

Hello! When editing, please look out for:

- abusive/creepy bs
- any grammar/spelling/etc
- stuff missing or not matching previous or later chapters

Special requests:

- please include more Julie & biker werewolves. (I was thinking, you know how in Breaking Dawn, the werewolves & vampires have declared a truce and some like Seth actually hang out at the Cullens'? What if there was already a conflict that happened before Bella arrived, and they're already allies, even friends, and Julie & Bonnie & co. often hangs out with the Cullens? That way, we 1.) get rid of the unnecessary werewolf vs. vampire bs and 2.) Julie & co. can appear more whenever the Cullens hang out as a family? Just an idea.

[All the books in PDF format, via my Google Drive](#)

[Blog](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[**Editable Links**](#)

[**\(Comment only\) Chapter 1 Reference**](#)

[**Chapter 1**](#)

[**Chapter 2**](#)

[**Chapter 3**](#)

[**Chapter 4**](#)

[**Chapter 5**](#)

[**Chapter 6**](#)

[**Chapter 7**](#)

[**Chapter 8**](#)

4. Invitations

In my dream it was very dark, and what dim light there was seemed to be radiating from Edythe's skin. I couldn't see her face, just her back as she walked away from me, leaving me in the blackness. No matter how fast I ran, I couldn't catch up to her; no matter how loud I called, she never turned. I got more and more frantic to get to her until that anxiety woke me. It was the middle of the night, but I couldn't sleep again for what seemed like a very long time.

The month that followed the accident was uneasy, tense, and, at first, embarrassing.

I found myself the center of attention for the rest of the week, which was extremely uncomfortable. Taylor Crowley was very annoying; she followed me around and tried to come up with different hypothetical ways to make it up to me. I tried to convince her that what I wanted more than anything else was for her to forget about it — especially since nothing had actually happened to me — and she reluctantly stopped. Still, she sought me out between classes and sat at our now-crowded lunch table. McKayla and Erica didn't seem to like that; they glanced at me often as if trying to figure out whether I wanted Taylor gone. I made no hint, unwilling to give Taylor cause to apologize again.

No one was worried about Edythe. There had been initial concern, but after Dr. Cullen firmly reassured everyone of Edythe's well being, no one followed Edythe around or asked for her eyewitness account. I always included her in my version; she was the hero — she had pulled me out of the way and nearly been crushed, too, but all anyone ever said was that they hadn't even realized she was there until the van was pulled away. I wondered a lot about why no one else had noticed her standing so far away by her car, before she was suddenly and impossibly saving my life. I couldn't think of any possible solution. That, combined with her changing eyes and her refusal to explain herself, made me even more curious and determined to investigate.

People avoided Edythe the same way they usually did. The Cullens and the Hales sat at the same table they always sat at, not eating, talking only to each other. None of them, especially Edythe, glanced my way anymore.

When Edythe sat beside me in class, as far away as possible, like usual, she was courteous enough, but didn't let the conversation lapse into anything that wasn't superficial or class-related. She would go silent and refuse to look at me if I dared broach the subject, often going tense.

I wanted very much to continue our conversation from the hospital hallway, and the day after the accident I tried. She'd been so furious when we talked before, however, and was clearly uncomfortable. Even though I really wanted to know what had actually happened and I thought I deserved the truth, I also knew I had been pretty pushy, considering that she had just saved my life. I didn't think I'd thanked her properly.

She was already in her chair when I got to Biology. Upon seeing me, she nodded to me and turned to the board, pencil gripped a little too tightly. When I tried to bring up the accident, this

time intending to insert a proper thank-you, she cut me off with a comment about the assignment. Then with the weather. Eventually all she gave me was silence.

I started watching her intently, from a distance, in the cafeteria or parking lot. I watched as her golden eyes grew noticeably darker day by day, then abruptly becoming honey-colored again before the slow progression toward black would start over. In class I gave up broaching the subject. Not knowing was miserable. A little voice in my head wondered about her secrets — whatever they were — and her determination to not let them be compromised by some girl she sat next to in biology.

