



Chapter Twenty-eight-

I woke up confused. We had gone to bed very early in the night, and it was just before dawn. I wriggled out of Edward's grasp to go to the bathroom. I washed my face and brushed my hair, examining my nude body in the mirror.

I thought about the differences in my body and myself in that exact moment compared to just five years before. I was healthier, more muscular, at least. I had gotten comfortable and stopped working out by that point in my marriage. But I was always rather small. My face was the same besides a couple of lines around my lips. I had a couple of silver hairs at the base of my neck. I liked them, though. Five years before I was happy, mostly. No marriage is perfect, but I loved him desperately. We were trying to get pregnant. I lived in a charming townhouse on the upper East side with my sweet professor. Five years before I woke up early and made my husband steak and eggs for breakfast in bed and cheesecake to eat at his mother's house for

his birthday party. Aiden told me he was blissfully happy. I wondered how much more stress they put on his poor broken heart. What fatty meal was the final straw, ripping the pinprick hole entirely apart? I asked myself that a lot actually. *It wasn't my fault*, I tried to remind myself.

And now I felt contented again... which made me feel absolutely dreadful. If it were just because I had become more financially stable since he had been gone, I might have felt proud. He would have been. But, moving on made me feel guilty. I adored Edward, though. He made me feel so safe and warm. Not wanting to give up on the relationship made it even worse somehow. I felt like I was drowning. I wasn't willing to give up Edward for Aiden.

I was still so angry at all the possibilities lost forever now that Aiden was gone. I was not sure if I would ever get over it. A fire burned in my stomach. But, there were new possibilities with Edward, a million of them all more wonderful than the last.

If I were being honest with myself, I knew this relationship was healthier than my marriage. Aiden could be cold, distant, and quietly manipulative. Edward was warm, loving, openly affectionate. I still didn't feel equal to Edward, just as I never did to Aiden, but it was different. The way he looked at me made me feel worshipped. I wanted to feel adored by him. He made me feel as if I almost deserved it.

I sat on the edge of the bathtub and cried, covering my face with both my hands because I couldn't bear to look at myself anymore. I wasn't sure how long I was there in that bathroom alone. I felt the cotton bathrobe wrap around me before I realized Edward was there. I hugged my face into his bare stomach, and he stroked my hair softly.

When I had finally stopped, he pulled away just to turn on the shower. "Let's get washed up, okay? We'll pick up some flowers on the way, yeah?"

"Yeah," I nodded a bit numbly.

"Then we can do whatever you need to." He helped me to my feet. "I wish you had told me so I could have made sure to be here for you. I would have moved heaven and earth to not let you feel this way alone."

"You shouldn't have to go through this," I mumbled quietly. "It's not your problem to deal with."

"Well, that's your opinion, love. It's wrong and stupidly self-sacrificing, but you are entitled to it, I suppose." He didn't look at me as he checked the temperature of the water.

I scoffed at his biting tone. "We've been together a month, Eddie. Just a month."

"That doesn't change the fact that I want to be here for you, whether you think you need the support or not. Which you do, by the way. That doesn't make you less strong or capable," he reminded me. "You don't have to be the stoic one all the time."

I chewed on my thumb a little. "Stoic? That's a nice way of saying kind of a cold bitch."

“Don't do that.” He pulled my thumb away from my mouth and brought it up to his to kiss. “It's okay to be sad. You're not a bitch. You're calm and collected, and that's good, but not at the cost of your mental health. Don't keep things like this to yourself. I want to know everything.” He held my face sweetly, kissing my forehead. “And I know this is a serious moment, but I need you to know that when you cry you stick your bottom lip out and it's stupidly cute. It gives me *feels*,” Edward said against my skin. I giggled a little, pressing my face against his. “Something is wrong with me. I'm sorry.” He hugged me.

“No, you're the best.”

He washed my hair and scrubbed my skin clean. After the shower, Edward brushed my hair and put lotion on my back and legs, taking the bottle from my hands without a word so he could do it while I did my arms and stomach. He knew how to pamper me well.

The morning was gray and quiet. The cemetery was in Queens, a short subway ride from my apartment and his parent's house. The clouds were so thick in the sky that it blotted out the sun completely, mirroring my mood. I felt like there was a weight on my chest, pulling me down to the ground.

