

You're Still Home

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by [starryprose](#)

Summary

When Edward first returned to Bella, after he had lied in an attempt to protect her, Bella had desperately clung to him. She was afraid that the minute that she closed her eyes, he'd disappear. After that, Bella realized the anger that had been simmering underneath the hurt. She loves Edward, more than she's loved anything & that's the truth, but you can still be mad at someone while loving them. Being grounded makes it harder to see him & in that time Bella fixes the friendship she was afraid she broke with Jacob & she catches up on the six months she missed with Alice. She tries to become closer with her father & slowly but surely she begins to truly forgive Edward deep down. They're not together but they're not broken up either. The newborns are coming though & Victoria still wants revenge. This was the Cullen's fight first but in their absence, it had become the pack's fight, & neither one is willing to drop it or allow Bella to be hurt. A tense alliance is formed and slowly so is a friendship, Bella serving as the medium ground. She has to graduate high school and deal with relationship turmoil and bloodthirsty vampires all at once. Bella Swan is a pro at multitasking.

Notes

Hi guys! So, yes it is 2020 and yes, I am writing Twilight fanfic. This work is inspired by a Tumblr post by [queertwilight!](https://fullmoons-bloodtypes.tumblr.com/post/185051743225/imagine-how-beautiful-it-wouldve-been-if-instead) (linked here! <https://fullmoons-bloodtypes.tumblr.com/post/185051743225/imagine-how-beautiful-it-wouldve-been-if-instead>) I really love Eclipse, it's my favorite book of the series because the backstories make me happy but reading it now that I'm older I definitely see the flaws. So, this post inspired me to jump back in and kind of edit. A lot is still pretty canon but shifted to fit a Bella who doesn't just forgive, to fit a less crazy love interest Jacob, and a less controlling Edward. I already plotted 25!! chapters of this thing so hopefully I'll get them up quick. I sat down and wrote a little over 3k words which is kinda rare for me? I'm enjoying this so far. I'm not a fan of first-person but doing anything twilight, not in the first person felt alien to me so it starts with a third person overview and jumps to Bella's first-person. I hope I'm capturing her! Also the title is taken from Nebraska by Oh wonder which is such a good song! I hope you guys enjoy this, kudos and comments are forever appreciated <3 Not betaed so please be nice!

1. The aftermath & the aftershocks

When Bella Swan flew to Italy and rescued her vampire ex-boyfriend from vampire royalty, you'd assume he was forgiven and immediately taken back. That was a reasonable assumption for an absurd situation.

The truth though?

Bella saved her vampire ex-boyfriend from vampire royalty and she decided she would at some point become a vampire. She told Edward she forgave him, that she loved him, but she didn't immediately take him back. Actually, as of this very moment, Edward Cullen was still solidly Bella's vampire ex-boyfriend and Bella was very *very* grounded.

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Angela set her tray on the table across from me, the sound of the plastic tray shaking me out of my reverie. I had been daydreaming again, my mind on rocky beaches and Italian landscapes. Angela gave an apologetic smile at having shocked me out of my daydream but I waved it off. I was grateful that Angela had dutifully joined me when I had returned back to school from my brief run to Italy. Alice and Edward weren't fully back to school yet, paperwork taking a couple of days.

I had explained it to Angela as well as I could. Alice had come to town with Esme because she missed me. Edward at first had tried to convince his family to give me my space, he thought the move and breakup would be easier if I didn't have them trying to keep in touch, but it obviously hadn't worked like that. Angela had nodded at this, "boys are stupid," she'd told me solemnly and I had summoned somewhat of a genuine laugh at that. Edward was so far from a boy truly but sometimes his decisions were stupid enough to be *boyish*.

Anyway, Alice came to visit and while she was there, Jasper got hurt. A white lie, but it was pretty bad. He had broken a leg while at school and he was with Carlisle currently healing. Alice wanted to get back to him but I was so scared of her leaving and not returning that I managed to convince them to take me along. I was eighteen, I left a note for Charlie. The flight got delayed from the weather, finally, we got there and Edward and I argued. Inevitably Carlisle determined that he did miss his job in Forks, the hospital in California wasn't really

treating him well, and though the pay was better, Esme was unhappy in a big city and Carlisle missed Forks. They decided that within the month, they'd try to move back.

Angela had been elated on my behalf. "So, are you and Edward back together?" She had asked. And there was the million-dollar question.

We weren't but we were. If it was either of our choices alone, probably yes, but when you mixed Edward and I's decisions together? If he had asked me to be dating him again, I would've said yes, and if I had presented him the same question, he would have agreed too. But mutually? It was like we decided we needed to relearn each other. I wasn't the exact same Bella that he had left. Humans changed more than vampires. Edward wasn't as changed but because I had changed, he had changed. His love for me was the same, it was shaping to love the new me the same as he had loved the girl who had moved here in junior year, but he had to get to know this new girl who rode motorcycles and jumped off cliffs.

I explained to Angela that we were working on it and Angela, being her, had taken that as a full reply and hadn't questioned further. She just smiled and sat with me and lunch and called me sometimes.

I left my recalling of the recent memories to pay attention to Angela who had begun talking.

"I just don't quite understand why we're still on Shakespeare? I mean, I feel like we've covered him for the year! Julius Caesar is alright but I'm getting a bit tired of the characters," She complained about our current read for English. I had to agree, Shakespeare was a constant reminder to his tragedy of Romeo and Juliet which had felt too comparative to my life and now felt like a trigger.

"I do have to agree," I admitted to her. "Shakespeare is a classic but yeah, there's only so many ways we can debate democracy vs monarchy. We get it, Shakespeare, you really loved Queen Elizabeth, come on now. I just hate how we're dragging it on."

Angela pointed her finger at me excitedly. "Exactly! It would be a wonderful play if we hadn't already spent two weeks on it and are only in the latter half of act two! There are FIVE acts!"

I laughed at her dramatics. “You do have to admit that Mike makes a hilarious Julius Caesar though,” I replied, recalling the boy’s reenactment of the deceased warlord. Angela giggled, likely picturing the same, and how Mike had eagerly given us a sneak peek of how he’d play the ‘Et Tu Brute’ scene, dramatically falling out of his chair in first period English this morning.

The rest of lunch passed easily, Angela telling me about her assignments for photography and how she was still building her portfolio in an effort to get more scholarship money for college. I ate my lunch slowly and tried to be a good friend and listen attentively but I truly had never much practice being a good friend. Most of the people in my life were quiet and so was I, Angela was quiet too but I think she tried to make sure I had some noise. I appreciated it, I just didn’t want to let her down.

By the end of the school day, I was trudging out to my truck, the misty rain being knocked back into my face by the slight wind. Mike waved at me from his car and I waved back. Jessica was standing with him and she offered me a small smile, we still hadn’t talked since the Port Angeles incident. I felt like I owed her an apology for my behavior, I had been reckless and it could’ve really hurt both of us. I’d get an apology to her soon, luckily Jess didn’t seem like one to hold a grudge.

My truck roared to life comfortingly and I let it rumble for a few seconds before I backed out of the parking lot and headed down the familiar slick streets to the small house I called home. Charlie’s cruiser was still missing when I got home which was not unusual but especially not unusual for recently, according to Charlie a crime rate had spiked in Seattle. It wasn’t horribly close to us but close enough that any small town cops were trying to help where they could, Charlie was taking longer hours.

What was rather unusual was the marble-faced boy standing near the front steps. My chest tightened at the sight of Edward and my mind suddenly lurched back to that day, to following him into the woods, and my brain chanted a steady *no no no no*. I attempted a shaky breath as I turned the key in the ignition and shut off my rumbling truck. Edward, who must’ve heard my heart rate pick up unsteadily was at my door, opening it for me.

“Bella, what’s wrong?” He asked quickly, protectively, in his beautiful voice. I tried to shake the fog of anxiety from my head, reaching for him suddenly and he leaned into the cab, letting my arms wrap around him easily. I cling to his solid stone frame, pretending like I was strong enough to hold him in place. He held me to his chest as tightly as he safely could and pressed his chin to my hair.

“Sorry,” I managed. “I just, I remembered the last time you were waiting for me outside of my house after school. It just, I don’t know, brought me back too vividly.”

I pulled away from him to catch sight of the horrified look on his face. His eyes were already turning dark and I knew it was because he was only hunting small game in the area, wanting to stay close for my sake.

“Bella, God, I’m sorry. I didn’t think of what it may remind you of. I was coming to tell you I got my schedule for school, that I’ll be back with you in Forks High by Monday,” He tried for the crooked smile I loved but it didn’t fully meet his eyes, the error in his attempt of surprising me failing. I mustered a weak smile though.

“Hey, that’s great! For me at least. Alice will be back too right?” I question and he nodded.

“Yes, she’ll be back, and before you ask, I have all the same classes as last time. You’re stuck with me,” He said simply before worry entered his eyes, “that is if you’re okay with that. I can change it if need be if you’d rather have more space.”

“No, you’re fine. It’ll be nice to have the seat next to mine full again,” I reassured him and I meant it. Deep down, I was still angry at him. The stubbornness in me burned to hold it against him and some of me did. I didn’t hold it against him the way Charlie did, but I held the way he lied to me against him. Edward was going have to rebuild my full trust in him but he was trying and he was here and I did love him. For now, that would be enough to keep us going while we healed. We’d work.