Despite my careful wording, the tone of my texts gradually got my mom worried. She called afterwards, wondering if I was okay, and I spent two hours ranting to her about Edythe Cullen and the mystery surrounding Edythe. I couldn't tell her expression from the tone of her voice, but I did hear her mutter something like "young love" under her breath. At which I turned red and huffed at her. She laughed, and when she hung up, she was reassured. I had the rest of my time to ponder.

McKayla, at least, didn't voice her concern at my sudden interest in sleuthing, though it was clear on her face. Instead, she began sitting on the edge of my table to talk before Biology class started, making cheerful small talk and ignoring Edythe completely. The snow washed away for good after that one dangerously icy day. McKayla complained that she'd never gotten to stage her big snowball fight, but she was happy that the beach trip would soon be possible. She volunteered to help me shop for swimsuits if needed, and joked that she would make the volleyballs extra soft for my sake. I pouted at that.

I hadn't really been aware of how much time was passing. Most days looked the same — gray, green, and more gray. My stepmom had always complained that Phoenix didn't have seasons, but as far as I could tell, Forks was much worse. I had no idea spring was anywhere near appearing until I was walking to the cafeteria with Jessica one rainy morning.

"Hey, Bella...?" she piped up. I wanted to hurry out of the rain, but Jessica was barely shuffling forward. I slowed my pace to match hers.

"What's up, Jessica?"

"I was just wondering if anyone's asked you to the spring dance yet."

"Oh. Um, no."

"Huh. Do you want... I mean, do you think McKayla will ask you?"

"I hope not," I said, maybe a little too fast.

She looked up at me, surprised. "Why not?"

"I don't do dances."

“Oh.”

We shuffled forward for a minute in silence. She was thoughtful. I was impatient to get out of the drizzle.

“Do you mind if I tell her that?” she asked.

“No. That’s probably a good idea. I don’t want to have to tell anyone no if I don’t have to.”

“Okay.”

“When’s the dance again?”

We were close to the cafeteria now. She pointed to a bright yellow poster advertising the dance. I’d never noticed it before, but it was curling around the edges and a little washed out, like it had been up for a while. “A week from Saturday,” she said.

I wasn’t if sure Jessica had already said something, because the next morning, McKayla was her usual bubbly self. At lunch, she sat with both Jessica and me, talking excitedly about her outfit to the dance. She stayed quiet as she walked with me to Biology, but she came over like usual to sit on the edge of my lab table. Rather than the usual murmured greeting, Edythe dipped her head towards me, glanced up at McKayla, and turned her head away to look out the window. I could see her cheek shift, but couldn’t make out the expression.

“So,” McKayla said, looking at the floor instead of at me. “Jessica said that you don’t do dances.”

“Yeah, that’s true.”

She looked at me then, her expression sad. I hadn’t even told her no yet, and I already felt guilty.

“Oh,” she said. “I thought she might’ve misheard or something.”

“Uh, sorry, no. Why don’t you ask *her* to the dance?”

She seemed to consider this for a moment before she replied. “I think she *wants* me to ask her, actually.”

I gave her my best attempt at an encouraging smile, “Then you should. Jessica’s great.”

She nodded, “Yeah, she is.” She took a deep breath and looked me straight in the eye with a quick, nervous smile. “And I’m guessing this ‘I don’t do dances’ thing wouldn’t change if I was the one asking you to go?”

From the corner of my eye, I saw Edythe’s head suddenly tilt in my direction. Like she was listening to my answer, too. It took me a little too long to respond. I still felt guilty, but mostly distracted. *Was Edythe listening?*

“No. Sorry again.”

McKayla’s face fell. “Would it change if someone else asked you?”

Did Edythe see how McKayla’s eyes flickered in her direction?

“No. It’s a moot point anyway. I’m going to be in Seattle that day.” I needed to get out of town — two Saturdays from now was the perfect time to go.

“Does it have to be that weekend?” McKayla asked.

“Yeah. But don’t worry about me. You should take Jessica.”

“Yeah, you’re right,” she agreed after a thought, and turned to walk back to her seat. I closed my eyes and pushed my fingers against my temples, trying to push the guilt and sympathy out of my head. Mrs. Banner started talking. I sighed and opened my eyes.

Edythe was staring straight at me, that familiar expression of frustration even more obvious now in her black eyes.