With a bunch of orange flowers clutched in my tight fist, I entered the old Jewish graveyard. It was a tree covered space in the center of the busy city. It was nine in the morning, still very early in the day. The ground was hard with frost, and the grass crunched under my feet. Edward had his hand on the small of my back, silent as he let me lead the way.

Aiden's stone was simple. Doctor Aiden Levi Zucker. Husband and Son. And it had a big blue star of David on it. He would have hated it. *Hated*. He wanted to be cremated and thrown somewhere interesting. He also wouldn't want to upset his mother. There was a stone bench in front of his spot, the area well cared for with fresh flowers already littering his grave. I laid my bundle on the center. His family came often, especially his mother.

“Is it okay if I have a few minutes?” I asked.

“Of course, darling. I'll walk around a little.” He kissed my temple. “Let me know if you need anything.”

I sat down on the bench as I watched him move along the edge of the path underneath the trees.

“You're not there. I can't talk to you. You can't hear me anymore,” I said to the ground. “Goddammit. I wasn't ready. I'm never ready. Why? I thought I would be better this year. But, you're still not here.”

I picked at the edge of my boots, feeling tears well up in my eyes again. Edward had picked up a small package of tissues when we got the flowers. I pulled one from the pack in my jacket pocket and wiped my snotty nose.

“God, this is sexy,” I mumbled at my boogers. “Am I ever not going to feel like this?” I asked to the air. “I am so fucking angry. We were just getting started, Doc. It wasn't enough. We

had things we needed to work on. We had things we were going to do. Is just everyone going to be ripped away from me? What did I do to deserve that, huh?"

"Oh, honey, you didn't do anything," a soft familiar voice said from behind me as her arm went around my shoulder. Esther, Aiden's mother, pulled me into a hug. "No one deserves that, baby. It's not your fault. It's no one's fault. It's God's will."

I cried into her big fake fur coat, "I miss him so much."

Esther was a tiny woman, at least an inch shorter than I was. She overcompensated with big puffy strawberry blond hair and very high heels. She always wore lots of gold jewelry and bright clothes, making herself seem bigger than she really was. It was probably a good thing she came with warning colors because she could be a handful.

"I do, too, baby. I know," she soothed me, her long red fake nails brushing through my hair. She held me for a few moments in silence while I cried.

"I'm sorry I didn't call," I sobbed out finally. "It just hurts, and I'm coward."

She took my chin sharply. "There is nothing you need to apologize for. You're not a coward."

"I should have called-" Esther tapped a perfectly manicured nail on my nose, stopping me from continuing.

"No," she said sharply as if I was her toy poodle, Dixie. She treated all her family like that, though. At least she was a loving and kind woman, if not a little odd. "We will not have any of that. It's his birthday. He wouldn't have liked it. It's a happy day. We celebrate today."

"He's not here though."

"Yes, he is." She pressed her hand over my heart. "Don't you feel him? I do. All the time. He's watching us all the time."

I shook my head, rubbing my cheek with my fist clenched tissue. "I don't think that's how that works. And, if he's here, then he needs to give me a sign. Maybe some directions. I've been kind of lost without him."

It began to snow, the sky filling with big thick white flakes. The world instantly became a little quieter. I looked up sharply, a bunch of fat snowflakes falling onto my face.

Esther held both of her hands up. "There you go."

"It's been threatening snow for weeks," I told her with a quiet laugh, wiping my face again.

"And he saved it for his birthday just for you."

"Your son does not control the weather now. He couldn't even control the thermostat," I teased her kindly. She smiled knowingly.

"I'm sure he has some kind of pull. He was a good boy. Now, have you eaten? You can come to the house, and I'll cook for you."

"I'm not alone," I said honestly. I looked up and caught Edward's eye from across the cemetery. He was watching as he strolled under the trees from afar. Even from this distance, I could see his concern and curiosity.

"I see." She looked up to see who I was looking at. Esther caught on right away. "Is that your new young man?"

"Yes, it is."

"He's very tall," she said in her thick New York accent. "I've seen shorter trees."

I laughed as I tore at the Kleenex in my hand. "Yeah. He is quite tall. Someone needs to be able to reach the top shelf."

"Come here, young man!" She shouted at him. I brought my hand up to my eyes, rubbing them deeply with a smirk on my tear-stained face.

Edward made his way back towards us. The snow was clumping on the ground already. It had been so cold for a couple of weeks by then. I could see the flakes gathering around the edges of his beanie, his nose bright pink.