Edward smiled his real crooked grin at my reassurance and he was still wary, I could tell, but he seemed so Edward that I squeezed his hand lightly. In reply, he took the hand and brushed his knuckles against my cheekbone, a gesture that was common with him. I offered him a soft smile.

“I’ve got homework,” I told him, turning away as quickly as possible to grab my books. When I turned back he was miraculously still there, pale against the green and gray backdrop of Forks scenery, the blue sweater he wore bringing out the brighter red in his bronze hair.

“Would you like me to go?” He asked me. I contemplated his question before shaking my head.

“You can stay until Charlie is close. I’m not going to push him, I’m still grounded.”

“Alright,” Edward agreed, his simple confirmation beautiful to me. He shut the truck door for me once I got out before offering me his hand. I didn’t have to take it, I knew that, but I did. His icy skin was as unsettling and comforting as ever, so different from the warmth of Jacob that I had gotten used to in Edward’s absence. “Should I go through your window? I still don’t think Charlie wants me going through his door.”

I snorted a little at that, not sure if Edward was joking or serious. I shot him a look and he did look entirely serious but truthfully it was hard to tell with him sometimes, his face commonly somber. “No, come on. We’re going through the door like normal people and you’re going to hold my books for me while I get my key.”

He held open his arms for me to dump my books into. I knew he could have easily gotten the key for me and unlocked the door quickly but I also knew that he was letting me be human, letting me do things myself even if it seemed impractical.

“Yes milady,” he replied with a quick nod. He grinned at me now, his white teeth on display and I rolled my eyes fondly. This was the Edward I missed the most and this was easy for me to fall back into. The playfulness, the way we talked. One day I’d get this and feel comfortable kissing him again, feeling comfortable with him holding me at night. But for now, I had this.

I managed to get my key in the lock and turned, the door creaking open to allow us in. Edward walked my books to the kitchen table as I shrugged out of my raincoat and hung my keys on the hook near the door. I followed him into the kitchen a moment later and soon settled into the chair near him with a glass of water. This was where we sat now if he came over, he hadn’t been in my room since that first night back from Volterra. Partially because I assumed Charlie was still checking on me during the night and partially because I needed that time. I was scared the nightmares of him leaving would return and part of me wanted him there, to remind me he was real, but part of me just couldn’t bring myself to let him into that vulnerable part of me so fast.

I wasn't sure what I'd say in my sleep nowadays.

Edward had picked up my well-worn copy of *Wuthering Heights* as I worked on my calculus. He would occasionally huff at the book in displeasure before I finally looked up, an eyebrow raised.

"What?" I asked him. His eyes shot to me, a confused and innocent look on his face.

"What?" He parroted back to me. I frowned then.

"What are you hming at?" I questioned. He seemed to understand then and set the book down, of course, he'd know where he'd left off.

"I just don't see why you like this book. I mean, the writing is alright, but the characters are awful." Edward explained to me. I pulled my bottom lip between my teeth, thinking over my reply, holding my pencil still in my hand.

"I guess I like that part? It's not really a love story, it's a pain story. It's a lesson. They're all damned and they're all awful but the love each other despite it, despite it being the worst thing for them. Cathy is so connected to Heathcliff, they are the same, in their souls. But that's not really a good thing because it means when one is damned, they both are, and it means she wants to be him. You should love someone without having to become them. It's, like I said, a lesson. Edgar, he loves Cathy despite her flaws but he doesn't want her flaws and he doesn't throw himself away entirely loving her. He tries to love her in the best ways he can despite the fact she drives herself mad for Heathcliff. I guess it's just about what love is and isn't." I finished my explanation, Edward's eyes never leaving my face the entire time I told him. It felt somewhat similar to he and I, the idea of souls was so Edward. He didn't want to damn my soul in the way he was, to make me like him, but in my opinion, I was still me. Becoming a vampire would not change the me I was, I would not become someone new, I would merely fulfill the me that I had been wanting to become since I was seventeen.

Edward looked like he was still contemplating my explanation like his brain had slowed down to the speed of a humans at my analysis. After a few moments though he nodded to

himself like he had realized or accepted my points. "I can see why you like it," he finally admitted. "I'm sorry I interrupted you."

"It's alright," I told him. "I need to get started on something for dinner anyway."

"Oh, yes. Charlie will be home soon," He agreed and I rose from my chair. I was sad to see Edward go in the way I usually was, the peace with him of this afternoon already beginning to fade into my memories. "Alice was planning to try and come over this weekend."

"Really?" I asked as I opened the freezer, peering in to see what we had in terms of materials to work with. When I turned around Edward was nodding.

"Yes, she says she misses you already and that she wants to tell you her plans for the outfits she's considering for her first day back at school," Edward seemed like he was reciting word for word what she asked him to say. I wrinkled my nose at the word outfits.

"She knows I'll be rotten at helping her make any sort of fashion decision."

"I think she really just wants to see you but I'm sure she'll also talk your head off about all the ways the color combinations she has chosen could complement her skin."

I rolled my eyes fondly at that. It was purely Alice but I truly did miss her. Charlie had mostly forgiven her for dragging me along, realizing it was my choice and that I had forced Alice into agreeing. My father liked Edward's adopted sister much better than he liked Edward and I was sure he'd not argue too much at Alice's presence. I focused on choosing some potato's before Edward walked over to me.

"Your father is down the road, I should get going." He said softly. I nodded, too afraid to speak, turning to look at him. His eyes looked pained at having to go and I nearly broke and told him to come to my room tonight but decided against it. My resolve was strong. "I'll see you Monday. I love you."

And then he was gone. It wasn't a full minute before Charlie's tires were crunching against the gravel and I gritted my teeth, reminding myself in a mantra that Edward was still in Forks, he had just gone home. That was my choice, for him to go home instead of going to wait in my room.

Charlie was in the house soon, stomping any mud off onto the mat and slinging his belt off and onto the book. "Hey, Bels!" He called gruffly.

"Hey Dad," I replied, focusing on washing the potatoes I had settled on. He walked into the tiny kitchen.

"How was school?" Charlie asked, walking over to the table where my school books, *Wuthering Heights*, and the newspaper sat. I shrugged.

"Good. I ate lunch with Angela and we complained about our English reading. Normal high school things," I said. I had finished washing the potatoes and was now getting prepared to peel them. I was going to try a home french fry recipe my mom had once tried and failed, I thought the truly finished product would be something up Charlie's ally.

"What are you all reading?" He asked me, distractedly now as he had picked up the paper from where he'd left it that morning. His mustache was covering his lips now and his brows furrowed as he skimmed the paper.

"Julius Caesar. Shakespeare again," I told him. "What's big in the news today?"

And that's how the rest of my night continued, casually conversing with Charlie, finishing dinner, then finishing my homework. Finally, I went to bed, the rain which had once made me restless lulling my exhausted mind and body into an only slightly uneasy sleep.

2. I'm a satellite heart

Chapter Notes

Oh boy, so, I already wrote chapter 2? I'm sort of on a binge write with this lol. I started chapter 3 already and I hope to have it done quickly but efficiently. This chapter is a little scattered and gave me much difficulty when it came to editing. I wrote it mainly on my phone and edited there too with my editing software to check me, so if you see mistakes, huge apologies! I have no patience whatsoever. Again, this was inspired by a Tumblr post by queertwilight linked in the notes of the first chapter and the chapter title is taken from lyrics of a song from the New Moon soundtrack. I'm gonna try to make a mini playlist for this fic which will go up on my Tumblr Elise-alisande most likely and appear here. Also, I'll try to make most chapter titles be from soundtrack songs or songs I relate to this particular fix! Comments and kudos are appreciated <3

Alice arrived rather early on Saturday morning but I was commonly an early riser. Charlie was leaving to go fishing as Alice pulled up in Edward's Volvo. I was sure my father's face would have been humorous and terrible if I hadn't given the heads up that Alice was coming over.

She had cheerfully waved at my father when she'd gotten out of the Volvo. Charlie gave her a gruff hello and wave back before he told me to have a good day and got into his cruiser. Alice then turned on me, a happy grin stretching across her perfect face, her eyes were a light gold letting me know she'd recently hunted. I returned her grin with a hesitant smile of my own, opening the door wider.

Alice darted up the steps, coming into the house before she threw her hard arms around me, gently enough it couldn't leave a bruise but hard enough I felt her excitement.

"Oh Bella I've missed you," She sang and I laughed lightly. Being with Alice was so easy, it was like she had never left.

"I've missed you too, Alice. Although, doesn't time feel different when you're a vampire?" I asked. She pulled away from me then, a look on her face that clued me into knowing she was contemplating that statement.

“Well, yes. But I have just been at home all day. There are only so many things to unload. I’ve already redone Jasper and I’s room and no one will let me at theirs yet. So, I’m bored. You’re the only one interesting right now, I’ve been with the rest of them the past few months or well few decades.” Alice explained. She was holding my hand in her cold one and I relished in the small affection despite the chill.

“I suppose that is true,” I admitted. It felt nice to hear that Alice wanted to see me and specifically me. To think that to Alice, at least, that I was more interesting than her perfect family. I didn’t know anyone more interesting than the Cullens but here Alice was assuring me that I was much more intriguing. It was mind-boggling.

