

## 27. REVELATION

“Renesmee,” I reminded my wife.

Bella went stiff beside me. Something about our daughter’s name had made her anxious. The only worry that any of us had about Nessie was her frightening growth rate. That must be it.

“It’s all right, love. Get dressed, and we’ll be back to the house in two seconds.”

The space beside me in the bed was instantly empty. That wasn’t exactly the reaction I was hoping for, but I knew that I should help Bella balance her priorities. It wasn’t easy in the beginning, and with both of us enthralled with our new sex life, it would be all the more difficult.

She turned back toward the bed and her eyes scanned the long length of me. I could almost feel her desire as she considered returning to bed. Then she looked in the direction of the big house and Renesmee, then back at me, then back toward the house, then back at me...all in the space of a millisecond. She resembled the Road Runner on the lookout for Wile E. Coyote. It was the silliest performance I’d ever seen, especially since I wasn’t completely adjusted to Bella’s new status as a vampire. It took a fair amount of effort to contain my amusement in a smile.

“It’s all about balance, love. You’re so good at all of this, I don’t imagine it will take too long to put everything in perspective.”

“And we have all night, right?”

*Mmmm...*

“Do you think I could bear to let you get dressed now if that weren’t the case?” Images of the previous night rolled through my head and the desire that fueled them through my body, but Bella was already gone. She had zipped through the double doors that led to Alice’s warehouse of a closet. I followed on her heels.

“Which ones are mine?” she wanted to know.

“To the best of my knowledge, everything but this rack here is yours.” I placed my hand on a short rack next to the door.

“All of this?” Bella wailed. I shrugged.

“Alice,” we said simultaneously, she more harshly than me.

“Fine.” Bella was disgusted—or discouraged—by the sheer number of mysterious white garment bags filling racks on all four walls and in the middle of the room. The closet was almost the size of the rest of the cottage put together. Bella and I could turn it into a banquet hall, or a ballroom, or house several more children in that space. Typical Alice.

Bella reached out randomly for a garment bag, which turned out to contain a ball gown. Pink silk, long and lovely. It would be stunning on her, but she was not impressed. I

could see her impatience spike.

“Let me help,” I volunteered, before Bella got too frustrated. I showed her how to locate different kinds of fabrics by scent. It didn’t take long to find a pair of blue jeans and a low-cut, v-necked t-shirt. That item was for me. I smiled to myself.

I found something to wear without any trouble, then Bella and I dashed out through the garden, over the wall, and into the forest. I didn’t let Bella beat me on the run back this time, though she kept up pretty well.

When we entered the house, Renesmee was sitting on the floor entertaining the family by bending silver spoons (and knives and forks). Our little Uri Geller had been waiting impatiently for her mother—she still had a lot of catching up to do. But first things first...she touched Bella’s cheek to show her “thirsty.” Bella visibly cringed and I hurried to the kitchen to get our child some breakfast. She was already getting cranky. *Where’s Jacob?* I wouldn’t mind seeing my daughter bite him again.

“How long has she been up?” Bella asked Rosalie as I left the room.

“Just a few minutes. We would have called you soon. She’s been asking for you—*demanding* might be a better description. Esme sacrificed her second-best silver service to keep the little monster entertained.” Rosalie’s words were affectionate. She was more indulgent than any of us.

“We didn’t want to...er, bother you.” Rosalie barely contained her snickering as she remembered the sounds of our night together.

Emmett was less successful at trying not to snort like a hog. His thoughts and visuals were both loud. *They really did figure it all out! Ha, ha!* He had us hanging from the rafters and getting stuck in the kitchen sink. It hadn’t occurred to us to inaugurate the entire cottage, nor did we walk around or stand up a lot. (I just a bit more than Bella since she’s shorter.) We didn’t get fancy our first night back together, but Emmett wasn’t too far off the mark in a couple of cases. I chuckled to myself.

Bella was obviously mortified by Emmett’s amusement. Fortunately, she couldn’t read his thoughts! Of course, they weren’t hard to read, probably not even for my wife. Bella did her best to ignore Emmett by focusing on Renesmee.