I stared back, surprised, expecting her to look away. She didn’t. Her eyes kept boring into mine, like she was trying to find something really important inside them. I continued to stare also, totally unable to break the connection and becoming more and more aware of her hair, her lips, the curves of her shoulders. My face began to get hot.

“Miss Cullen?” the teacher called, looking for the answer to some question I hadn’t heard.

“The Krebs Cycle,” Edythe answered, seeming reluctant as she turned to look at Mrs. Banner.

I put my head down, pretending to stare at my book, as soon as her eyes released me. It bothered me — the rush of emotion pulsing through me, just because of an intense stare. I felt ridiculous at the thought of how much she affected me. It couldn’t be normal.

I tried hard not to be aware of her for the rest of the class, or, since that was impossible, at least not to let her know that I was aware of her. When the bell finally rang, I turned away from her to stack up my books, expecting her to rush out as usual.

“Bella?”

Her voice shouldn’t sound so familiar, like I’d been hearing it all my life.

I turned slowly toward her, not wanting to feel what I knew I would feel when I looked at her perfect face. I’m sure my expression was guarded; hers was unreadable. She didn’t say anything.

“So... are you... or are you not talking to me again?” I asked.

“With certain topics, no,” she said, but her lips curled up into a smile, her dimples flashing.

“Okay...” I looked away — down at my hands, then over toward the chalkboard.

“I’m sorry,” she said, and there was no joke in her voice now. “I’m being very rude, but it’s better this way, really.”

I looked at her again; her expression was completely serious now. “I don’t know what you mean.”

“It’s better if we’re just acquaintances,” she explained. “Trust me. I can’t explain for personal reasons.”

I studied her face with narrowed eyes, though more in frustration.

She seemed surprised by my reaction. “What are you thinking?” she asked.

“I’m thinking,” I mumbled, “that you can’t just leave things off like that and expect me not to get suspicious. I’m thinking that I can’t trust you, especially when you refuse to explain why.”

“I can’t.”

I decided to take a drastic step. “It’s too bad you didn’t figure that out earlier,” I continued. “Saved yourself the regret.” The last part was quieter, as if it wasn’t for her to hear, but she heard it.

“Regret?” She seemed, for once, entirely caught off guard. “Regret over what?”

“Saving me, I meant.” It felt awkward, saying it out loud, and I felt awful about it almost immediately.

She looked completely shocked. She stared at me for a minute, wide-eyed, and when she finally spoke she sounded horribly upset.

“You think I regret saving your life?” The words were quiet, just under her breath, but still unmistakably hurt.

I glanced at her, unsure how to reply.

“Yeah,” I said, just as quietly. “So that there wouldn’t be someone poking around in your secrets...” I trailed off. Just her expression was enough to make me regret voicing my concern aloud.

Edythe looked somewhere between horrified and wounded, like she didn’t know just which she felt more. She made the strangest sound — exhaling through her teeth, almost like a hiss. I couldn’t read the look she gave me next.

“I can't believe you,” she told me. For a moment, that feeling of guilt settled in my chest - and then it vanished as quickly as it had come when I reminded myself of her actions. Why am I feeling guilty? *I* was the one who she'd been treating like a stranger!

The bell rang. I turned my head sharply away from her, clenching my jaw against all the wild accusations I wanted to hurl at her. I gathered my books together, then stood and walked to the door. I meant to sweep dramatically out of the room, but of course I caught the toe of my boot on the door jamb and dropped my books. I stood there for a moment, thinking about leaving them. Then I sighed and bent to pick them up.

Edythe was there; she'd already stacked them in a pile, which she offered to me.

I took them without really looking at her.

"Thank you," I said stiffly.

“You're welcome,” she answered. I couldn't read her tone.

I straightened up swiftly, turned away from her again, and stalked off to class without looking back.

Gym didn't make my day any better. We'd moved on to basketball. On the first day, even though all of them had seen me play volleyball, the other kids still seemed to think I should be good. It didn't take them long to figure out the truth. They never passed to me now, which was good, but with all the running I still managed to have a few accidents per game. Today was worse than yesterday, because I couldn't concentrate on my feet. All I could think about was Edythe.

It was a relief, as usual, when I was finally free to leave. I saw McKayla in the locker room but avoided her. I couldn't wait to be back inside my truck, alone. The truck was in pretty decent shape, all things considered. I'd had to replace the taillights after the accident, but that was it. If the paint job weren't already hopeless, maybe I would have had to do something about the new scrapes. Taylor's parents had to sell her van for parts.