“Anyway, I know you don’t like me dressing you up, but I do like fashion. So, instead, I’m going to hope you can help me choose a perfect back to school outfit,” Alice said finally letting my hand go. She reached for the bag she had brought but dropped when she had hugged me. It wasn’t large, there couldn’t have been many outfits in there. I was resigned to the activities she had for me because at least I was getting to spend time with Alice.

I let the tiny vampire drag me up to my room where she proceeded to have a mini fashion show. Finally, I helped her decide on a nice blouse and a cute skirt that fell above her knees.

“You might want to pair that with tights,” I pointed to the skirt she was admiring. “It’s supposed to be kind of chilly and I know the weather doesn’t affect you but it affects other people and you need to blend in.”

Alice poured at that but nodded. “I suppose your right.” her eyes unfocused a little, “well, yes, I think it will look alright.”

“I can’t believe you had a vision of how it’d look that fast,” I shook my head. Alice’s visions still intrigued me. They were sporadic and rather uncontrolled despite her attempts to control them. I felt a bit like Alice was a slightly more accurate magic 8 ball. If I shook her hard enough maybe she’d tell me what to do about my life situation.

“They come as they please,” She replied, shrugging her narrow shoulders and folding the clothes back into her bag. She joined me on my bed then, settling beside me and crossing her

hands onto her chest a bit like she was a body laid in a coffin. She stared up at the ceiling.

“What are you thinking about?” Alice finally asked after a few moments of silence. I shook my head softly.

“You sound like your brother,” I replied instead of telling her my thought. Alice’s nose wrinkled at that.

“I could never wear beige as often as he does,” Alice said simply, her nose slightly turned up in disgust. I giggled.

“I happen to like his beige color scheme,” I replied in slight defense of Edward. Alice sent me a scornful look.

“Of course you would, Bella! You own one skirt and it’s khaki-colored!” She nearly wailed and I almost felt guilty for apparently traumatizing the small fashionista I called a close friend.

“You’ll have all of eternity to try and treat me as your Barbie, Alice” I reminded her. That thought seemed to soothe her enough because she let the matter drop mostly.

“When do you think you’ll want to turn?” Alice suddenly asked. I gulped in the silence that followed.

“I’m not sure,” I replied finally. She turned her head to look at me, there was curiosity in her expression.

“You were very eager to get it done on the way to Volterra,”

“I was,” I admitted. Alice was right about that but everything then had seemed about how I could save Edward. There was a risk of me going into Volterra as a human and it was still a

risk now because they were waiting to see me as a vampire. “I guess, now I’m a bit worried about the permanence. Edward, he left once, you all left. It will be harder when I’m a vampire but what if one day you just don’t want me anymore? You spend a few decades with me and realize I’m not interesting anymore.”

It was quiet again and I could feel the tears building up in my chest. I was a crier, I hated it. I cried no matter what. When I was sad when I was angry when I was happy. Tears were my emotions. I tried to will the salty tears back into my eyes before Alice could notice them but all of a sudden my friend was holding me.

Her head was resting on my shoulder, her spiky hair tickling my cheek and her cold hard arms wrapped securely around my middle and she was shaking a little too. Like a chihuahua who had gotten too cold.

“My brother is an idiot,” She offered in reply and her voice was sort of raw. Vampires couldn’t cry but I thought that this was Alice’s way of crying. Alice, who couldn’t even remember her human life but who had so easily given human me a chance before Edward had entirely seemed to. “You are my family. You will always be my family. I will never be bored of you, Bella. My family never really bores me. I had a sister when I was human and I don’t remember her but then something gave me two new sisters in a new life. I’m not losing a sister again, I’m not losing you.”

I choked up and I was sobbing then and Alice held me even tighter. My ribs would probably hurt later but for now, this is what I needed. When I had been trying to hold myself together all through this past fall and winter, I had needed this, someone, who was strong enough to hold me together while I broke. That way when it was time I could manage to put myself back together without having to find the pieces I’d managed to knock loose and lose over time.

We lay like that for a while, until my sobs slowed and Alice, who had silently sobbed with me, calmed too. I had always been an only child but I did have to assume this must be what it felt like to have a sister and I could not complain about it. Alice was my sister in everything but actually blood.

“I love you, Alice. You’re the best.” I broke the silence to tell her, my voice croaked from the crying.

“I love you too, Bella. Even though your fashion sense sucks and you give me headaches sometimes.” She replied.

“Very sweet.”

“That’s me!”

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Edward and Alice’s return to Forks High School went rather smoothly. Before I had ridden to school with Edward and Alice usually but now I drove myself. It was both practical and impractical. Edward and Alice both went to the Cullen’s house after school but it was likely one of them would then find their way back to my house. Then again cars were not the only means of quick transport for those two.

Edward once again took his seat next to me in English. Angela shot us both a smile when she walked in, Edward returned her smile politely. Mike’s eyes widened considerably large at seeing Edward before he scowled, Edward did look at smug at that.

Mike’s shock was rather stupid though. Carlisle had easily taken back up just position at the hospital and word traveled around Forks fast. Maybe Mike just hadn’t expected Edward to sit next to me again so easily. Maybe he hadn’t expected me to get back together with Edward so quickly.

Well, if Mike had guessed that he was right.

All-day long people's eyes found Alice or Edward in the hallway and also me. It felt like my first day again or the day when I first rode to school with Edward. High school students were like vultures.

Edward sat beside me at lunch and though it was easier for people to stare then, it was easier to ignore them. Angela had taken her usual seat and not objected when Alice slid onto the chair beside her. Angela had even struck up a conversation with Alice about Alice's stone bracelet. My two friends chatted while I picked my way through a salad I had gotten, my appetite rather nonexistent though.

Edward tapped my knee lightly under the table with his fingers. Two taps. It was a sort of symbol we had made up to use around others. A silent question, *are you okay?* It had been so long since I had felt it. How many months had I spent imagining a phantom two taps? Imagining a phantom question of if I was okay from a boy I was sure I had created in my mind, that was when I really had felt crazy.

But these two taps were real and they startled me some. I jumped and Alice's gold eyes flicked to me quickly, Edward's own darker eyes a sort of cider color due to his lack of recent hunting. Angela paused in her speaking.

"You okay, Bella?" Angela asked and they all watched me, waiting for my reply. I swallowed thickly, their eyes on me causing a sort of block in my throat from nerves.

"Yeah, sorry. Edward, I think you bumped my foot with yours and it just startled me," I made up the lie quickly. It wasn't a full lie, just a shifting of the truth. He had sort of bumped me and startled me. Edward seemed to catch on and attempted to look sheepish.

"Sorry," He apologized and Angela laughed the break the awkward tension that had settled. She turned back to Alice who restarted the conversation enthusiastically.

"I'm okay," I said under my breath. I knew Edward, and Alice for that matter would hear it despite how low it was. Edward nodded but he was careful not to touch my knee again. The part of me that desired his touch aches at that, but the other part of me was glad to not be having to be on guard to make sure I reacted properly.

The rest of the school week passed by rather quickly. After the original shock of seeing Edward and Alice back had died off, I finally faded into the background again. I was happy being not front and center of attention, I had always been shy and people's stares made me uncomfortable. My mother had said offhandedly once that maybe I had social anxiety but we never had the money to truly look into getting that diagnosed by a Psychiatrist.

Edward came by again Friday night, staying until Charlie was almost home. We worked on homework, though it was easy for Edward. He helped me slightly with math, it comforted me some that he was not the best at calculus, just only decent because he had been through it a handful of times.

Once our homework was finished though we migrated to the couch. I was in one of my slightly touchier moods so I curled my legs up against my side and rested my head on Edward's shoulder.

"Sometimes I wish we could just start over," I said wistfully. I didn't entirely mean it. I would regret not living some of the moments if things had gone differently. What if in the diner there wasn't a pretty waitress for him to ignore? Or what if I didn't make the excuse of going to Seattle? But on one hand, would Edward not leave?

"Well," He said softly. "How do you feel about today's weather?"

I let out a sudden laugh at his question and I felt him begin to laugh too. His laugh was a musical noise, unlike mine which sometimes to me felt like breaking plates, a little too sudden and sharp. The rest of me was soft but not my laugh. I was taken aback at Edward's slight joke. I remembered then his first time truly talking to me, he had said it was a shame about the snow melting but I had quickly disagreed, pleased to lose the cold and wet. Now, I was fonder of Forks' dreary weather.

"Well, it is a little chilly," I replied, sitting up from and him trying to play along. Edward gave me my favorite smile.

"Not a fan of the cold?" He asked and he was smirking now.

"Not really."

"Too bad. I guess the girl I love is not a fan of me," He was referring to the fact that he was cold constantly of course but I zeroed in on the label he had given me. The girl he loves. It

was not shocking, he reminded me frequently, but once Edward had said that it was nice to be reminded that I loved him. I found that it was nice to be reminded that he too loved me.

“I am a fan of you,” I reassured him, picking up his ice-cold hand and holding it in my warm one, letting his only slightly paler fingers lace with mine. We sat there like that and his eyes drifted shut, though he could not sleep.