“We’ll get your room set up right away,” she told Nessie. “You’ll like the cottage. It’s magic.” The family had told her about the little house in the woods, but Renesmee didn’t have an image for it. She understood that she would be with her parents, though, and that made her happy.

“Thank you, Esme. So much. It’s absolutely perfect,” Bella said.

Emmett couldn’t hold his tongue any longer. “So it’s still standing?” he cackled. “I would’ve thought you two had knocked it to rubble by now. What were you doing last night? Discussing the national debt?”

Bella wisely ignored him. “Where’re the wolves today?” she asked the room in general.

“Jacob took off this morning pretty early,” answered Rosalie. “Seth followed him

out.” The image in Rose’s mind was of a panicked Jacob racing out of the house and into the woods.

“What was he so upset about?” I asked, returning to the living room. She took Renesmee from Bella’s arms and I handed over the metal cup. Bella was doing marvelously. I didn’t see any particular expression of pain or distress, though she was within a few feet of the human blood. I kept an eye on her, though. Blood warmed in the microwave didn’t have quite the same appeal as the elixir pumping through a human’s veins, but it was certainly close enough to set off a newborn.

“I don’t know—or care,” Rose replied petulantly. “He was watching Nessie sleep, his mouth hanging open like the moron he is, and then he just jumped to his feet without any kind of trigger—that I noticed, anyway—and stormed out. *I* was glad to be rid of him,” she declared. “The more time he spends here, the less chance there is that we’ll ever get the smell out.”

“Rose,” Esme chastised. Though our mother would never say so out loud, she was a little worried about the smell herself. It really was hard to tolerate.

“I suppose it doesn’t matter. We won’t be here that much longer,” Rose said disdainfully.

Emmett agreed. “I still say we should go straight to New Hampshire and get things set up. Bella’s already registered at Dartmouth. Doesn’t look like it will take her all that long to be able to handle school.”

*No Emmett...don't say it...don't say it...*

“I’m sure you’ll ace your classes...apparently there’s nothing interesting for you to do at night besides study.”

*He said it...must have a death wish.*

Rosalie snickered. My mind had already moved on because I could hear Jacob’s thoughts as he drove his motorcycle down the highway toward us.

I growled in fury. *No!!!* Jacob had taken things into his own hands! He couldn’t leave La Push and he didn’t want to be separated from Renesmee. He was *desperate* not to be separated from Renesmee. *What had he done??* Alice couldn’t see what was going on, but she knew that something significant was happening.

“What is he *doing*? What is that *dog* doing that has erased my schedule for the entire day? I can’t see *anything*. No!” Alice complained. “Look at you! You need me to show you how to use your closet.” That last was directed at Bella. Alice was displeased with her attire, but more than that, she wanted an excuse to play dress-up all day with my wife—something Bella would hate.

“He talked to Charlie,” I snarled. “He thinks Charlie is following after him. Coming here. Today.”

“*Shit!*” Alice was off like a bullet out the kitchen door. Fortunately, she had made contingency plans for managing Bella’s appearance during her first year. She was caught off-guard by the emergency nature of the current situation, though, and had raced off to the

cottage.

Bella was starting to panic. “He told Charlie? But—doesn’t he understand? How could he do that? No!” Jacob hadn’t told Charlie what we were. What he *had* said was bad enough, though. Charlie knew that Bella was in Forks and not in Atlanta.

“Jacob’s on his way in now,” I hissed.

“Hey, guys.” He breezed in looking very satisfied with himself. The combination of his arrogance and glee was infuriating enough that I could have taken his head off. Instead, I focused on remaining completely still, as did my entire family.

Seth and Leah came in behind Jacob in their human forms, but the stress in the air kept them both on edge. Either one could lose control and phase at any time. We had a potential fight brewing in the room.

Since Charlie was Bella’s father, I thought she should get the first shot.

“Rose,” Bella said carefully, holding her arms out for the baby. Renesmee felt the tension and saw that Jacob was the only one in the room who was happy. She knew intuitively that *her* Jacob was in trouble, but she didn’t understand why.