I did feel a bit guilty, though. My irritation had gotten the better of me, I decided, and saying that to Edythe was a bit too much. I made a mental note to apologize the next time I saw her. Didn't mean I was any less angry at her, though. Continually withholding secrets, acting all mysterious, saying straight out how she wanted to only be acquaintances: there was something strangely infuriating about that girl.

I rounded the corner and nearly had a heart attack. Someone small and thin was leaning against the side of my truck. I skidded to a stop, then saw the black hair. It was just Erica. I started walking again.

“Hey, Erica,” I called.

“Hi, Bella...”

“What’s up?” I asked as I went to unlock the door. I glanced down at her and fumbled for my keys. She looked really uncomfortable.

“Bella, I have a question to ask you.” She paused, her eyes casted down.

There was an awkward moment of silence as I waited for her to continue, hoping that it wasn’t what I think it was.

“Do you think...” She glanced at my face. “... that Angela would say yes if I asked her to the dance?”

I breathed out in relief. Turning down two friends in one day wasn’t my idea of fun. “Of course, though you better hurry. She might already have a date.”

“Thanks,” she said, smiling now. I smiled back.

“For a moment there, I thought you were going to ask *me*.” I inserted my key into the car lock. Out of the corner of my eyes, I saw Erica freeze for a moment, then she relaxed.

“I was,” she mumbled.

“Oh.” Another moment of silence elapsed. I unlocked the car, hoping to make a fast escape.

Erica giggled. “But then I saw your face,” she said. “Your expression said it all. I had to improvise.”

“Well, Angela is a lovely person,” I slowly replied, finally taking a peek at her. Her face was down, black hair hiding her eyes, but she was smiling.

“Of course. Sorry to make it awkward for you,” she said, glancing up. Our eyes met, and Erica nodded sheepishly. “Can I ask who you’re going with, then?”

“Oh, I’m not going to the dance. I’m going to Seattle that day, because, well, that’s the only day I could go.”

“I see. I hope you have fun.”

“Thanks.”

“See ya,” she said over her shoulder. She was already escaping. I waved, but she didn’t see it.

I heard a sigh.

Edythe was walking past the front of my truck, looking straight forward, her mouth not betraying even the hint of an expression.

I froze for a second. I wasn’t prepared to be so close to her. She kept walking. I yanked the door open and jumped inside, slamming it loudly behind me. I revved the engine deafeningly and

reversed out into the aisle. Edythe was in her car already, two spaces down, sliding out smoothly in front of me, cutting me off. She stopped there to wait for her family; I could see the four of them walking this way, but still by the cafeteria. I considered taking out the rear of her shiny Volvo, but there were too many witnesses. I looked in my rearview mirror. A line was beginning to form. Directly behind me, Taylor Crowley was in her recently acquired used Sentra, waving. I was too aggravated by Edythe to acknowledge her.

While I was sitting there, focusing all my efforts on not staring at the driver in front of me, I heard a knock on my passenger side window. It was Taylor. I glanced in my mirror again, confused. Her Sentra was still running, the door left open. I leaned across the cab to crank the window down. It was stiff. I got it halfway there, then gave up.

“Sorry, Taylor, I can’t move. I’m stuck behind Cullen.” I was annoyed — obviously the holdup wasn't my fault.

“Oh, I know — I just wanted to ask you something while we’re trapped here.” She grinned.

Oh, come on.

“Will you go to the spring dance with me?” she continued.

“I’m not going to be in town, Taylor.” I realized I probably sounded too sharp. I had to remember it wasn’t Taylor’s fault that Edythe had already used up my patience.

“Yeah, just thought I had to try,” she admitted.

“Is this about almost hitting me again?”

She avoided my glare.

“It’s okay, Taylor,” I said, working to hide my irritation. “You don’t need to make it up to me.”

“Alright,” she said, finally seeming to accept it. “I’ll see you later.”