“Starting over would be nice if we could leave out me pushing you away and you theorizing what I am and James almost killing you. Oh, also me almost killing you,” the last part he added snarkily and I knew him well enough to sense his self-hatred was blooming.

“If we could leave out the negatives that would be nice,” I decided was the best reply I could think of. He opened his eyes then and they bore into my own brown irises.

“I hoped by removing myself, I would be removing the negatives,”

“And that ended up being the most negative of all,” I told him with finality. I didn’t really want to talk about this and I didn’t think Edward did either. He luckily dropped it and we switched the subject to school until I had to start dinner and he had to leave to avoid Charlie.

Avoidance: 1. Facing things head-on: 0

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That Saturday I impulsively decided to ask Charlie to go see Jacob.

I hadn’t talked to my best friend since he had ratted me out for the motorcycles. Mostly because I was grounded and partially because I was settling in. Charlie though was a fan of Jacob and readily agreed. Halfway there I realized Edward was likely not going to be pleased with my trip into the heart of werewolf territory.

But I had spent the past few months in the heart of werewolf territory. He wasn't going to stop me from returning there now. When I pulled up to the little red house, I saw a curtain shift. Before I could fully get out of the truck, Jacob was blinding down the ramp and running towards me, a grin on his face.

"Bella!" He cried happily and despite my previous anger at him, I grinned back. I was suddenly out of the truck and in Jacob's arms, my vision was spinning as he twirled me around and the strength of his hold limited my oxygen.

"Jake! Loosen the hug, can't breathe!" I managed to get out and he set me down quickly, looking sheepish. I was exhilarated by his excitement though. Maybe Jacob wasn't as angry with me as he had seemed. Maybe I could still have my best friend, still have a portion of the bubble we had built in his shed.

"What are you doing here?" He asked before continuing. "I mean, not that you can't come here! I'm just surprised."

"I just wanted to see you," I told him back and Jacob smiled a bit like an excited little boy. My heart panged for the younger Jacob. Luckily his hair was growing back out. I was never entirely sure why all the boys cropped their hair when they first shifted. Sam kept his shorter than most but Jared has grown his back to his chin now and as far as I remembered, it had not really affected his wolf counterparts fur.

"Hey, I'm not complaining!" Jacob admitted. He grabbed my hand. "Come on, let's go to the beach!"

So, we did. The beach wasn't very crowded but the rain had faded enough that you could walk without getting soaked. It was a little chilly with the wind blowing off the water but Jacob radiated heat so I stayed close to him.

"So, how are you?" Jacob finally asked. I almost froze at that question but I kept walking, trying very hard not to cross my arms across my chest like I used to. It was an easy reflex to act upon, a much harder one to fight. I was so used to attempting to hold myself together, even when I was younger, that I had no clue how to let other people do it. I took care of people, they did not ask me if I was okay or attempt to care for me.

“I’m decent. Alice and Edward started school again, I’m still kind of grounded. I’m becoming better friends with Angela.” I ticked off the things that I felt like were evidence that I was good, better. I smiled at Jacob. “I’m here.”

“You’re here.” He agreed and he smiled back at me but it didn’t reach his eyes. “So, are you and the vampire back together?”

I shot a sudden look around to make sure no one could’ve heard us. I glared at Jacob saying the word so loud. “We’re... working on it.”

“Working on it?” Jacob mouthed the words and I was suddenly uneasy. I had mostly tried to forget about Jacob’s not entirely platonic feelings for me, trying to remind him frequently that to me he was just a best friend. Jacob felt a bit like the little brother I think I slightly had always wanted. I did not have a large maternal instinct but the small part of me that had the maternal need to take care of people was very satisfied by worrying after Jacob Black. But Jacob surprised me.

“So, I guess what you always said was right? That it’s kind of always going to be him, you’ll always work to make sure it’s him.” Jacob said and he didn’t sound as hurt as I had expected. He turned his dark eyes on me and they were so warm, so Jacob, I wanted to cry. To throw my arms around this boy who I thought was hurting, to make him feel alive the way he had made me feel alive. But in reality, I was not capable of that. I could not try to fix him and give him what he wanted and deny myself what I wanted and maybe that made me selfish. He continued speaking, “I never really stood a chance, did I?”

“I’m sorry, Jake. I just, you never were that for me? I loved you, I love you, it’s just not the way you want. And maybe I wish I could make myself but I can’t,” I told him honestly and I was proud that my voice didn’t shake. Jacob took a deep breath before he let it out. He didn’t look angry, which I was glad for. There was some sadness to him but I think Jacob had always known what I had just told him. It stung to get the final, or what I hoped was the final, blow, but it helped.

“You’ll still be my friend, right? Because I’d rather have you as a friend than not have you at all,” He suddenly asked, desperation in his voice. I was shocked that my best friend thought I could in any way not be his friend.

“Jake, of course! You’re my best friend you idiot. I’m not planning to really go anywhere until you’re sick and tired of me.” As I said it though, I knew I was likely wrong. Jake would probably not want me around when I became a vampire, his sworn enemy. I hoped maybe he could still see me and not just a vampire but there was no guarantee. Jacob’s responding grin to my statement though was too bright for me to let him down with my impending change for now. I would tell him at some point.

“So, are you going to explain to me what all happened when you ran off to save your cold guy?” He asked me. I raised my brow at the term ‘cold guy’ but Jake returned my raised brow with raised hands. “Hey, I’m trying to be nicer but I don’t want to say his actual name.”

I rolled my eyes at that but I eyed a tree trunk that Jacob and I had sat on before. I gestured to it and he followed me to sit down. “It’s a long story.”

“I’m raised on long complicated scary stories,” He replied and his teeth were white and bright against his warm russet skin. I gravitated toward his warmth the same way I gravitated towards Edward’s cold.

I settled into my spot beside him and began to recount my trip to Volterra, dragging Jacob fully into the people in my life who seemed to orbit me and fend off my troubles. Maybe he was always meant to be there, a defense to the people trying to hurt me. Jacob, my best friend, my sun.

They're my friends

Chapter Notes

Hello lovely readers! Sorry, it's been a hot minute since an update. I had a lot of school work to catch up on and multiple friends celebrating social distanced birthday's so it's been a bit chaotic here in El land! I hope you're all doing well in quarantine and I'll try to keep the updating pretty frequent but these next couple weeks I'll be busy finishing my junior year of high school, planning my own social distanced birthday for June. Thank you for the feedback I've received!! I love seeing you guys' comments so much!

As always, this fic is inspired by a post by queertwilight on Tumblr (linked in the notes of chapter one) though I've taken my own twist on it. Also as always comments, kudos, and any other feedback is welcome and appreciated. Now onto chapter three of 'You're Still Home'!

I stayed at Jacob's until rather late and when I got home, Charlie was gone. I found a note near the key hook telling me that he had decided to go fishing. I sighed, it was predictable but I didn't mind the alone time. I walked into the kitchen and nearly had a heart attack when I saw Edward sitting there motionless.

"Edward!" I snapped and he turned his head to me slowly. His eyes were very dark now, nearly no gold remaining in his irises. He looked relieved.

"You went to see Jacob," He said simply as a reply. I stiffened before setting my chin stubbornly.

"Yes," I replied. "Is that a problem?"

"Yes and no," Edward told me and he stood up then, walking over to me, his hand extended but I stubbornly ignored it. Hurt flared in his eyes but I crossed my arms across my chest and pursed my lips. I knew Edward had been jealous once, junior year, of Mike Newton of all people! I was sincerely hoping he was not jealous now and rather just wary of my safety, though that wasn't much better.

“Care to explain that contradiction you presented?”

“It is a problem just because I was worried. Alice suddenly saw your future disappear, that was very disconcerting, last time I heard of that happening I was convinced you were dead!” His voice raised slightly and if it was capable of cracking like a boy in puberty it probably would have but Edward’s voice was musical even in his stress. “I don’t care if you go see Jacob, Bella. I don’t control you and even if I did, I doubt I’d have much success at doing so. I was just worried. The wolves are temperamental and you must guess how worried I would be when all of the sudden Alice stops seeing you.”

“Maybe you should have Alice stop watching my future then,” was the stubborn retort I offered him back. It was a bit cruel and petty. I did sympathize with Edward and I understood where he was coming from but in my core, I was stubborn and unwilling to easily bend to him, especially now.

“She doesn’t always try to. Plus, she’s watching you because of the Volturi and Victoria. We have to make sure we’re ready if either come to hurt you or us.” He responded back and it was a bit flat. It shouldn’t have stung, it should’ve been comforting, but it felt like maybe Edward was trying to say he was more concerned about the vampire royalty and the revenge obsessed vampire than he was concerned about me. Though, wasn’t that what I wanted? To be less babysat?

I could tell I was likely not going to get anywhere with my stubborn approach so I relented a little. “I should have told you, just so you would’ve had a heads up that my future would disappear. NOT because I should feel obligated to tell you but it was spur of the moment, I just randomly decided. I’m sorry I worried you, but the wolves, they really aren’t that dangerous.” Edward raised one of his thick brows at me and I raised my own thin one back. “They’re not!”

“How are they not, Bella? Please enlighten me.”