“Charlie’ll be here soon,” Jacob announced. “Just a heads-up. I assume Alice is getting you sunglasses or something?” His superior air and overconfidence was beyond belief. Could anybody be more infuriating?

“You assume *way* too much,” Bella snapped. “What. Have. You. *Done?*”

“Blondie and Emmett woke me up this morning going on and on about you all moving cross-country. Like I could let you leave. Charlie was the biggest issue there, right? Well, problem solved.”

Bella was livid. “Do you even *realize* what you’ve done? The danger you’ve put him in?”

“I didn’t put him in danger. Except from you. But you’ve got some kind of supernatural self-control, right? Not as good as mind reading, if you ask me. Much less exciting.”

I lost my cool. Insulting Bella on top of everything else? He was forgetting that *we* were in charge of Renesmee’s future and *he* was threatening it! My fury was almost visible as I leaned in toward him. Jacob was intimidated, if I wasn’t mistaken. *Good.*

“That’s just a *theory*, mongrel. You think we should test it out on *Charlie*? Did you consider the physical pain you’re putting Bella through, even if she can resist? Or the emotional pain if she doesn’t? I suppose what happens to Bella no longer concerns you!” That was the true source of my anger. He’d given no more thought to Bella than he would have to a random stranger. I wanted to knock some sense into him.

“Bella will be in pain?” Jacob replied, abashed.

“Like you’ve shoved a white-hot branding iron down her throat!”

“I didn’t know that.” He was finally coming down to earth, all the cockiness draining away.

“Then perhaps you should have asked first,” I snarled at him.

“You would have stopped me.”

*Idiot!* “You *should* have been stopped—”

“This isn’t about me,” Bella broke in. She clutched Renesmee to her chest like a life-ring. “This is about Charlie, Jacob. How could you put him in danger this way? Do you realize it’s death or vampire life for him now, too?”

“Relax, Bella. I didn’t tell him anything you weren’t planning to tell him.”

“But he’s coming here!”

“Yeah, that’s the idea. Wasn’t the whole ‘let-him-make-the-wrong-assumptions-thing’ your plan? I think I provided a very nice red herring, if I do say so myself.”

“Say it straight, Jacob. I don’t have the patience for this.”

“I didn’t tell him anything about you, Bella. Not really. I told him about me. Well, *show* is probably a better verb.”

I saw the whole thing in his head...He was so proud of himself.

“He phased in front of Charlie,” I told Bella, equal parts bile and threat in my voice.

“You *what?*” Bella was incredulous.

“He’s brave. Brave as you are. Didn’t pass out or throw up or anything. I gotta say, I was impressed. You should’ve seen his face when I started taking my clothes off, though. Priceless.”

Well, I’d give him that one. Judging by Charlie’s expression in Jacob’s mind, Bella’s father would never recover...ever. I wish I’d been there to read his thoughts! I can guess, though.

*What? Jacob wants to fight? He doesn’t seem angry, though. Wait!! He’s taking off his goddam pants!! Is he trying to tell me he’s a homo? Uh...sexual? Surely not! Didn’t he nearly get his butt kicked for kissing Bella! Holy Shiite! Does he think I’m a...gay...too?! Billy’s been alone nearly as long as me, and nobody thinks he’s a homosexual!*

“CHRIST! WHAT THE F...? JACOB! JACOB!” The final sentence was the only one he said out loud. I admit that the corners of my mouth twitched the tiniest bit at Charlie’s stunned expression.

“You absolute *moron!* You could have given him a heart attack!” Bella was in a surprisingly well-controlled rage. If she went for him, I wouldn’t stop her. I’d just grab Renesmee and get out of the way...

“Charlie’s fine. He’s tough. If you’d give this just a minute, you’ll see that I did you a favor here.” Jacob was doing his best to convince her.

“You have half of that, Jacob. You have thirty seconds to tell me every single word before I give Renesmee to Rosalie and rip your miserable head off. Seth won’t be able to stop me this time.” Bella was getting dangerous, which put Seth and Leah on edge.

