



# GREAT VEXATIONS

A SLASH TWILIGHT FANFICTION  
BY ANGSTGODDESS003

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Like even if I baked you cookies from a recipe that's not mine,  
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XD

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When the Cullens brought him into their home, eight-year-old Jasper thought it too big. He was so terrified of the high ceilings and echoing spaces in their elegant foyer, so bright and sterile. He thought to himself, There are so many things to break. Vases and little figurines littered shelves and tabletops, and Jasper was well aware that he'd never been very graceful. So he pressed his arms flat to his sides and watched the toes of his old sneakers as they led him through the house, up to his new bedroom. He threw himself into it with much relief. His ruby red room was comfortably devoid of all the little, delicate porcelain and glass trinkets that he'd passed on the way up the winding staircase.

He never thought he'd miss home, but that first night, he definitely did. The red of the walls suddenly resembled blood. Plus, there were so many places for monsters to hide in the large house, little nooks and crannies behind furniture and tables.

He hid beneath the bed on the following day when Dr. and Mrs. Cullen announced his doctor appointment. He was terrified of needles, had only just been released from the hospital where they had constantly poked and prodded him.

The wooden floor he laid against was cold and comforting, and he could watch the door through the space allotted to him. After so long, it opened, and little feet pattered through. He inspected the shoes—brown and clean—and recoiled as they neared him.

The blanket was suddenly yanked up, and the intruder crouched, ducking his reddish hair to the floor with a patient, piercingly green stare. Jasper's eyes were wide with awe as he gazed back at this other boy, having never been around someone so clearly his own age since he was much smaller.

"Isn't it dark under there?" the boy suddenly asked, and when Jasper didn't answer—for he was far too stunned to do so—the boy shrugged, and simply joined him. He slid along the hardwood and lay beside Jasper, resting his cheek on his arm as he stared at him. He whispered in his soft, boyish voice, "I thought monsters hid under beds?" and pursed his little lips contemplatively.

Jasper laughed. It was so trilling, yet also, oddly hollow. When his laughter faded, he stared at the boy's face and traced the contours with his frightened eyes. He tried to convey in a gaze how he always felt: dark, cold air tickling his toes and climbing his pant legs as he lay motionless in the dark.

Jasper *was* the monster, because monsters were never afraid of anything—even *needles*.

But Edward—as he introduced himself—remained laying with him until Jasper finally conceded and emerged. For if Jasper was a monster, then this Edward was a white, shining knight, so brave to crawl beneath a bed and speak to the monster himself.

Edward stood with his chin high as they both finally emerged and then took Jasper's hand. He had an impishly crooked grin that enamored Jasper. Edward then promptly paraded Jasper around their big house, so proud and accomplished that he'd achieved what the adults had thought impossible.

When Edward's Aunt, smiling and jovial at Jasper's ultimate emergence asked, Edward informed her matter-of-factly, "Jasper can't go to the doctor. He's playing with me today."

And that was that.

He showed Jasper his books and toy soldiers and electronic video games. Jasper had never seen electronic video games before. Edward—always the selfless creature—wanted to give his every toy to Jasper, and after many days spent playing with him, took to leaving his things in Jasper's room. Esme would find Edward's expensive devices there and ask, "What if you wanted to play with it later, Edward?"

It made Jasper uncomfortable to see his new best friend's squandering and neglectful behavior admonished. He feared Edward's punishment. Thus, Jasper would clutch his hand and tremble in fear of seeing Dr. Cullen strike the boy. This had been a common punishment for Jasper before he'd come into the Cullen house.

A *very* common punishment.

The first time he reacted in this way—shoved Edward behind him and gazed fearfully into Esme's bewildered eyes—he begged, "I stole his toys. Hit me instead." And then Jasper waited for Esme's fury, expected her to go downstairs and call her husband home from work to administer Jasper's punishment himself.

But instead, she stepped forward with teary eyes. This alarmed Jasper, and he flinched instinctively, incapable of knowing that she only wanted to embrace him. It was then that she *did* go downstairs to call her husband, and Jasper—frantic and scared—attempted to slide himself underneath his bed, to become the monster that wouldn't even fear Dr. Cullen and his belts and needles.

But Edward didn't allow him. Edward seemed to understand more than Jasper, and was sad as he led him to lay *on* the bed, instead of *beneath* it. They curled up and Edward pressed himself

close to Jasper, caressed his hair as he cried and shook in fear. They were clutched tightly that afternoon, Jasper's little sobs muffled by Edward's yellow shirt as Edward shushed him.