"He's so handsome," she said in a whisper to me as he came closer into view.

"He is," I agreed, smiling at him. He smiled back. When he was close enough, about ten feet away, I said, "Mrs. Esther Zucker, this is Edward Cullen."

"Hello, Edward. I'm Aiden's mother," she said, offering his hand in greeting. He took it, shaking it gently while clasping it warmly in both of his hands.

"Hello, Mrs. Zucker. It's nice to meet you. Bella has said very kind things about you."

"He's foreign!" She said in loud surprise, making me snicker. "Are you British?"

"I'm from Australia," he said a bit awkwardly. "My dad is Scottish, and my mum is English, though, so I do have a funny accent."

"Are you Jewish?" She asked him very seriously. Esther was blunt like a hammer. She had asked me the very same thing within moments of meeting her for the first time, too. She did it to any of her family's new romantic partners, in fact. It had become a running joke among the younger Zuckers.

He looked at me in a panic and looked back at her before he answered, "um... No,

ma'am."

"No? That's okay. Neither is she. We'll take you anyway." She took his arm before offering me her hand to stand from the bench. "We'll get you two some lunch."

"We've not even had breakfast yet," he told her honestly.

"What? No, that's not acceptable. We can fix that, though. Come on. You two are coming to the house right now." She patted his hand. Pulling me along, she gave us no room to argue with her. When I stood, I realized that Aiden's cousin was standing silently behind us.

"Hey! What are you doing back there?" I went to hug her tightly. Ash held me close, her and I about the same height since I was in heeled boots. She was dressed very sharply in a long black coat and a slick silver scarf.

"I offered to drive Aunt Esther. How are you doing?" She asked quietly. "You look so good!" Ash said more warmly, holding me back at arm's length.

"I look terrible, but I'm actually doing really well. I love your coat," I complimented her. "Edward, this is Ash. Aiden's cousin. They were really close."

"He was my best friend," she said a little sadly. "We lived on the same street growing up. He'd love this weather," she commented, holding her hand out for him to shake.

"He'd love it inside." Esther pointed towards the gates. "Shall we?"

We rode in Ash's small car in the backseat to Aiden's childhood home. It was a sweet little house in Flushing just past a big beautiful Hindu Temple and the Buddhist center. It was a very quick ride, and he held my hand my entire time.

"Dr. Zucker is at the hospital right now," Esther explained as we came walking up the driveway. Edward was far too big for the short front door frame and had to bend over a good foot. It was an old house meant for smaller people.

"Aiden's father," I explained to him. "He is a pediatric oncologist. Is he ever going to retire?" I asked my former mother in law.

"Probably not. You know how much he loves his work. He'll be home later this afternoon." She took our coats and led us into her kitchen through the living room. There was already food covering the counters and table, all on trays and wrapped in plastic wrap.

"Esther, what did you do?" I looked over everything in awe.

"Everyone is coming over today, and then they're coming over on Thursday for Thanksgiving as well. I'm sure someone will show up on Wednesday. They always do. You have to be prepared for guests. Let me start some coffee. Do you want coffee? Have you ever eaten Jewish food, Edward?" Esther said, going into her hostess mode.

I imagined this is what bringing a date home to meet my mother would be like, but even more awkward somehow.

"I'd love coffee. No, ma'am. I don't think I've ever had the chance," he answered politely.

Esther came to my side to squeeze a handful of my fat. "You are too thin. You're not eating enough. Have you lost weight?"

"I've gained ten pounds actually. I've been lifting weights." I raised my chin up. "Muscle is leaner than fat."

"Auntie, leave her alone. She looks great," Ash defended me as she went to the fridge to get an iced coffee drink.

"She does, but she's so tiny. Doesn't lifting weights make you bulky? Give me a muscle. Show me your arm." She shoved up my sleeve and felt my forearm. "Oh! You are very muscular. Have you two been going to the gym together? You both seem very healthy," she directed her question towards Edward.

"We have worked out together, but I actually live in Los Angeles," Edward told her as he took the seat that she offered him at the dinner table. "So, it's not every day."

"Los Angeles! How exciting. How on earth did you two meet?" She asked loudly before more quietly turning to me. "Sweetie, get your gentleman some food. You know where everything is," she told me before sitting herself down at the kitchen table. "How long have you been dating?"