“Okay, I mean, yeah one time Paul shifted near me but Jacob and Sam could tell he was about to and they made sure to pull me away instantly. And Jacob transformed to go after Paul for even daring to be close to me while transforming!” I said. Edward had let a soft snarl out at the mention of the close call with Paul. “They’re all really good at controlling their transformations, probably as good as you all are at controlling your blood lust. Besides, what happened with Paul, it’s similar to what happened with Jasper!”

Edward tensed at the mention of my catastrophic eighteenth birthday and I was even shocked at myself for bringing it up. It was sort of a topic we avoided, not a high-risk trigger, but it ruined everything then and I knew to an extent Jasper was still beating himself over it. I sighed some and walked over to Edward, reaching up to place my hands on his jaw and making sure his dark eyes looked at me.

“When that happened, everyone made sure to get Jasper away from me. When Paul transformed, they made sure to get me out of the way. And something could’ve happened, I could’ve gotten hurt the same way I did at the party but I didn’t luckily.” I told him, making sure my voice was soft. Edward closed his eyes like it was hurting him to look at me, hurting him to recall the memory of me hurt. I continued though. “I’m living my life surrounded by people that could hurt me, but on the flip side of that, I’m surrounded by people who actively choose every day to not hurt me. You, your family, Jake, the wolves, they try so hard not to hurt me! Angela even, could be so cruel and turn her back on me and hurt me in the way a classic friend could but she doesn’t, despite the fact I haven’t been the most present friend! The fact that I have people who choose to love me and choose to try and save me and help me and not hurt me is better than the few times that they may slip up.”

Edward breathed shakily after my slight little monologue and he leaned so that our foreheads pressed together. “You’re right.”

I smirked a little. “I usually am. It’s rare you admit it though.”

“You’d get a big head,” He replied before smiling at me. I often forgot how much of a little shit he blatantly could be. I swatted at him, realizing as my hand smacked against his arm that I would likely just gain a bruise. He didn’t budge and my hand stung a little at the contact but I was clumsy enough that I was used to a few bumps and bruises.

Edward laughed though and I was comforted at the confirmation the tension had left him. I stepped back from him though and made my way to the refrigerator, ignoring the feeling of Edward’s eyes on me, and pulled out some leftover lasagna. I kept myself busy for a few minutes, letting myself be human after the brief discussion of the supernatural.

When Edward had left, the magic that the supernatural had brought into my life faded. When Jacob was suddenly a bit shifted out of normal himself, a taste of that had entered back into

my life though, but not in the same way. I was drawn to the supernatural, I would never doubt that I belonged there, in that world, but there were moments when my mind reminded me I was human. And now that I had spent months having to be human, albeit a bit of a zombie-like one, the reconnection to the surreal side of my life often exhausted me. I had to have the nights making Charlie and I dinner or doing my homework to reconnect and then by the morning I was itching to see Edward's unnatural gold eyes or feel Jacob's increased heat.

The human-minutes I had used to request Edward to give me had now become human hours.

When I turned back to the table, warmed lasagna in hand there was Edward, every single bit the image of perfection he always was. It would never be easy, I had concluded that rather easily, but I was stubborn enough to never like easy

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Despite the fact that I shared my English class with Edward, he wasn't paired up with me for the newest project we had. Since he'd returned later, despite his insistence that he knew the material (of course he did), our English teacher had told him to work with Alice though they were in different class periods. I had no doubt they'd complete the project in record time and ace it.

I was paired with Angela, thankfully, and Jessica Stanley.

My first friend at Forks High School had remained pulled away from me even after I had checked back into reality. Though I couldn't blame her, something in me did pang at the reminder of how easy it seemed to be for people to leave. We had never been close and that had mostly been my fault.

Jessica seemed as uncomfortable to be paired with me as I was to be paired with her and poor Angela hung in the middle of awkward tension.

"So, how about this weekend, my house?" Angela questioned, brushing her dark hair behind her ear and tugging her lower lip between her teeth, an action I was familiar with. Her dark

eyes flitted between Jess and me as if she was trying to keep an eye on two bombs at the same time, her own tension mixing with ours.

“That sounds great Angela,” I replied and my friend looked a bit relieved that someone had finally replied to her question. She turned from me to Jessica now. Jess tugged on one of her curls before she nodded.

“Yeah, sounds good.” She finally said before she peered over her shoulder towards Mike. Mike was paired with Tyler and a girl named Mallory. Jessica looked wistful and I was sure that she wished she was paired with her on and off-again boyfriend.

“Alright, great! Saturday afternoon, at 1 o’clock? Hopefully, my parents won’t try to get us up Sunday morning to go to church.” Angela rambled as she wrote the plans down in a floral planner she had pulled out. I nodded along with her planning, making sure I caught the details to tell Charlie. He’d be glad once again that I was seeing other friends.

I truly didn’t mind that I was getting time with Angela. She was the one person besides my dad and Jake that I’d miss when I inevitably fulfilled the Volturi’s request for me to change. I just hoped the awkward tension between Jessica and I would fade by Saturday.

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My wish for less awkwardness went unheard.

We were cramped in Angela’s small lavender color room, the wood floors cool underneath me as I lay on my stomach. Angela was busy swiping glue onto the back of a sheet of paper that she would press onto the board we were working on. Jessica was dutifully cutting shapes of paper with the pair of scissors Angela had given her and I was writing down textual evidence in my messy scrawl.

It was meant to be some graphic for Shakespeare's plays and to compare symbolism, it wasn’t hard but more so time-consuming. Jessica luckily had an eye for design and organization and the section of our rubric that lined up with that was definitely met. If this project was all about the aesthetic of it all, Jessica would’ve made sure we won. She’d created a call back to

Rome so easily across the board. I wasn't as called to pretty things like that as Jessica but I could admire it.

We worked mainly in silence, asking each other questions when needed and when we were pretty much finished, Angela brought up dinner and we sat in a circle to eat on Angela's bedroom floor.

"Bella," Jessica said and I startled at my name leaving her mouth. I looked to her and was met with her thick brows pulled together. "Are you ever going to explain to me really what happened at the beginning of this year?"

Angela's own thin brows shot up and her fork paused halfway to her mouth, her dark almond eyes widened in unison with her brows raising. I swallowed, anxiety suddenly tightening my chest. Jessica did have a right to ask though.

"I just, I mean after Port Angeles, you scared me you know! I kept waiting for an explanation, especially after they were back but.." She trailed off and it was sort of nice that she didn't say the Cullen's by name. For so long I needed people to do that and yet they still slipped up. I suddenly felt guilty though, remembering how I had used Jessica as a way to get my dad off my back and how I had likely terrified her in Port Angeles.

"Uh, yeah," I finally replied intelligently before shaking my head to clear the dozens of thoughts that flitted through my brain. It was probably good Edward couldn't read my mind, he'd get confused in a minute, unable to keep up despite his super speed. "I guess I kind of owe you an explanation."

Jessica pursed her lips like she didn't want to agree with the usage of 'owe' out loud but I could tell she felt like that was the perfect word to use. "I'd appreciate one."

"Well, uh, junior year, when I ran into Edward in Port Angeles? It was because these guys were following me, I'm pretty sure they wanted to assault me but Edward randomly pulled up because he had seen me and thought they were following me. The men in Port Angeles that night, they reminded me of the first guys, and I guess I deluded myself into thinking maybe Edward would show up and save me again." I finished my explanation and Jessica's brows had furrowed more. "It wasn't fair to you of course. I know I probably scared you and obviously there was no one there to help us, it would've been bad."

Jessica nodded. "I'm still not sure why you even asked me to go?"

"My dad was kind of on my case. I made up an excuse, said I needed a girls night, you were the first person I thought of." I shrugged sheepishly. Oddly though Jessica grinned.

"You thought of me first? That's sweet. Although you did just admit to kind of using me, it's fine though. You know I think we all use each other. It's sort of a cycle of life." Jessica suddenly rambled and I was a bit taken aback at her reply. Angela let out a sudden awkward laugh and then Jessica giggled too.

"Sorry," I said to apologize for using Jessica although she didn't seem bothered by that. She shrugged off my apology.

"I was worried about you, you know. I mean I was a little confused, Edward left but your reaction was worrisome. But then again you didn't really come out of your shell until you were close with him and then he had to leave so suddenly, truly it would suck. I just, you sort of shoved everyone even farther away then you already kept them and I like to be needed and wanted and Mike wouldn't shut up about how he thought he had a chance with you now. I was angry for a while, even more after Port Angeles, but I was worried too." Jessica finally explained her side and I did feel for her suddenly. I had never asked for Mike to be so obsessed with me and the feeling of not being wanted was crushing, I knew first hand.

"I've never liked Mike like that," I finally answered.

Jess shrugged. "Logically, I know that. It's just easier to be mad at you for being the object of his obsessive affections than to be angry with the guy I like."

"It's sort of stupid girls have to turn on each other because boys are stupid."

"Amen!" Angela said suddenly and I laughed at her sudden add into the conversation and Jessica joined us. It felt incredibly human then and I realized I had never really experienced this. In Phoenix I had been too shy to really make friends, sticking to nights in with my

mother or nights alone when I was old enough. I hadn't ever had a real sleepover except for a couple when I was little and did dance. My memory that far back was fuzzy though.

"Very true," Jessica finally agreed with me but she shrugged. "I didn't say I was right for being angry, just that I was."