So tired from their abridged day of playing, they fell asleep in that position.

And this was how Dr. and Mrs. Cullen found them: legs and arms all tangled and entwined like vines around a picket fence as they slept peacefully. They didn't dare disturb them, and Jasper awoke feeling much better when he realized that he wasn't waking alone.

The little boys never slept alone again.

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At nights, Edward came to Jasper and in return, must have gained something—though Jasper never understood why Edward didn't grow bored of just laying there in the dark with him while he acted like a scardey cat. Sometimes they'd quietly play games or use black markers to write on Jasper's walls. Esme had encouraged him to do so when she'd found him tracing words into the red paint with his fingertip, a small, focused smile adorning his lips. The boys' tiny whispers echoed and embedded themselves within those walls at night, writing little snippets of tactical strategies utilized by their action figures.

They were inseparable by default. Jasper watched Edward's wide smiles with wonder and held him unlike a normal boy would have, arms always around his little waist or shoulders. And Edward touched Jasper in foreign ways. He'd pet his hair and hold his hand, and Jasper liked it. It never made Jasper feel like a puppy that had been brought home in offering to the lonely nephew, even though he'd already come to the realization that this was likely the case.

Edward made him feel loved.

Years went by with their predictable routines of waking and playing and going to grade school and falling asleep coiled around one another, and Jasper didn't question his feelings. It was the only real friendship he'd ever known. Edward himself rarely socialized with the other children on the playground at school, instead opting to plant himself beside Jasper in the sand beneath the monkey bars. It was here that they'd eat Esme's extravagant bagged lunches, pearly teeth biting into shiny red apples and their giggles regarding the girls with cooties who fawned over Edward's messy hair by yanking it.

The other children eventually accepted that neither would join their groups on the swingsets.

But they were growing older as the years passed, summers coming and going and climbing the ranks of their grade school with one another. Shoes were outgrown, pants became too short, and odd things began happening to Jasper's emotions.

Edward was Jasper's home. He'd grown attached to him in ways that no one his own age could comprehend. For the longest time, Jasper could not eat or sleep or walk outside without knowing Edward's immediate whereabouts.

One day, Edward went out to the river behind the property. He left Jasper behind because he'd been bathing, and Edward was always impatient. Jasper had told him to wait, that he'd help him catch the tadpoles for their school project, but Edward went, awkward feet trodding through the murky trees to the riverbank alone.

Jasper emerged from the bedroom and searched the house for him, growing panicked when he realized that Edward was no longer inside. He couldn't understand the way in which his breathing grew labored, or why his pulse raced and his vision went blurry. Jasper ran out of the house into the backyard, in such a hurry to get to the riverbank that he tripped over branches and scuffed his knees. He didn't care. He stood up and continued his path, eyes wide and frightened with every second that he couldn't see his friend and know he was okay.

Jasper had always feared something would happen to Edward—that monsters would defeat his white knight. Edward had always been sheltered. Jasper knew that worse evils in this world existed beyond the trivial school yard trickery that Edward was accustomed to.

Slipping into the mud of the riverbank, Jasper spotted the shine of Edward's red hair, his pant legs rolled up as he crouched in the water, dipping a glass jar beneath the surface to capture the slimy tadpoles.

Jasper wanted to run in after him, but he was afraid and didn't know how to swim. He was happy just knowing Edward was alright, and as the boy turned to him, a wide smile on his face as he exclaimed, "Caught six!" Jasper was relieved.

He rarely let Edward out of his sight again, opting to bathe after dark, when he knew that Edward was forbidden from leaving the house. It never seemed to bother Edward, who rarely left Jasper's side anyway. For the longest time, everything was perfect, because Jasper was used to odd things happening to his emotions. Emotions were something he could handle.

But then, odd things started happening to Jasper's *body*.

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He saw it on television between a married couple. The man and woman were in a bed together, and he laid atop her, pressed into her and put his tongue into her mouth. Jasper was fairly certain that this was the type of television he wasn't allowed to watch, but he was sick with a cold, and Esme had allowed him to sleep on the sofa as he stayed home from school. He'd just been flipping through channels when a flash of flesh made his finger pause on the rubber button.

He watched the man put his hand over her chest, and they made sounds, his hips pressing her into the bed as she began removing his shirt. Jasper was excited. He sat up and leaned closer to the television, snotty tissues being crushed in his fists as he gaped at the screen, wide-eyed. The man began thrusting and moving on top of her and... Jasper knew that he wanted to do *that*.