"She doesn't have to get me anything." He looked at me like a deer in headlights that just realized how much trouble he was in for the rest of the day.

"I don't mind," I assured him, trying to peek through the plastic wrap and Tupperware. "Let's see, it looks like we have some plain and everything bagels. So I'm sure there are cream cheese and lox."

"And, onions and capers, too. Or, jelly if you like it sweet," Esther added, ever the perfect host. "If I had known you hadn't had breakfast, I would have made you some blueberry blintz. Those are Bella's favorite."

"I think you have enough already cooked," I teased her. "It looks like there is also sufganiyot. It's a Jewish doughnut with jelly. Strawberry?" I asked. The jelly seemed really dark red. "Or Raspberry?"

"I did them with some cranberry jelly. I used your recipe you gave me that Aiden loved so much," she answered. Ash came over and snatched one of the sugar covered pastries up from the tray.

"Yes, please," I picked one up and put it in my mouth. It just melted away. "Oh, my God."

"Language," Esther corrected.

"Goodness. Oh, my goodness. It's superb, Esther," I smirked at my mother in law. She knew I wasn't religious, but I always respected her. "Bagel or doughnut?" I asked an overwhelmed Edward.

"Just get him both dear, so he can try them," Esther went to make the coffee. "You didn't say how you met or how long you've been dating?" She reminded him. She brought him a mug to mix his own sugar and creamer into it. Ash put the milk the table for everyone to use.

"We've been together just a month now," he finally answered her.

"Oh, so it just started. I see. I wondered why I haven't heard about you yet, but that makes sense." She patted his hand. "I'm glad she didn't wait too long."

"Shouldn't it bother you that I'm bringing a new man to your home on your son's birthday?" I asked her, my arms crossed over my chest.

"No, baby. It's fantastic. Now, how did you meet?" She persisted. Esther wasn't going to give up until she knew everything she wanted to.

"I was hired to take his picture for one of the magazines that I work for. Vaudevillian. I flew to LA and got to stay with him for a week, and we hit it off right away," I explained quickly, leaving out a few details but that was the best most basic answer. "Edward is an actor."

"Oh! How interesting! Well, that makes sense, too. She has so many friends who are performers and artists." She patted my back but was speaking to Edward as she brought me a mug of coffee. She already knew how I liked it, making it without me having to ask.

I toasted a bagel and put some cream cheese on it with some lox along with some of the fluffy sufganiyot. There was no use arguing with her over food. And, Edward would be happy to try anything I gave him. Esther might have met a belly she could never completely fill. I sat beside him, taking one half of the bagel for myself. He was going to have to pace himself, at least.

"Thank you," he told me, warmly, rubbing my shoulder.

"What have you been in?" Ash asked Edward from her spot on the other side of the table. "I thought you looked familiar, but I thought you might just be one of her friends that I've seen before. I'm sorry if that's rude."

"No, it's fine. I'm kind of just starting out, really. I've only been in a couple of bigger movies so far. Last year I was in Night Hunter, and this year, I was in a movie called Golden Spy. I'm more of a voice actor, though. I've done a few cartoons and video games."

"That's so fascinating!" Esther said, clearly not seeing or even hearing about either of those movies. Golden Spy was actually number one at the box office in the early spring for a couple of weeks. But she wasn't really up on pop culture. She was not a huge movie fan. She

was obsessed with game shows.

"I saw *Night Hunter* in the theater with my wife," Ash said thoughtfully, trying to remember his face. "She loves those killer thriller type movies. Who were you in it?"

He looked a little embarrassed. "I was the one who got his head shot off about halfway through."

"Oh... *yeah...*" She nodded her head, chewing on her second doughnut. "Yeah, I remember you. That's cool! That scene was so gross, though."

"He was just training for a movie the past couple of weeks," I informed them, trying to take some of the conversation on for him. "He's going to be a henchmen with a name next month. He gets to kill Jodie Foster."

"Yes. Henchmen with a name," he chuckled, rubbing his forehead. "Yeah. I'm pretty excited. It's the biggest part I've had where people actually see my face. I'm a little nervous."

"Everyone might not know your face, but everyone will know your voice soon enough." I looked up at him with a small smile, rubbing his thigh gently.

He leaned his forehead into mine for a brief second. "You have far too much faith in my abilities, darling."