“Jeez, Bells. You didn’t used to be so melodramatic. Is that a vampire thing?”

“Twenty-six seconds.” Bella was counting down, her voice barely controlled.

Jacob reluctantly gave in, dropping into a chair and rolling his eyes.

“So I knocked on Charlie’s door this morning and asked him to come for a walk

with me. He was confused, but when I told him it was about you and that you were back in town, he followed me out to the woods. I told him you weren't sick anymore, and that things were a little weird, but good. He was about to take off to see you, but I told him I had to show him something first. And then I phased."

Bella was not going to let him off that easily.

"I want every word, you monster."

"Well, you said I only had thirty seconds—" Jacob finally paid heed to Bella's threatening stare. "Okay, okay. Lemme see... I phased back and got dressed, and then after he started breathing again, I said something like, 'Charlie, you don't live in the world you thought you lived in. The good news is, nothing has changed—except that now you know. Life'll go on the same way it always has. You can go right back to pretending that you don't believe any of this.'"

Jacob continued. "It took him a minute to get his head together, and then he wanted to know what was really going on with you, with the whole rare-disease thing. I told him that you *had* been sick, but you were fine now—it was just that you'd had to change a little bit in the process of getting better. He wanted to know what I meant by 'change,' and I told him that you looked a lot more like Esme now than you looked like Renee."

I snarled at him. He was endangering my family!

"After a few minutes, he asked, real quietly, if you turned into an animal, too. And I said, 'She wishes she was that cool!'" Jacob was the only one in the room who thought that was funny. No... Seth and Leah did too. Rosalie was highly annoyed.

"I started to tell him more about werewolves, but I didn't even get the whole word out— Charlie cut me off and said he'd 'rather not know the specifics.' Then he asked if you'd known what you were getting yourself into when you married Edward, and I said, 'Sure, she's known all about this for years, since she first came to Forks.' He didn't like *that* very much. I let him rant 'til he got it out of his system. After he got calmed down, he just wanted two things. He wanted to see you, and I said it would be better if he gave me a head start to explain."

"What was the other thing he wanted?" Bella wanted to know.

"You'll like this. His main request is that he be told as little as possible about *all* of this. If it's not absolutely essential for him to know something, then keep it to yourself. Need to know, only."

"I can handle that part," Bella said.

"Other than that, he'd just like to pretend things are normal."

"What did you tell him about Renesmee?" Bella's anger was slowly subsiding, faster than mine was, actually. I could not forgive Jacob for recklessly endangering Bella as he had, but having Charlie in her life *would* make her happy. Maybe this could work out somehow...

"Oh yeah. So I told him that you and Edward had inherited a new little mouth to feed." He looked at me for my reaction. I wasn't giving him a thing.

“She’s your orphaned ward—like Bruce Wayne and Dick Grayson.” *Superhero stuff again? Oh well. If it worked...*

Jacob snorted. “I didn’t think you’d mind me lying. That’s all part of the game, right?”

*What an arrogant prick! A clever arrogant prick.*

“Charlie was way past being shocked at this point, but he did ask if you were adopting her. ‘Like a daughter? Like I’m sort of a grandfather?’ were his exact words. I told him yes. ‘Congrats, Gramps,’ and all of that. He even smiled a little.”

“But she’s changing so fast,” Bella objected, emotion marring her clear, bell-like voice.

“I told him that she was more special than all of us put together.” A tone of reverence replaced the arrogance when he said those words. He loved Renesmee as I loved Bella. Could I hold his actions against him when I would have done the same thing—or something similar—to stay with Bella? *Yes, I could.*

Renesmee reached out to Jacob as he approached Bella, but she clung more tightly to our baby.

“I told him, ‘Trust me, you don’t want to know about this. But if you can ignore all the strange parts, you’re going to be amazed. She’s the most wonderful person in the whole world.’ And then I told him that if he could deal with that, you all would stick around for a while and he would have a chance to get to know her. But that if it was too much for him, you would leave. He said as long as no one forced too much information on him, he’d deal.”