I nodded at that. I understood Jessica more then, she just wanted to be liked. She was kind deep down, a good friend when I would let her be. I doubted that we'd ever be close but she likely would always be the first person I'd think of if I needed a human girls night. She wasn't ever going to be Alice or Angela or Jacob but she was Jessica and that felt like enough suddenly.

We wound down for the night soon and Angela fell asleep first. Jessica and I slept on pallets of blankets Mrs. Weber had made up for us on Angela's floor. When it was dark and quiet except for Angela's even breathing and the rain patter I spoke.

"Hey, Jess,"

"Hm?"

"Thanks for worrying."

"You're welcome," She said sleepily and I could almost hear the slight smile in her voice. I smiled too.

authors note

Hello readers! I am currently working on the next chapter right now but I wanted to explain my absence!

First off– thank you so much to all my new readers! Your comments and kudos and love have been so kind and truly make me want to keep writing! Thank you, thank you!

Second– my absence. May and June have been very tough months. I was completing my Junior year of high school and celebrating turning seventeen. A couple weeks before my birthday my dog, who I have grown up with, suffered a stroke. This occurred the day after I received the news that one of my best friends was diagnosed with cancer. My dog became paralyzed in her back legs and we assumed we were going to put her down when her stroke occurred but we gave her a fighting chance. Sometimes she seemed like she would make a recovery, other days it seemed she wouldn't. The day before my actual birthday I saw some friends social distanced and my dog took a turn for the worse. On my actual birthday, she was very unresponsive and truly not herself. My mom and I knew that she had reached her end but my dad was not ready to take her in to put her down yet. That night, around three am, she passed away at home. We buried her that next morning, the day after my birthday.

Obviously, I've had a lot of emotional things occurring in the past few weeks and some of the time I have been off my anxiety and depression meds. I also adopted a small puppy to help the loss of my other dog and she's going to become an emotional service dog. The time has been incredibly stressful and I have attempted to channel my energy into supporting my friend as she goes through chemo, training and loving my puppy, and last but not least; supporting and raising my voice for the Black Lives Matter movement. Yes, everyone does matter, but at the moment, Black lives need the support and reminder in knowing they do matter.

All of this being said, chapter four is in progress! I am so excited for Midnight Sun and plan to reread the saga over the month of July to prepare so I hope that there will be a large revival in my love for it that produces many frequent updates! Please be patient with me though! I am still a student, a mentally unhealthy one at that, and I writing is a passion I want to turn into a career. I've got to look towards college applications and those sort of things too, taking into account how covid has affected that.

Again though, thank you so so much for your support and love for this story. It was a random, impulsive decision I chose to plan and write for when I was browsing twilight tumblr and found the original inspiration post. Happy Pride Month, support the BLM movement! I will be back very very soon. Sending love and light to you all <3

4: wherever I go, I catch a glimpse of you

Chapter Notes

Lovely readers thank you so much for your patience and kindness!! Happy belated midnight sun day, I just finished it and I have mixed emotions. I hope you enjoy this very much due chapter, I tried to make it long and I finally got to some more supporting women stuff! I want to mention TW for Rape! It is a glossed-over subject in twilight but important I think. Please stay safe while reading!! TW RAPE again!! I will update tags! I begin my senior year of high school next week and my first paid job so I can't promise frequent updates but I will try. A lot of this is planned I just get writer's block or busy haha. Concerning my last update of an authors note, I'm doing much better mentally and emotionally. I hope you're all safe and healthy and taking care of yourselves. Hug your loved ones when you can, wash your hands!! Sending love and light to you all. Remember to donate to the Quileute tribe, BLM organizations, and places to help the crisis in Yemen, the explosion in Lebanon, and any other parts of the world or life that 2020 has hit hard! Comments and kudos always appreciated!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When I returned home from Angela's on Sunday afternoon Charlie was surprisingly home and not fishing. I assumed it was likely because of the pouring rain outside but there had been days when that hadn't stopped his hobby. I called hello to him as I trudged upstairs, combing my fingers through my dampened hair, my rain jacket could only do much. When I had placed my bag down in my desk chair, I had made my way back down the narrow wooden steps to the first floor of the small house.

Charlie looked up at me as I wandered into the living room and sat on the small loveseat across from his faded and creaky recliner. He muted whatever it was on tv that had been entertaining him and I was shocked by that. It meant he likely wanted to talk to me, a concept that made me want to quickly retreat back upstairs to my quiet and dim bedroom.

It wasn't really that it was Charlie talking to me, more just that it was talking in general.

"So, how was Angela's?" He questioned me, his chocolate eyes trained on my own. There was an awkwardness to Charlie I was familiar with.

“It was good. Jessica is really good at poster designing,” I said simply, winding my fingers around each other in my lap. Charlie let out a gruff ‘hm’ in reply and I waited for him to talk. That’s how it was with Charlie, he and I were both quiet and he really only spoke when he needed something. So, I knew there was something on his mind.

A silence settled over us for a little while and I waited patiently but anxiously for Charlie’s continuation.

“Bella, you know, you’re a good kid,” he finally said.

“Well, I try to be,”

“You succeed for the most part,” Charlie admitted. “Because of that, I’m mostly lifting your grounding. I know it hasn’t been very long, but it is your senior year and I want you to enjoy it. As long as you get your work done and you don’t dedicate all your time to the Cullen’s again, you’re grounding is lifted.”

“Really?” I could hear the skepticism in my voice but I was shocked. This wasn’t something I had expected. I was ready to live out my sentence, I had earned it, but the lifting of it was not expected. My thin brows were raised to showcase my surprise.

“Yes, really.” My dad said and he smiled a little, the crow's feet near his eyes becoming noticeable but his bushy mustache hiding most of his upper lip. “I’m not going to be your warden, Bells. I’m your dad and that meant I had to hold you accountable for your decisions but you learned your lesson.”

“Well, uh, thanks, dad!” I managed, surprise still fogging my thoughts. He grunted in reply, nodded as if he was pleased with himself, and turned back to the tv. This wasn’t as surprising, Charlie had had his bout of emotional interaction for the day or week and now his inner introvert was going back into recharge mode. I wasn’t one to argue, my own introverted side itching to climb upstairs to my bed with a book.

Our interaction seemed to be finished but I remained downstairs for a little bit longer, in case he said more. I didn’t want to just run after being let off the hook, it wouldn’t seem very

appreciative. After half an hour passed I felt like it was acceptable to make my way to the kitchen to think of a plan for dinner.

Spaghetti was always easy and it kept me busy. I had no intention of alerting people of my lifted grounding yet, though Alice likely already knew and Edward too. The comment of not becoming so dedicated to the Cullen's again had hit its mark, likely how Charlie was intending it to. I loved the Cullen's, they were easily a large family I never had, yet never really needed, and I fully intended to work my way into spending the rest of eternity with them. The reminder of that made it easy for me to want to pull back from my human friends; Angela, Jessica, Ben when he joined our lunch table to talk with Angela, even Mike. In a few years, I would not look twenty-something, hopefully, I wouldn't look over eighteen, but at the most nineteen.

They would waste away at some point and I would be marbled perfection with Edward. I assume that even Jacob would age, maybe slower, but even though he knew of the supernatural, the feud with his kind and the one I intended to become may still make Jake abandon me.

Was there a point in loving and dedicating my time to anyone but the Cullen's? Was there even a point in doing that though? I had witnessed months ago how easy it was for them to pack up, to leave. I was not one of them, not yet, and they may take care of me while I was a newborn because the Volturi had laws, and I would have to turn because of those same laws, but actually, would I ever be a Cullen?

The thoughts were spinning in my mind too chaotically, much like the tops I had played with some when I was younger and didn't have a book to occupy my time. I had been so absorbed in my internal argument that I had barely noticed the water was already boiling. I dropped the noodles into the pot that was on the back burner and set up the pan needed to cook the meat for it.

I fell into a routine, stirring the noodles so they didn't stick to the bottom in a blob, and stabbing at the sizzling meat as it browned. Occasionally, I'd habitually pull my lower lip between my teeth, tugging at the delicate skin until it stung. I tried to keep my thoughts away from the negatives, thinking instead of the excitement Alice would have that my grounding was lifted.

Although, maybe that was negative for me. I was sure Alice would begin planning an entire party for it. Maybe I could reign her into going shopping instead, I could use a few new books. I had exhausted my personal library too many times over during my grounding.

It wasn't too long before the food was ready. I called to Charlie and he had drug himself into the kitchen. We sat around the tiny kitchen table like usual and we were rather quiet as usual. There was nothing out of the routine, even if I had gained my freedom back, I wasn't using it to run away just yet.

I'd done enough running in the past year. Running to Jacob, away from him, towards Edward again. It felt as if I had perhaps spent the entirety of my eighteenth year running and yet I was the one who was so terrified of moving forward into nineteen. I was so ready to be a vampire and yet, suddenly I was so scared to run away from Charlie again. It would break his heart and it wasn't something I could do.

Charlie made a few comments about fishing and asked questions about my late college applications as we both stirred noodles around our plates. I answered as lightly as I could, unsure about college as I always had been but with other reasons besides money now. A thirst for human blood was stronger than money issues and I knew the Cullen's were rich and Edward was determined to help pay for my college if I decided I'd like to go.