I looked over to Esther. I knew how to win her heart. "He's being modest. He has a Grammy." I glanced back at him. "I've been reading that your work in *Beyond the Hollow* is in the running for an Emmy. *Beyond the Hollow* is a cartoon series," I explained to my mother in law.

"I know that one! Claire watches it!" She said more excitedly. "She made me watch it with her on her tablet."

I took his hand and squeezed it. "It's just a matter of time before you get an Emmy for your voice work. Your Disney Pixar movie will undoubtedly be nominated for some sort of Oscar. At the very least in the animated category. We just need to get you on Broadway next, and you're halfway to your EGOT." His cheeks got more and more red as I egged him on.

"I need you to understand how terrible you are for my ego. Just awful. I am going to be a beast if you don't stop. Just..." He used his hands to make the motion of a balloon popping around his head.

"Nah," I laughed happily at his sweet embarrassment. "You need the encouragement."

We chatted for a couple more hours around the table before Esther had me help her start getting dinner ready. She was making brisket and roasted potatoes, carrots and Brussels sprouts. Ash had to go to pick up her wife from work and then her mother to bring back to the house. Esther kept stuffing Edward with food, and he was just happy to shove all of it into his face. She was going to feed him half the kitchen.

I stood in the doorway, watching the two of them gossip like they were old friends over a tray of cookies. It made me smile.

"You should do a video on Jewish food," I told Edward. "Maybe for Hanukkah," I said thoughtfully. "I don't know if we could do it before then," I thought out loud before turning to Esther. "He makes videos for the internet. Like the ones that you see on Facebook. That's how he got started, doing online stuff. He does a lot of food videos."

"Do you cook?" She said excitedly. She loved those top-down cooking videos. It's almost all she ever posted beside family pictures online.

"No, no," he shook his head vigorously. "I just eat. I review it. Try new foods," he explained. "Bella is going to try to teach me, though. I have zero faith in my skills, but if anyone could teach me..."

"You'll be cooking in no time. She's an outstanding chef. She can even keep up with me," my mother in law said proudly.

The front door opened and I turned to see my father in law coming in from the snow. He had a full head of stark white hair and big bushy eyebrows with a sharp nose. He was a slight man, just like his son. He wasn't expecting to see me there but opened up his arms instantly.

"My beautiful daughter!" He came and kissed me on each cheek, pulling me into a hug. "You are a lovely woman. So pretty. And such a nice smile. Oh, I can't get over it, every time I see you. How are you, my dear?" He squeezed my hands. He spoke as fast as Esther did. Maybe faster.

"I've been terrific. Things are going very well," I answered. "It's good to see you again, Jonah."

He took my face in his hands. "We were worried we wouldn't see you."

"I know, I'm sorry. I'm still dealing with a lot of emotions, and sometimes I don't handle it very well. I forget how much I need the people I love around me," I replied softly.

"And we do love you. Very much. We're always here," he assured me. Finally, Dr. Zucker came into the kitchen. He looked at my boyfriend. "Who are you?"

"This is Edward. He's Bella's new gentleman," Esther was far too happy to explain. She was already in love with him.

"I really like the term gentleman," I told Edward honestly. "I am too old for a boyfriend."

"No, you're not," he shook his head, standing from the table so he could shake the good doctor's hand. "Hello, sir. Nice to meet you."

Jonah looked him up and down, taking him in for a full minute. "Aren't you a tall one?"

You don't buy your clothes at Penny's."

He seemed a little taken aback. "No, not usually. I have a lot of stuff tailored to me. A lot of special ordered stuff."

"He's twice your size," Jonah told me, pointing between us.

"No. He is one and a third of my size. I'm not a midget. Mrs. Esther is an inch shorter than me without the hair," I reminded him. "Make fun of her."

"No. I can't make fun of my wife."

I snorted, "that's a lie."

He ignored me. "Why don't you come to help me, young man? I need to bring some things in from the car."

"Yes, sir," Edward hurriedly agreed and followed the old man inside. Esther stood from the table to fidget over food.

"I hope he's not giving him the talk. It's kind of late for that," I smirked at her as I watched them go out the front door. Edward was so eager to please.

"I'm sure it'll be fine. He seems like a nice man. I like him," she told me over her shoulder.

"He is. I like him, too," I agreed with her.

"Are you going to move to Los Angeles?" She asked out of nowhere.