Before I could say anything, she was walking back to her car. I could feel my face getting red. Straight ahead, Alice, Rosalie, Eleanor, and Jasper were all sliding into the Volvo. In the rearview mirror, I could see Edythe’s eyes — staring at me. They were crinkled around the edges, and her shoulders were shaking with laughter. It was like she’d heard everything Taylor had said, and found my bright-red reaction hilarious. I drove home slowly, carefully, muttering to myself the whole way.

When I got home, I decided to make chicken enchiladas for dinner. It was a long process, and it would keep me busy. While I was sautéing the onions and chilies, my phone rang. I was almost afraid to answer it, but it might be Charlie or my mom. A quick look at the screen told me it was Jessica, and I picked up with relief. She was jubilant; McKayla had caught her after school to accept her invitation. I celebrated with her briefly while I stirred. She had to go, she wanted to call Angela and Lauren to tell them. I suggested — with casual innocence — that maybe Angela

could ask Erica; part of me wasn't sure if she would go through with her own plans to ask her. And Lauren, a standoffish girl who had always ignored me at the lunch table, could ask Taylor; I'd heard she was still available. Jess thought that was a great idea, and with all this matchmaking success, I felt an awful lot like Jane Austen's Emma. Now that she was sure of McKayla, she actually sounded sincere when she said she wished I would go to the dance. I gave her my Seattle excuse.

After I hung up, I tried to concentrate on dinner, but my mind kept going right back to Edythe. What did she mean, it was better if we were just acquaintances? Did she not want to be friends? Was it related to why she was able to stop speeding, full-sized vans with her bare hands?

My stomach twisted. As much as I was annoyed, I still liked her a lot. Beautiful, perfect, strong Edythe Cullen who wouldn't let me get near her. I grabbed a dish towel, ran it under the faucet, and then rubbed it across my eyes. It didn't really help.

Well, that was fine. I could leave her alone. I *would* leave her alone. I would get through my self-imposed sentence here in purgatory, and then hopefully some school in the Southwest, or possibly Hawaii, would offer me a scholarship. I focused my thoughts on sunny beaches and palm trees as I finished the enchiladas and put them in the oven.

Charlie seemed worried when she came home and smelled the peppers, but she came around after the first bite. It was kind of a strange feeling, but also a good feeling, watching as she started to trust me in the kitchen.

"Ma?" I asked when she was almost done.

"Yeah?"

"Um, I just wanted to let you know that I'm going to Seattle for the day a week from Saturday... if that's okay?"

"How come?" She paused her fork, directing her full attention at me.

"Well, I wanted to get a few books. The library here is pretty limited. And maybe some warmer clothes." I had a little extra money, since, thanks to Charlie, I hadn't had to pay for a car. Not that the truck didn't cost me quite a bit in the gas department. The cold-weather clothes I'd picked up in Phoenix seemed to have been designed by people who'd never actually lived in temperatures below seventy degrees but had once had such a climate described to them.

"That truck probably doesn't get very good gas mileage," she said, echoing my thoughts.

"I know, I'll stop in Montesano and Olympia — and Tacoma if I have to."

"Are you going all by yourself?"

"Yes."

“Seattle is a big city — you could get lost,” she warned.

“Ma, Phoenix is five times the size of Seattle, and I have my GPS. Don’t worry about it.”

“Do you want me to come with you?”

I wondered whether she was worried about my decision to go alone or about my anemia. Probably about me going alone.

“That’s okay. It’s not going to be very exciting. I’ll probably just be in dressing rooms all day — very boring.”

“Will you be back in time for the dance?”

Only in a town this small would a parent know when the high school dances were. I just stared back at her until she got it.

It didn’t take her long. “Oh, right.”

“Yeah.” She, of all people, should figure out that I didn’t get my balance problems from Renée.

The next morning, when I pulled into the parking lot, I deliberately parked as far as possible from the silver Volvo. I didn’t want to put myself in the path of too much temptation and end up owing her a new car. Getting out of the cab, I fumbled with my key and it fell into a puddle at my feet. As I bent to get it, a hand flashed out and grabbed it before I could. I jerked upright, almost smacking my head into her. Edythe Cullen was right there, leaning casually against my truck.

“How do you do that?” I asked, amazed and irritated.

“Do what?” She held out my key while she spoke. As I reached for it, she dropped it in my palm.

“Appear out of thin air.”

“Oh. This time I was waiting for you.”