Perhaps maybe in a few years, I would like college. When my eyes matched Edward's and my control was at least as good as Jasper's. Perhaps I would follow up on my half trampled hopes of being some professor of an English elective. Though, I wasn't sure how much I really would like a bunch of people staring at me while I lectured. So maybe it was good I'd chosen the fate of being a vampire.

Though my loyalty and trust in Edward was rocky, ever since I had learned more about myself and vampires, I had never not been sure it was what I was meant to be. Alice had only solidified it in Volterra. I struggled with the concept of the future, unsure of what I would do for a living and if I'd ever settle with someone. Even when I had tried to convince myself I could settle for Jacob, I couldn't. I liked being a caretaker but I was not a motherly type, just a caretaker, the bare minimum at that.

I was so much like my father. Shy and introverted, a little too serious. He had let go of my mother not because he didn't love her but because he did. She was too much of a wanderer and my father was too loyal. Sometimes I wondered what would've been different if he

hadn't stayed in Forks to look after my paternal grandparents. They died not more than a year or two after my mom and I left and I wasn't sure my father had ever recovered.

I was as rooted as him, desiring of stability, and forever. I clung to a real promise of forever that Edward could promise but even he had broken that in the early fall and I was still recovering. Edward was like me, he wanted stability and that was why he always returned to the Cullens. But I remembered his questions at the start of our relationship, his questions about what all of the world I had seen. And perhaps if it was easier, a fully trusted promise I could let my mind wander.

I could think of visiting Italy with Edward again. With all of the Cullens this time. Alice giggling gleefully as she got her hands on another canary yellow Porsche, Esme amongst the architecture, Emmett and Jasper roughhousing in the fields, Carlisle among old breaking cobblestones. Rosalie, her golden hair shining as she admired the cars and spoke different languages. If I really tried, if I really trusted I could see myself there too. All of the Cullen Coven, my eyes a dull

amber and my skin fairer than it already was, hand in hand with Edward.

I dreamt of that, of a kinder and softer and prettier Italy. The Italy that was meant to be enjoyed. I dreamt of that until

it bled into nightmares about the bloody Italy, the Italy that housed Volterra. I shockingly did not awake screaming.

"You're ungroundeddddd!" Alice sang as I climbed into Edward's Volvo the following morning. Her pale hand was clutching the back of the passenger seat as she leaned forward from the back. She was grinning, her abnormally sharp canines more obviously on display than usual.

"I am," I said wearily. I was tired and the rain had come in even harder the night before. The chill of the storm had mixed with my lack of sleep and I felt awful. Edward shot me a worried look as he took in my dark circles but I shook my head at him and he tried to smooth his face out.

“We have to make plans,” Alice insisted.

“How did I know you were going to say that? I thought you were the psychic here, Alice.” I replied. She pouted, her lips twisting into a frown that made her look like a too-perfect toddler.

“Let’s not push the Chief too much now dear sister,” Edward commented and said sister sighed dramatically. I gave Alice a look that was meant to inform her that Edward did indeed have a point.

“ *Charlie,* ” She used my fathers name as a sort of jab towards Edward, a reminder that she was on a first-name basis with him rather than having to call him Chief, “loves me. So, I’m sure if I asked nicely he’d let me make plans with Bella. Especially if Esme were to come along!”

Alice looked towards me expectantly, as if awaiting me to concede or give her another argument to defeat. I looked towards Edward whose look made it clear that Alice had already seen that she’d win this argument. I sighed.

“I have missed Esme and I would like some new books,” I finally admitted and Alice giggled again, clapping her hands together like a truly pleased child. Edward rolled his eyes at her antics, Alice caught the gesture and stuck her tongue out at her brother, leaning forward to flick his ear. He likely felt the action from her more than if I had done it but he was unfazed.

“You’re not invited, dear Eddy. Go have a boys weekend with Emmett and Jasper, bag some mountain lions!” She told him. She sounded entirely too pleased about informing him that he wasn’t invited.

“I will, thank you, Alice,” He replied and it should’ve been more sarcastic but he seemed pleased that the atmosphere of the car was so light. If Jasper had been there he would’ve been bathing in it, the soft-toned teasing.

“This will be a wonderful girls' day!” Alice declared.

The rest of the school week passed both slowly and quickly the way many human moments did. When I was immersed in the vampire world, time flew by. I would never have enough time with Edward or learning what I needed to know about it all. I had felt that way before he had left and now that I had experienced time without Edward, I knew time without him felt increasingly slow when I had clung to a promised forever.

Before too long though it was Saturday morning and I was in Charlie's kitchen with Alice and my father. The latter was perching in one of the tiny wooden chairs she had frequently inhabited, her chin resting against her hand. Charlie's brows were furrowed at her.

"I'm not sure if a day in the city is such a good idea, Alice. The crime in Seattle has skyrocketed, I was just reading about it in this morning's paper. Some sort of serial killer I think." Charlie said through a bite of scrambled eggs. Alice didn't react but I wrinkled my nose at my dad's manners, knowing he was just too passionate about what he was saying, as passionate as he was about food apparently.

"Carlisle and Esme told us about that. Esme doesn't like Seattle much anyway. I promise we'll only head towards Olympia. You have our cell, right? We can call and check in when we arrive and when we leave!" My friend tried to reassure my father. He still seemed hesitant but he shot a look at me. I was cleaning the pan I had used to scramble eggs for our breakfast but I turned to meet his face as I felt his eyes on me. Charlie's furrowed brows softened and he sighed deep enough that his shoulders lifted with it. He wiped egg from his mustache with his napkin.

"Well, I suppose it's alright. Don't shop poor Bella out," He asked of Alice, gesturing toward me. Alice smiled happily, careful to not show too much of her pointed incisors.

"I'm only going because I was promised books," I assured my father. I wanted to branch out to reading more modern books. The classics were classic but I had exhausted them and I wanted to take some small risks. Explore new worlds while still in my small bedroom in Forks. I had enough adventures on my own logically but oh well.

Alice rushed me upstairs, to get ready. I didn't argue with her as she rummaged through my drawers, tossing me dark jeans and terracotta-colored v-neck that reminded me of Phoenix's landscapes. She pulled out some combat boots she had bought for me months ago, citing I need proper footwear when I went to the meadow with Edward.

I was usually shy in general but Alice had helped me change when I was hurt after James so I felt very little shyness around her. Once I was dressed she assessed the look she had put me in before her lips curved in a smile.

"I really am just fabulous at what I do," she said simply, which I knew meant she approved of her outfit choices. I shoved my arms into the brown coat she'd given me. It was basically may and yet I was still stuck in a coat. I did not regret my decision to stay in Forks, even when the Cullens were gone I'd had Jacob and the rocky La Push beach, and Angela's quiet but steady presence, not pushy but there. But I did sometimes still miss the warmth, the sun. I knew the life I had chosen when I had fallen for Edward meant I had sentenced myself to an eternity of cloud covered days and I was okay with it. The memory of my last time in Phoenix haunting and tainting.

I would find good parts of rainy places. The greenery was a bit alien planet like still but I had always loved plants. Perhaps in some life down the line, I would take care of plants, plants wouldn't be enticing the way humans would be while I was a newborn.

I followed Alice out into the rain after calling goodbye to my father. The slight drizzle clung to my thick hair and danced off Alice's own dark style, slightly flattening the usual spikes. She had borrowed the Volvo and we would return back to the Cullen household to retrieve Esme.

I was excited to see the matriarch, Esme was one I had missed the most. Jasper was the one who had a true "gift" to influence emotions but I thought that Esme could perhaps calm or soothe anything or anyone just by being her. Edward always claimed I was warm and I was physically compared to them but despite the skin temperature, Esme was much like Jacob, she was truly *warm*. A soothing kind of warmth that made you want to build homes around them, Carlisle had certainly built his home with Esme, one that Edward hadn't stayed away from for long, and one that Alice had dreamt about for decades. I could only hope that Jacob would find someone who recognized his warmth and built a home with him.

Esme's car was already waiting on us and so when Alice parked and skipped towards the car, I followed. I was shocked to find that in the front passenger seat, the other female Cullen, Rosalie, was seated.

Rosalie and I's dynamic was odd and rocky. I felt no true ill will towards her, a sort of respect and admiration. She was less hostile now than she had used to be, perhaps because I had proved I was willing to save parts of her family even if I was the reason that part was at risk anyway. Rosalie remained facing forward, the entirety of her gold.

"I'm glad you decided to come, Rose!" Alice chirped from beside me in the backseat. "I've been wanting to test how this new color would look on you in person so this is truly the perfect opportunity!"

I met Esme's own golden gaze in the rearview mirror and she smiled softly at me. I returned the gesture before trying to zone back into Alice's babble and Rosalie's half indulging nods and hums to her adoptive sister. Rosalie didn't look very pleased to be with us but it was hard to convince Rosalie to do things she didn't want to do, so I was sure it really was her choice to be here.

Esme's own soft voice joined in with Alice as the ride went on. She began explaining how she wanted to redo her office, bring more warmth into the space. They had been in Forks for a while and she knew they may move soon but she was struck by inspiration to design so she was going to follow the thread while it had her looped up. I asked a couple of questions but I really wasn't skilled in things like that. Perhaps it was because my mother had lived her life afraid of making a home feel like a home. Renee had never desired to settle, she hadn't decorated with the intent to, letting her own spontaneity and chaos decorate by itself. I had picked up on it so I had cluttered my space up with belongings I didn't really need.

