly hear him.

Her attention returns to the words being spoken when Alice takes her place at the podium and begins to read, not from the bible, but from a Native American wedding blessing. With her words she says the things that Bella feels in her heart. Things she never truly felt in her marriage to Jacob, but now, with Edward, she does.

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*" Now you will feel no rain,
for each of you will be shelter for the other.*

*Now you will feel no cold,
for each of you will be warmth for the other.*

Now there is no more loneliness, for each of you will be companion to the other.

*Now you are two bodies,
but there is only one life before you.*

Go now to your dwelling place to enter into the days of your togetherness.

And may your days together be good and long upon the earth ."

Bella's eyes find Edward's again, and she gets lost in the blue. Her shelter, her warmth, her companion.

Edward does not feel the nerves that he can see Emmett is feeling. He does his best to distract his friend from the cold feet that all men inevitably feel on this day, regardless of how much they love the woman they are about to marry.

Guests stagger and file into the church, and the only thing that Edward feels is painful impatience to see his Bella. He doesn't like to be away from her for long. In an effort to kill time, he adjusts his tie, smooths his hand through his hair and repetitively shifts his weight back and forth between his feet.

Finally, the music begins to reverberate through the church, and the doors open. Edward could not have anticipated the way he feels when he sees Bella walking toward him, bouquet in hand.

Participating in the institution of marriage is not something that had ever occurred to him. His dark burden, his addiction, never allowed him to entertain any concept of commitment or devotion, but at this moment he realizes that commitment and devotion are exactly what he feels for Bella. He smirks at this

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thought and it turns into a full blown smile when her eyes finally meet his.

Edward is standing in church and he has never felt more of a sense of belonging. The irony of this truth is not lost on him. He looks up at the flaming heart inside the stained glass window, and he knows that *this* is a miracle.

The recessional begins and Edward offers Bella his arm as they exit the church. He is happy to finally be touching her. They are forced to stand in awkward positions as they pose for pictures with the bride and groom, and then they are rushed into separate limos.

The reception is held in an old stone building on the grounds of an estate. The dining room is lit with candles, and white roses adorn each of the small round tables. Forgoing the typical rituals, Rosalie and Emmett enter the reception after the guests have been seated, and then begin their first dance alone.

Bella sits at her table, the place card beside her seat bears Edwards name, but he is not here. She feels anxious, but the music is beautiful and Bella sips her champagne with a smile, happy for her friends. The bond that the newly married couple now share is evident and their love radiates throughout the room.

Bella sips from her crystal flute, and Rosalie and Emmett take their seats at a small sweetheart table as the first course is served. Still, Edward is nowhere in sight. Her first drink is finished, and she begins another. Then, finally, he appears.

He enters from a side door. He doesn't see her. She raises her hand to wave, but stops herself, and slowly drops her hand.

He moves through the dining room stealthily dodging drunken guests and relatives. A feeling Bella can't quite put her finger on rises up inside her, and then she realizes what it is. A wave of recognition rolls through her.

Edward has been overtaken by Stormy, and he is hunting. But Bella knows with absolute certainty, that the person he is hunting for is her.

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He circles and lurks in the shadows; his eyes scanning the crowded room. Bella lets herself enjoy this. She doesn't make it easy for him.

His tuxedo is like a second skin on his slim body, and Bella feels that she has never laid eyes on a more beautiful man.

He sees her and their eyes lock. He stalks toward her with fierce determination. When he arrives at the table, he does not sit, and the other couples look puzzled by his behavior, but then they return to their cocktails and conversations.

He leans in and whispers to her. "I have been away from you for too long today. I can't take it. Bella, I *need* you."

That is all the invitation Bella requires. She rises from her seat, and her hand is instantly enveloped in his. He turns and guides her out of the candle-lit dining room through the door that he entered.

They emerge upon a patio and the cool night surrounds them. Bella is unsure, but Edward doesn't hesitate. He guides her down a dirt path, into the darkness.