"Uh, I don't know," I answered her honestly. "It's kind of early to think about that."

"I think it would be good for you. But, I would miss you something fierce. But, I think you need some sunshine," she insisted firmly. "That's just what I think. You're a little pale."

"I'm surprised you feel that way. It's only been a month, Esther. He's just met Alice and y'all. I'm not sure what's in our future. He's going to be busy soon."

"So he'll need a good woman to help him."

"He might be too busy for me, though. And I'd like to have my own career. It's just started going somewhere."

"You can do both. You're a strong, capable woman. I've been meaning to ask you something. We're doing something for the temple. An auction. Would you like to donate some of your work for it?" She asked, stirring a pot of soup. She already knew the answer to that. I would never tell her no.

"Sure. Just look at my online store and tell me what you like. There is a link to it on my Facebook page. Just show me, and I'll order it. I'll have it shipped here. Or, if you want I can offer a couple of thirty-minute photo sessions."

"Perfect, dear. I'll look later and tell you what I decide."

Edward and Jonah were outside for a long while. When they came in, they were chatting and smiling. Jonah went into the kitchen to get something to eat while Edward stopped in the hallway and looked at one of the wedding pictures that hung on the wall. His face became serious and a little sad. He forced a smile when he saw me, though.

"He looks really happy," he commented quietly when I came to stand beside him. Aiden was beside me, laughing and holding my hand up into the air. Bubbles were being blown all around us. Our wedding day.

"I look terrified. It's a good picture of him, though." I touched the picture's face. I showed him another photo on the wall. "I like this one better. We were on our honeymoon in Mexico, on the beach. You can't tell it in this photo, but I have the worst rash on my back. I was miserable the entire time. Still, I have no idea why I had a rash."

"Oh no," he rubbed my back sweetly. It tingled with the memory.

I walked him into the living room where there was another picture on the wall of just Aiden. "This is about a month before he died. He looks like a small straight Anderson Cooper," I laughed, rubbing the back of my neck as I thought about it. He hated being told that, but I wasn't the first. We teased him all the time.

"Are you doing okay?" Edward asked me quietly, so only I could hear.

"Yeah. Thank you for being here today and being so wonderful," I told him, hugging him. He kissed the top of my head lightly.

"Young man, do you like beer?" Dr. Zucker asked from the kitchen.

"Yes, sir."

"They like you," I said in a whisper.

"Good," he replied.

An hour later Aiden's sister Helena arrived with her husband Mike, their thirteen-year-old daughter Claire in tow. My niece screamed when she saw me, running past her mom and dad to hug me as I stood in the doorway of the kitchen again.

"Aunt Bella!" She attacked me.

"Hey, girly!" I hugged tightly, squeezing her. "I missed you."

"I missed you, too." She was already taller than me at thirteen by a couple of inches.

"Have you been using your birthday gifts I got you?" I asked, smoothing her curly brown hair behind her ear. She was a pretty little thing, awkward but in a cute way. Her teeth still seemed too big for her face, but she was still growing into them.

"She's been using them every day," Helena complained to me as she gave me a hug. Mike went straight to the fridge for a beer.

"Mommy made me wipe it off before we came," Claire whined. "She said it looked bad."

"That because you don't know what you're doing yet," Helena told her quickly.

"I have my makeup bag in my purse. I can teach you how to do some subtle looks your mom will like," I told her sweetly, brushing her bushy brown hair out of her eyes on the other side. She was going to be very lovely.

"Yas!" She hopped up once. Then she did a little dance from a game I had seen Edward play, but I couldn't remember which.

"After dinner," Helena told her daughter. "It looks like Grandma is almost done," she said as she came into the kitchen. Jonah and Mike had gone into the living room to turn on the television to ESPN. "Go wash your hands," she told Claire.

"Yes, ma'am," she mumbled, stomping off from the center of the living room to the bathroom. Ash, her wife, and Aiden's Aunt Minnie on his Father's side all came in from the cold. The house was filled with people. It was so familiar and comforting.

"Helena, come meet Bella's new gentleman, Edward," Esther said from the stove, waving dramatically with her wooden spoon. She almost knocked her daughter in the face with it. Helena dodged, used to it, and moved on like it never happened.

"Hi!" She shook Edward's hand as she came over. "I know you. Have we met before?"