The sooner the better, in fact.

He felt so thrilled watching it. He wanted to turn off the television and go to his bed right then. But Jasper stopped at the top of the staircase. He contemplated it a little more, and he realized that he didn't share a bed with a woman.

He shared a bed with Edward.

Jasper wasn't able to think of anything since. The only thing more exciting than doing *that* with a woman was doing *that* with *Edward*.

The thought also amused him that night as Edward jumped into his bed. The springs would make them bounce, Jasper was certain. He wanted so badly to do it with him. It looked like so much fun. But something on the surface stopped it from emerging in the form of brave and exciting displays. He was afraid of waking Edward's Aunt and Uncle with his dark little giggles and bouncing, bouncing, bouncing.

Shortly after that, Jasper began having curious *physical* reactions to Edward's body, though he didn't completely understand them. He was forced to hide countless, perplexing stiffenings of his penis and the evidence of thrilling dreams against his soft, sticky belly come sunrise in their shared beds.

The first time it happened, he panicked, thinking he'd wet the bed and that—*surely*—he'd humiliated himself in front of the one and only person whose opinion had ever mattered to him. Frantic, he kicked a bewildered Edward out of bed and shoved his dirty underwear into the

bottom of the bathroom waste can, praying that he wouldn't be caught and punished for doing something so unbelievably childlike.

Esme found them and promptly informed her husband. This spurred a rather uncomfortable and awkward conversation regarding words foreign to Jasper: masturbation, ejaculation, penetration. All of the "—ation's" confused Jasper as he sat in Dr. Cullen's office, red-faced and bewildered. Especially since Dr. Cullen kept mentioning *girls*. Jasper had never liked *girls*. They were gross.

But Edward was *not*.

Jasper liked Edward. He found his face and symmetry to be intriguing, could stare at him for hours and never grew bored of it. When Edward would lay next to him, Jasper would like the warmth against his stomach and chest, would wish to be closer to him.

Jasper wasn't able to determine whether or not it was okay to feel that way toward Edward, so he felt it best to keep it secret until he discovered otherwise. He was too afraid to ask Dr. Cullen. He didn't want to risk his new home—his best friend. The thought alone terrified him. He was certain that he could not exist without Edward. He often hated his reactions toward Edward for this reason, though he couldn't understand why he should have to hide them.

It felt so natural.

Later, Jasper became consumed by curiosity over his body—enraptured by the sensations of touching his penis. He wondered about what Edward's might look like. He'd wrap his fingers around the stiff length and pretend it might be his. He desperately wanted to know what it might feel like to rub them together, though he feared that asking might be inappropriate.

He didn't masturbate like normal boys either—preferred laying atop a pillow rather than using his hand, as Dr. Cullen had once awkwardly explained to him. It was the only way he'd ever seen anyone have sex before. It was easier for him to imagine that Edward was beneath him, giggling and making sounds much like the people on television had.

Jasper's pants always grew tight when he got a new pillow.

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"It's cold," Edward shivered as he sprang through the door to Jasper's room. Jasper had been waiting since his door had closed that evening. He was too old to fear ridiculous things like monsters *now*—a thirteen-year-old. A *teenager*. This thought excited Jasper.



He couldn't wait for school to let out for the summer so that he and Edward could go to the beach. Jasper still couldn't swim, but that didn't matter. He liked seeing Edward in his swim trunks, had even encouraged him to buy the black ones.

He liked seeing Edward's body, so much more toned than his own. Jasper was usually described as "twiggy," with his skinny arms and legs and awkwardly frail frame. Jasper also had long, ragged scars across his back that he was too embarrassed to reveal. But Edward was so perfectly proportioned and symmetrical and... perfect. Jasper wished he looked like that.

Jasper chuckled and flung back the blankets just as Edward approached the bed, diving beneath with chattering teeth. The winter would be gone soon, but for now, Forks was wet and cold and the hardwood floors of their rooms did nothing to help matters. Jasper hissed as he felt one of Edward's cold toes touch his.

Then he said, "You're freezing! Get over here," and eagerly opened his arms to Edward, who did not hesitate to accept Jasper's offering. Their chests crushed together and residual shivers emanated through Edward's body as Jasper warmed his arms with his hands.