When we arrived at the small mall we were shopping in, Alice suggested I go ahead and eat. Esme had wandered towards the home goods store and I could see Alice glancing at some lights near the front of it. I was prepared to argue that I wasn't hungry but Rosalie surprised me.

"I'll go with her to eat and we'll catch up with you two later," Rosalie told Alice. It seemed even Alice had not foreseen this. She blinked once and then glanced towards me. I swallowed quickly.

"That sounds good to me," I finally managed and Rosalie seemed pleased with my reply albeit slightly uncomfortable too. I was mainly curious as to why she had offered, usually,

Rosalie found reasons to not be alone with me rather than the other way around. Alice still looked hesitant but was likely unwilling to offend the blonde vampire so she nodded and darted off towards the store Esme had entered.

Rosalie began walking towards the food shops and I stumbled a little to follow her. I caught up soon enough and after I had ordered a sandwich from some shop I followed her again to a small table. We were quiet at first but it was Rosalie who broke the silence.

“It’s rare any of them really leave you alone. I can never really talk to you.”

It was not what I was expecting. I blinked at her for the next few seconds, my brain trying to process Rosalie even wanting to speak to me. She seemed to gather this and she sighed softly, a noise that was still too perfect and unflawed coming from Rosalie.

“I have not always been very kind to you.” She declared. It was true. Rosalie had never been outwardly rude to my face except for the time she had refused to swap clothes with me, making Esme do it but I hadn’t held that against her. “I supposed I don’t entirely know you. I’ve gathered an idea from what my family has said, from the way you flew to Italy to save Edward from a mistake I made. I spoke too soon, callously. Edward and I, we have a rocky past, we really are siblings I suppose. Often we don’t like each other but in the end, we love each other. You’ve changed him in many ways our unchanging kind can’t be changed,” Rosalie explained. I remained quiet, feeling as though I could not interrupt the time Rosalie so rarely spared towards people.

“I do love him.” I finally said once she was quiet for a time. It was the truth, Edward’s absence had made me angry and hurt, it had broken my trust, but I did still love him.

“I know,” Rosalie admitted. “You’ve always loved him and he had hurdles to cross but he loves you,” she paused again and laughed some at this. “My entire family loves you, Bella.”

“I consider the Cullens family.”

“I know. Family enough you’re ready to join us for eternity,” her perfect face was scarred with a frown now and I didn’t like that I was the one causing the frown. I aimed to please

Rosalie, to gain her support, her loyalty. “I suppose you know very little about my story.”

“Edward said that Carlisle saved you from something, that he’d hoped you’d fall for Edward. Sorry if it’s rude to say I’m glad you didn’t.” I admitted. Rosalie let out a real laugh now and I even huffed a hint of one too.

“He and I could never love each other in that way. I’m surprised Edward didn’t really tell you. It’s a bit too gnarly to get into all the gory details right now but you must understand this about me, Bella, I have always spent my time wanting to be wanted. In my human life, I was the daughter of someone who maintained their riches despite the depression. I won the affections of a rich man and I let him dazzle me. I wanted to be wanted and I wanted to have a family. I had a friend who had a son but married a man who didn’t make much.

“The lack of money was shocking to me. That my friend, Vera, would marry for love. I was vain then and some would say I’m still vain now. I was leaving Vera’s one night late and my fiancée was drunk with friends. They ended up raping me and leaving me for dead but Carlisle found me, he saved me I suppose. In some religious cases, maybe I am damned and maybe he did save me because I was able to meet Emmett but I do not feel saved. I will never be able to have a family the way I want.” There was a sadness to Rosalie I did not understand or recognize in her. The distortion of her perfect features was out of place and yet heartbreaking and the caretaker in me was desperate to care for her suddenly, to comfort the immortal girl who was robbed of motherhood though I didn’t understand her desires. She continued though, “I gained my revenge, destroyed the men who raped me, and saved my fiancée for last. I didn’t taste their blood, my record is better than even Carlisle’s, but I gave them what they deserved.”

“Edward saved me towards the start, from a fate similar to yours I guess,” The words stumbled out of me. It felt so long ago, a different time. “The night I found out about you all for sure, in Port Angeles. Men were following me, it was dark and I got lost and Edward was a bit stalkerish, true, but I could’ve had a similar fate if he hadn’t been. I suppose maybe that’s why his hovering has never bothered me too much.”

“You’re lucky he was there,” Rosalie admitted. “It’s true that you lose many of your human memories but I held onto that one. It made getting revenge easier. It’s the one I held onto the hardest sadly. I can barely remember my mother’s face but I remember how it felt, to be taken apart by men who wanted you to feel used, not wanted.”

“I’m sorry you had to go through that,” I said softly and I did mean it. It wasn’t something I thought about much but I remembered the fear I had felt when it seemed likely to happen to me. I felt suddenly prepared to spill my guts out to Rosalie though I doubted she wanted to know it all. “When you all left, I was a mess for a long time, and for a while, right before I got better I did reckless things. I tried to join a man once in Port Angeles again because he looked like one from that night because I thought maybe Edward would appear again. I rode motorcycles and split open my head and I jumped off cliffs obviously.”

I laughed at the antics, the ridiculousness of me doing it. It had been fun, adrenaline rushing and reckless and I wouldn’t have minded doing it anyway but the state of mind I was in tainted it. Rosalie smirked a bit at what I revealed.

“I would suggest you abandon the cliff jumping and talking to strange men, for the sake of Edward’s non-existent blood pressure, but I do like cars. Motorcycles are different of course but if you ever became interested again, well Edward mentioned it was sort of your thing with the wolf boy, but if we are meant to spend an eternity together, we should have shared interests,” She seemed... not shy but I couldn’t find another word for it. As if she was embarrassed to be accepting me after all this time of forcing me away.

“Does that mean you approve of my choice?” I asked, already knowing her answer probably hadn’t changed. She proved me correct when she shook her head.

“I will never approve of you abandoning this life for the one my family and I lead. You’re giving up everything, everything I’ve ever wanted. And for so long I pushed you away because it hurts so much to be reminded that everything I do desperately desire, you’re ready to toss,” Rosalie shook her head more harshly now, her golden hair following her movements and she tugged her bottom lip into her mouth the same way I did sometimes. “I can’t ever be okay with it but in the end, it’s your choice. You have a choice, and I suppose changing you will end up having to happen for our family’s sake if just to save us from the Volturi’s wrath.”

I nodded. Rosalie’s disapproval still stung, it was still a rejection. “Edward is who I’ve decided I want to be with, for better or for worse, and staying human means losing him. It means losing all of you. I won’t do that either.”

She pursed her lips but nodded. Just as I understood Rosalie’s disapproval of my decision, she understood why I made my choice. “Have you forgiven my idiot brother? For the pain he caused?”

I contemplated the question. Edward and I were on the path to rebuilding, to relearning each other. I felt like I had aged mentally years in his absence and I had already been an old soul. But I'd learned more about the world while he was gone, more about my limits and need for him. I wasn't sure I'd ever forgive him for leaving without a real warning, for hurting us both, for hurting Charlie, for even hurting the other members of his family who were hurt by my absence too. But I had forgiven him enough to still know I loved him. You could still be mad at someone and love them anyway, Rosalie and Edward oddly enough showed that just platonically not romantically.

"Enough," I gave as my reply and Rosalie seemed to understand. She finally smiled faintly again.

"At least you got to play Superman for a minute, go rescue him from the big bad V government," She used a letter to either stand for a vampire or for the Volturi. I faintly recalled telling Edward I couldn't always be Lois Lane and that I needed to be Superman sometimes too and I laughed softly again. It was an odd but welcome feeling to laugh in the presence of Rosalie when I had usually had to be so on guard with the blonde. The tension had even left her and she seemed at ease enough around me. Her next question startled me. "Have you really forgiven me too?"

"I was never really upset," I assured her and it was true. It was stressful at the time but I understood why Rosalie had told him, even more so now that I had learned more about the girl that would end up being a future sister-in-law. Rosalie had merely wanted her brother back, had wanted her family back. Rosalie thrived off her loyalty and of gaining the awe and loyalty of others. It made her so unbearably human that I did feel for her, feel for her desire to be like me. "There was really nothing for me to forgive you for."

She just nodded and didn't comment further on that. She stood up then, realizing I'd finished eating awhile ago. "We better go. Before Alice and Esme think I took a bite out of you."

"Could never break your perfect record," I decided to joke. Rosalie was a bit startled by it but she did laugh a little at it as she waited for me to collect my trash and stand up. Once I had tossed it into a trash can, I followed Rosalie back towards the store where we'd left the fellow Cullen women. I suddenly felt no issue throwing myself in with the label of Cullen women, not with my new understanding with Rosalie. I felt more accepted, more loved than before. I felt as though I had the assurance that even if Edward screwed up again, tried to "save me" that the other Cullens would back me up. I was more part of the family than ever before.

Chapter End Notes

Let's chat or discuss anything on my tumblr [elise--alisande](#)! I promise I'm awkward but friendly <3

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!