"Probably haven't met," I answered her. I hugged Minnie who came shuffling into the kitchen to help her sister in law cook. She put on an apron, too deaf to bother much with wordy greetings. She just patted everyone on the back. She didn't like her hearing aids and rarely turned them on. "I'm telling you, gentleman is the way to go," I told Edward with a smirk.

"Really? Are you sure we haven't met?" Helena asked again, shaking her head. She looked at me. "Maybe at one of those parties you used to have? Those were so much fun."

The house was starting to be chaos like a proper birthday party. Everything was so loud.

"Maybe you saw him on the Facebook, dear," Esther said, not at all explaining herself. That could be so broad. I opened my mouth to clarify, but I felt a hand on my back.

Claire had crept up behind me. "Can I look at your makeup bag?" She asked, hopefully.

"Go get my purse. It's under the table," I informed her. "Just to look at right now. I'll do it after dinner. Don't make a mess."

"Okay!" Claire was halfway into the kitchen when she stopped, staring wide-eyed at Edward with her fists balled to her sides. She then let out a wild, top of her lungs, scream that only a teenager could let out. Even Minnie turned around in shock.

"What the hell?" Mike said from the living room.

"OH, MY GOD! You're Eddie! Mommy! No way! Oh, my god, oh my god, oh my god! Why are you in my grandma's kitchen!?" She shouted at him at full force before stopping suddenly. "Wait, you are Eddie, right?"

"His name is Edward, dear," her grandmother answered. "He's Aunt Bella's friend. And don't use the Lord's name in vain, please. It's not nice."

Claire threw herself at him, hugging his neck tightly even before Esther stopped talking. She almost knocked over a chair. It skittered across the tiles and made a screeching noise as it slid.

"Wow," Edward laughed as he hugged her back, timidly. He patted her back lightly.

"I watch all your videos! Every single day after school! Can I take a picture?" She said in a high pitched blur of words. "I love you so much."

He actually blushed, but he was such a good sport. "Yeah, of course. I don't mind."

She pulled her phone out and took a picture of him so quickly it was almost shocking. He was good at it though, immediately throwing up a big smile. When she saw the results, she hopped up and down.

"See, I was expecting more of that," I said to Edward, pointing at Claire.

"I *told* you, Mommy, that Aunt Bella was on YouTube!" The young girl said with a satisfied expression. "She said it was probably not you. How many people are named Bella Swan, though? Um, basically no one."

"She must have not actually watched the videos. But that's okay," I smirked. I winked at Helena, who just shook her head and rolled her eyes. "You know, anyone can be on YouTube. I'm pretty sure I'm in probably a few other videos somewhere for something. Probably for CfA. I have some of me playing and singing, I bet."

"I posted my favorite video that I've made with your aunt so far just today," Edward told the girl with a sneaky sweet little smile. "Do you know which?" He asked me. It probably just posted and I hadn't looked at my phone at all that day.

"The cake place? Or maybe the Hawaiian pancakes and chicken? I don't know. They

were all fun," I thought out loud. "My favorite is the Halloween one, I think. Maybe. Of the ones I've made with you, I mean."

"The spicy wing flight. Your aunt was so mean to me," he said in fake hurt. I gasped in mock horror.

"He's such a baby," I said to her in my defense.

"Are you dating him?" Claire asked me, bluntly. "In the videos, it looks like you're dating. The fandom isn't sure."

"You can tell the *fandom* we are," he said the word very sarcastically. "If that's okay with you, miss," Edward replied to her. She threw her hands in the air, did a little dance, and ran off to tell her friends of the latest adventures at her grandma's house. I had officially become the coolest aunt.

After dinner, I sat on the living room floor with Claire, all of the makeup I had with me spread out all over the ground around us. Edward was holding a conversation with Ash and Mike about soccer, Jonah asleep in his chair and snoring lightly. I delicately showed my niece how to put on eyeshadow.

"Your aunt has done my makeup too, you know," Edward interjected suddenly.

"Really?" She asked.

"I gave him fake eyelashes and everything," I said as I put on mascara on her eyelashes. "He looked very pretty."

She laughed, "why?"

"I lost a bet, and I had to do it for a video. And I did look fetching. Purple is my shade. You'll see that one soon enough."

She giggled in pleasure. He winked at me before going back to talk about sports. Claire pulled the attention back to her, asking if she could do my makeup. I, of course, let her. Luckily, I had makeup remover with me as well.