I scowled. I hadn’t seen her - and part of me still got the distinct impression that she wasn’t giving me the whole truth. Her eyes were light again today, at least, a warm honey color that seemed in line with her apparently good mood. I had to look away, to reassemble my now-tangled thoughts. I pretended to rifle through my backpack for who knows what while she stood just a half-foot away, unmoving. Like she was waiting for a response.

"Why the traffic jam yesterday?" I demanded, busying myself with my cluttered bag. "I thought you were supposed to be acting like I don't exist outside of classes, not irritating me to death in the school parking lot."

“Ah. That was for Taylor’s sake. She was figuratively dying for her chance at you.”

"You..." I gasped. I couldn't think of a bad enough word. "Don't say that about Taylor." It felt like the heat of my anger should physically burn her, and she shifted her eyes away from me, obviously uncomfortable.

"Sorry. That was a bad joke. And I'm not pretending you don't exist," she continued.

I focused my glare onto her face, keeping my mind focused, no matter how golden her eyes seemed, or how long her lashes were against her skin.

"I don't know what you want from me," I told her.

Her face was suddenly guarded.

"Nothing," she said too quickly.

"So you are trying to irritate me to death? Who are you going to insult next, McKayla?"

She stared for a second. "Bella... —"

My palms tingled. I wanted so badly to hit something. I was surprised at myself. I was usually a nonviolent person. I turned my back and started to walk away.

"Wait," she said, but I forced myself to keep moving, not to look back.

"I'm sorry, that was rude," she said, somehow right next to me.

"Why won't you leave me alone?" I groaned.

"I wanted to ask you something, but I got sidetracked."

I sighed. "Fine then. What do you want to ask?"

"I was wondering if, a week from Saturday — you know, the day of the spring dance —"

"Are you trying to be funny?" I interrupted, wheeling toward her. Rain hit my face as I met her eyes. "If you want to make more fun of me, don't. I didn't choose to have dyspraxia."

She stared at me, seemingly oblivious to the falling drizzle. For a second, I was actually angry. She was messing with me.

Her wickedly amused expression was back, the hint of dimples threatening on her cheeks, but her face was also apologetic.

"I'm sorry. That wasn't what I meant. Will you please let me finish?" she asked.

I bit my lip and clasped my hands together, interlocking my fingers, so I couldn't do anything rash.

“I heard that you were going to Seattle that day, and I wondered if you wanted a ride.”

That was unexpected.

"What?" I wasn't sure what she was getting at.

“Do you want a ride to Seattle?”

"With who?" I asked, mystified.

“With me.”

I was still stunned. "Why?" Going from avoiding me then offering a ride. Where was the punch line?

“Well, I was planning to go to Seattle in the next few weeks, and to be honest, I’m not sure if your truck can make it.”

"My truck works just fine, thank you very much for your concern." I started to walk again, goaded by the insult.

Again, she kept up easily. “Why would you think that I’m making fun of you?” she asked. “The invitation is genuine.” She laughed. “Can your truck make it to Seattle on one tank of gas?”

"I don't see how that is any of your business." Damn shiny Volvo owner.

“The wasting of finite resources is everyone’s problem,” she said primly.

"Honestly, Edythe." I felt a thrill go through me as I said her name, and I hated it. "I can't keep up with you, acting nice one minute and the next being rude. I thought you didn't want to be my friend."

She looked guilty. “It would be better if we weren’t friends, but that doesn’t mean I don’t want to be.”

I gave Edythe a dark look, and realized I had stopped walking again. We were under the shelter of the cafeteria roof now, so I could more easily look at her rain-washed face, clean and perfect. Which certainly didn't help my clarity of thought.

“It would be more... prudent for us to stay just classmates,” she explained. “But I don’t want to...ah, act so rude anymore.”

There was no humor in her face now. Just a serious intensity that made my heart trip over itself. I could see the earnestness in her eyes, almost toeing the line into pleading.

“Will you let me give you a ride, Bella?” she asked.

“Alright,” I said before I realized what I’d done. Before I could take it back, a quick, gorgeous smile reshaped her face and I was putty once again.

“I’ll see you in class.” She spun on her heel and then walked quickly back the way we’d come, leaving me to both regret and rejoice in all of my decisions.