Jasper nuzzled his nose into Edward's hair—Edward's soapy-smelling hair—and sighed, happy that he was no longer alone. For even if Jasper was much too old to fear ridiculous things, he certainly could not deny that being alone in the dark unnerved him.

Crushed chest-to-chest under the quilts, Jasper could finally turn out his lamp and find peace. Jasper burrowed deeper into him, as he always did, and hooked one of his legs around Edward's. He wanted to keep him pinned to his side as his anxious eyes searched the darkness of his bedroom. Edward's sleepy breaths washed over his neck and eased Jasper.

It was then that Jasper's focus would shift from the darkness to the body against him. Jasper felt his chest rising and falling and pushing and pulling. He felt Edward's hand at his back, limp as he slipped into slumber. Jasper felt Edward hips against his and he had to move back—just a little.

Jasper's erection throbbed.

Secretly, he'd rub softly against Edward some nights when he was certain his slumber was deep enough. Just a brush against his thigh, light as a feather. It was enough to create lengthy dreams that were far more fulfilling. He'd feel his curves and snake his arms around his torso, squeeze him gingerly and but a gentle rock was enough to satisfy his need and make his imagination run wild.

As Edward now slept against him in the cold room, Jasper anticipated that moment. His penis was throbbing and ached to be pressed against something. *Anything*. Jasper remained still until he was absolutely certain he would not rouse Edward. Then, slowly, he brought his hips forward and his erect penis touched Edward's hip.

Jasper wanted to make sounds and rub against him further, though he knew he couldn't. He was frustrated. He chided himself for being careless and not masturbating as he often did before Edward would come to his room.

He'd seen other boys their age french kissing girls much like he'd seen on television that day.

But Jasper didn't want to french kiss girls. He sighed into Edward's hair and eventually closed his eyes, wondering if he'd ever be able to have those things with Edward. But for now, Jasper really didn't care. As much as he spent his time thinking about sex and kissing and rubbing his erection against the pillow that he wished was Edward, he was certain that—so long as he had *this*—he would be perfectly content for the rest of time.

Jasper hugged Edward tighter.

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The first moment Jasper recognized a thin fracture between him and Edward existed was at the piano. It was a foreign, baffling thing, this crack that that could grow into a chasm at any moment. Try as he may have to ignore it, one Sunday morning proved it impossible.

"No. Your fingers aren't moving fast enough," Edward instructed through gnashed teeth, brows pulled together in annoyance. He had the most adorable scowl gracing his lips, hard, and yet soft.

Jasper replied, "What's wrong with going slow?" and tried the melody once more, so languorous that it was drawn into a series of sharp, ragged notes.

Edward cringed. "Because it's not a song if it takes a year to play," and then Edward shut the cover so hastily that it struck Jasper's wrist, and he snatched his hand back in surprise.

Staring at the bruising line, Jasper felt a pang in his chest where his happiness usually existed, nestled deep within Edward's soft caresses and gentle smiles. The slamming of his wrist put a dark, black mark upon Jasper's heart. He tried to shove it away, into the back of his soul where Edward's other indiscretions lay—a shove of his shoulder, an annoyed snapping-at, a tattle-telling to Esme—and yet Jasper couldn't simply disregard it.

They were becoming more and more frequent, he realized with sudden alarm.

He'd been trying to get Edward to teach him the piano. He knew so much about music and could play so beautifully. Jasper felt locked out of some obscure niche in Edward's life that he couldn't quite access.

But Jasper was horrible at playing piano and Edward was too impatient to teach him properly. It had taken him over a month to learn simple childhood lullabies, and his fingers were too short and awkward to move with the same speed and grace as Edward's.

Jasper rubbed his wrist, scowling at the piano cover. He didn't like piano anymore, couldn't grasp the complexity of playing the damn thing. It made him feel inferior to Edward, as if he were unable to keep up. He feared being left behind in his simple ways and lack of luster. Jasper didn't have any kind of special talents.

Edward's fingers came up to the bridge of his perfectly straight nose and he pinched it, squeezing his eyes closed. Jasper kept his gaze locked on his wrist and eventually felt Edward's hand on his own, prying it away from his spiteful grasp.

Edward smiled ruefully, but then he brought Jasper's wrist up to his lips—his perfectly pink lips—and kissed the reddened line, green eyes fixed to Jasper's, oh so contrite. "Sorry," he whispered when he gingerly released his hand, but Jasper was in a state of shock from the sensation that still tickled against his bruising flesh.