Jacob could see that Bella was feeling greatly relieved, perhaps even a little bit grateful for what he’d done, but that didn’t make it okay in my book. There was still the issue of Bella’s self-control and whether both she and Charlie would survive the afternoon intact.

“I’m not going to say thank you,” she said. “You’re still putting Charlie at a huge risk.”

“I *am* sorry about it hurting you. I didn’t know it was like that. Bella, things are different with us now, but you’ll always be my best friend, and I’ll always love you. But I’ll love you the right way now. There’s finally a balance. We *both* have people we can’t live without. Still friends?”

Bella gave him a miniscule smile and Jacob offered his hand to her to shake on it.

“If I don’t kill Charlie tonight, I’ll consider forgiving you for this,” was as far as she would go.

“*When* you don’t kill Charlie tonight, you’ll owe me huge.” He gave Bella a smug smile.

“Can I?” Jacob gestured toward Renesmee.

“I’m actually holding her so that my hands aren’t free to kill you, Jacob. Maybe later.”

All we could do was sit down and hold on tight. Carlisle had considered rounding all of us up and fleeing before Charlie got there, for everybody's safety, but he had reconsidered.

*Edward?* I looked in his direction. *Should we stay or go?*

I discreetly pointed toward the floor. Carlisle nodded. In the best-case scenario, Charlie would cope with Bella's altered state and she would be able to keep him in her life for several more years. In the worst-case scenario, Charlie would lose his mind and we would all disappear. It seemed worth a shot to try to stay if possible.

At that moment, Alice burst into the living room carrying a collection of small boxes.

"You, you, and you," she ordered the wolves, "If you must stay, get over in the corner and commit to being there for a while. I need to see. Bella, you'd better give him the baby, too. You'll need your arms free, anyway."

Jacob smirked and held his arms out for Renesmee.

"Take her." Bella passed the baby to him and then he retreated to the far corner of the room with Seth. Leah opted to leave the house altogether.

Bella was becoming frightened. I could see it in her face and I'd just heard it in her voice. I moved to her side and smoothed my hand over her cheek.

"You can do this. I know you can. I'll help you; we all will." I waited for a nod or a confirmation that she was willing to try, but she was still breathing rapidly. "If I didn't believe you could handle it, we'd disappear today. This very minute. But you can. And you'll be happier if you can have Charlie in your life."

Alice tossed one of the boxes into the air and Bella caught it easily.

"These will irritate your eyes," she told Bella. "They won't hurt, but they'll cloud your vision. It's annoying. They also won't match your old color, but it's still better than bright red, right?"

"When did you—" Bella began.

"Before you left on the honeymoon. I was prepared for several possible futures."

I smiled to myself. My sister was a phenomenon. Bella inserted the brown-colored contacts into her eyes and then blinked and squinted. She turned to me.

"I see what you mean," Bella said. "How do I look?"

"Gorgeous. Of course—"

Alice finished my sentence impatiently. She'd heard it before.

"Yes, yes, she always looks gorgeous. It's better than red, but that's the highest commendation I can give. Muddy brown. Your brown was much prettier. Keep in mind that those won't last forever—the venom in your eyes will dissolve them in a few hours. So if Charlie stays longer than that, you'll have to excuse yourself to replace them. Which is a good idea anyway, because humans need bathroom breaks. Esme, give her a few pointers on acting human while I stock the powder room with contacts."

"How long do I have?" Esme asked.



“Charlie will be here in five minutes. Keep it simple.”

Esme took Bella’s hand. “The main thing is not to sit too still or move too fast.”

Emmett added his advice. “Sit down if he does. Humans don’t like to just stand there.”

“Let your eyes wander every thirty seconds or so,” Jasper instructed. “Humans don’t stare at one thing for too long.”

Rosalie chimed in too. “Cross your legs for about five minutes, then switch to crossing your ankles for the next five.” Bella listened to everyone and nodded tentatively. The suggestions continued...