They weave down the winding path with interlaced hands, but neither of them speaks. Finally, they reach their destination. A latticed gazebo is at the end of the path and as soon as they ascend the three short steps, Edward's arms are around her, and his lips are on hers.

Then, the language that lives in Edward's heart flows from his lips. "Você é a mulher da minha vida." He is filled with a fever that Bella has come to savor. His need for her consumes him as he slides his fingers up under her skirt, and then he is on his knees.

Bella is speechless as he licks between her legs. His long tongue touches her, and enters her and he laps at her lips. She is immediately dripping wet, not only from his mouth, but from her acute arousal. She hears the sounds of the evening woods, crickets chirp and peep and it feels as if she and Edward are completely alone, and not a few hundred feet away from a room filled with drunken people celebrating.

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The thought that they may be missed creeps up in her mind, but is pushed down and away when Edward rises to his feet and roughly turns her body. She grips the wooden railing and smiles at the welcome sound of Edward unzipping his pants. Then, she is momentarily lifted off her feet as he enters her. The perfect fit of his body fills her and her eyes roll closed.

He buries his face in the back of her head as he pulls her hips against him. Their bodies meet and separate and Bella is overwhelmed by the passion and love she feels. "So perfect..." she whispers.

"I know, I know..." he tells her.

The full moon hangs above them casting the world in a pale and peaceful light. They move furiously and then gently, sharing a love and pleasure that is unparalleled, until they both feel their hearts and their bodies' pound in the sweet summer night.

Edward turns her to face him after he has felt what he needed to feel, and after he is confident that Bella has felt the same thing. Then he holds her tenderly in his arms and whispers, "Let's go home."

Bella wakes to find Edward standing naked in the morning sunlight from her bedroom window. "What are you doing?" she mumbles and pulls the covers over her head. "Come back to bed."

"No. No, wake up. Come on. Its so nice outside, lets go for a ride." Edward's enthusiasm infects her, and she does as he says.

They ride their bikes together down a path that Edward insists on following, in spite of the fact that they do not know where it will take them. They eventually emerge on the opposite side of the lake that they visited once before.

A devious, almost child-like look crosses Edward's face as he gets off his bike, and before Bella knows what has happened, he has ripped his white t-shirt over his head. He swiftly runs toward the water, removing the rest of his clothing when he reaches the shore of the lake.

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Bella watches his muscles flex as he runs, bare-assed, into the deep blue waves. He breaks the surface and beckons to her, then her body moves independent of her mind. She tosses her t-shirt and jeans and follows him, swimming out to meet him in the coolness of the lake.

When she reaches him, his arms are around her immediately. The smile on Edward's face melts Bella's heart, and she's sure that she bears the same expression.

He lets her go, and she floats on her back, looking up at heaven. She closes her eyes and sinks into the water, propelling herself down into the cool deep. She feels free. As always, Edward's need for her does not keep him away from her for long. He swims toward her, wrapping his arms around her waist as she wraps her legs around his hips. They float together alone in the wilderness, and he stares at her angelic face, but suddenly her expression is unsure.

"What is it?" he asks with concern.

She looks panicked as she scans the shore. "Edward, I'm just realizing, I have don't know which way we rode in from. Do you?"

Edward glances back toward the place where their bikes are resting and he realizes that he has no idea...and he does not care.

He shakes his head, then his lips press against hers. She relaxes in his arms. He knows they will find their way back.

Having found each other, Edward and Bella can never be lost again.

Translation: "My angels."

" You're the woman of my life."

Reading from the wedding: "The Apache Wedding Blessing"

Song that inspired the chapter: "Sigh No More" Mumford & Sons.

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A/N: I have been working on this fic for eight months. It is hard to say goodbye. I am eternally grateful to every single person who has worked on this fic, and to every single person who has reviewed and supported me.

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I am forgetting many people, but that does not mean I love them any less.

Keep me on author alert if you are interested in hearing more from me, and as always, please review!

xxx