“And blink at least three times a minute.” Emmett said, and then his mind latched onto an idea. *Sports! Charlie likes football. That will give him something else to do besides stare at us and freak out.* He looked over at me and I nodded my agreement. Emmett clicked on the flat-screen and located the college football channel. Watching the day’s games was something he would have done anyway. He probably had money riding on them, if I knew Emmett.

“Move your hands, too. Brush your hair back or pretend to scratch something,” Jasper added.

“I said *Esme*,” Alice protested. “You’ll overwhelm her.”

“No, I think I got it all,” Bella said. “Sit, look around, blink, fidget.”

“Right,” Esme confirmed, hugging Bella’s shoulders.

Jasper had even more advice. “You’ll be holding your breath as much as possible, but you need to move your shoulders a little to make it *look* like you’re breathing.”

Bella nodded again.

“You can do this,” I encouraged, wrapping my arm around her waist.

“Two minutes,” announced Alice. “Maybe you should start out already on the couch. You’ve been sick, after all. That way he won’t have to see you move right at first.” Bella headed toward the couch, trying to imitate the slow, clunky movements of a human, but she looked pretty silly. Alice rolled her eyes.

“Jacob, I need Renesmee,” declared Bella. Jacob didn’t respond and Alice objected.

“Bella, that doesn’t help me see.”

“But I *need* her. She keeps me calm!”

Alice gave in. “Fine. Hold her as still as you can and I’ll *try* to see around her.” She spoke like she was incredibly put out. Jacob reluctantly passed the baby to Bella and then retreated back to the corner at Alice’s glare.

I sat down, encircling both Bella and our daughter in my arms. I spoke in a low, serious voice. “Renesmee, someone special is coming to see you and your mother, but he’s not like us, or even like Jacob. We have to be very careful with him. You shouldn’t tell him things the way you tell us.”

Renesmee touched my face, though I could already see that she understood my

instructions. She'd always been able to take instruction and learn, even from the womb.

"Exactly," I told her, confirming her pictures. "And he's going to make you thirsty. But you mustn't bite him. He won't heal like Jacob."

"Can she understand you?" Bella whispered, surprised.

"She understands. You'll be careful, won't you, Renesmee? You'll help us?"

Renesmee reached for my face again and showed me biting Jacob.

"No, I don't care if you bite Jacob. That's fine." It was the least he deserved for the risks he'd taken today. Jacob chuckled.

"Maybe you should leave, Jacob," I suggested. I was still angry with him and was also concerned about his unpredictability. I didn't completely trust him. He would do anything to keep Renesmee in Forks.

"I told Charlie I'd be here," Jacob reminded me. "He needs the moral support."

"Moral support," I sneered. "As far as Charlie knows, you're the most repulsive monster of us all." None of the Cullens turned into filthy mongrels!

"Repulsive?" Jacob brushed off my comment with a laugh. He couldn't conceive of himself that way. He was actually *proud* of what he was. I already knew that, but I was still surprised that he didn't see how Charlie might find him disgusting. I could!

"Well done, Bella," Jasper said. In his mind, I saw that she'd managed to calm herself out of her panic. I turned my attention to her immediately, squeezing her a little tighter.

"You're sure?" Bella asked me.

"Positive. You can do *anything*." I kissed her for reassurance and to help her stop thinking of Charlie. It quickly got out of hand. Bella was right. The craving never really went away—mine didn't, anyway. Her breaths were coming fast and ragged. *Nice! Mmm...*

"Er, Edward, you might not want to distract her like that right now. She needs to be able to focus," warned Jasper.

"Oops." I grinned. She'd said the same to me after getting carried away with kisses during our courtship. The memories were still fresh and desire hit me with force. Talk about prioritizing! It wasn't always as easy as I'd implied to Bella.

"Later," Bella murmured and smiled.

"Focus, Bella," Jasper warned again.

"Right," she replied. Three seconds passed.

"Bella."

"Sorry, Jasper."

I chuckled and Emmett laughed out loud.

Just then, we heard Charlie's patrol car approaching the house and all laughter ceased. The vampires became as still as statues.