They talked and laughed, and Jasper was *impatient*. He wanted Edward to leave, so he asked him to go set up his new game system. When Edward was up the stairs, finally leaving Jasper alone, he brought his wrist to his own lips and copied Edward, stealing a phantom kiss that left him feeling exceptionally giddy.

He prayed that Edward might hurt him again—and *very* soon.

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All the boys sat huddled around the top bleacher, a couple of them shifting in a fashion quite familiar to Jasper. He shifted too, but not because of the pornographic magazine that sat between Edward and Tyler.

Edward was *horny*, Jasper could tell.

His cheeks were flushed with the most beautiful rose-colored hue, frosting the tips of his ears in a fervent pink. Jasper mentally dubbed this shade of Edward, "Pretty Porno Pink," and he inwardly snickered. Edward's green eyes were gaping at the image of a woman—a leggy, large-breasted brunette woman—and his hand was hidden suspiciously deep in his cargo short pockets. Jasper couldn't shake the vision of Edward possibly touching himself, right in front of him.

"God, she's hot," Tyler sighed, pursing his lips as his head dipped closer.

"Smokin'" some of the boys echoed, but Jasper didn't much care about *their* assessments.

His eyes were trained to Edward, hoping that he'd find the image as repulsive as he did.

Sadly, Edward was clearly excited, stuttering, "W-where did you get this?" There was brief, subtle movement under Edward's short fabric, and Jasper desperately needed to get home and loosen his own.

"My brother," Tyler replied, tongue darting out to lick his lips. Even that small gesture, from someone like Tyler, had Jasper's erection throbbing so badly that his hips bucked.

His mind was wildly creating fantasies with both Edward *and* Tyler now. Then again, Jasper was so frustrated that even the disgusting woman in the magazine could have gotten him off.

Edward shifted again. "Send him my thanks," he chuckled, low and husky and Jasper grew impossibly harder. He scooted a little closer to Edward, under the ruse of wanting a better angle in which to view the picture, and Edward, noticing, gave him the space necessary to nestle his body closely.

Edward always saved Jasper the seat closest to him.

His arms were warm, and the one nearest to Jasper still had its hand shoved deep into his pocket. Jasper imagined all these other boys leaving so that he could get closer and whisper in his ear, "I can help with that..."

He'd never felt so brazen and so unforgivably turned on, by just watching Edward's arousal nonetheless. He didn't know how much longer he could keep this secret from Edward. They spent so much time together, alone and intimate, and the opportunities they might have to explore were so incredibly appealing to Jasper.

But then Tyler was watching Jasper with narrowed eyes, and Jasper realized that his own stare hadn't been on the magazine, but instead, on Edward's subtly shifting crotch.

Jasper gulped and quickly looked away, ignoring the accusation in his gaze.

"Hey, Jasper," Tyler suddenly said, and all heads snapped to him, most of the faces flushed and blank. Tyler smirked and wondered aloud, "I'm guessing this isn't your type of material." Then Tyler pulled out a sports magazine, full of sweaty men and athletic advertisements, and slapped it down on the bleachers, in front of him.

The other boys were silent for only a moment before their eyes widened, and then they were laughing uproariously, Edward stock-still and staring at the sports magazine in bewilderment.

Jasper stood, indignant as he glowered at Tyler's ridiculously greasy hair, and wished that he could pour bleach into his brain, just to dissolve the momentary fantasy he'd just had of him, sullyng Edward's solitary perfection.

"Shut up," Edward eventually defended as Jasper stalked away to the restrooms, hoping they might go home soon.

Jasper couldn't wait to curl up to Edward and dream of that hand, lost in the depths of pocket fabric.

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"What do you mean?" Jasper asked, leaning against his headboard with one knee tucked to his chest. The soft glow of his bedside lamp illuminated Edward's face from below as he stood, and it accentuated his eye sockets—made them look sunken. His lips looked bigger. The lines of his fifteen-year-old body were almost visible through his old, sheer t-shirt.

"This isn't a joke," Edward whispered, but Jasper wasn't laughing. In fact, Jasper was very close to weeping, but he wouldn't let Edward see that. He clenched his teeth and wound his finger tightly around a loose thread of his bed sheet. It cut off his circulation and turned his fingertip blue.

Jasper pulled harder.

"Come on," Jasper pleaded softly, one last time, nodding his head to the space at his side. He was doing his best to play it off, uncertain how transparent he was being.

Edward's eyes stared at the void, blankets all rumpled and shoved back for the promise of his warm body.

Jasper hadn't wanted to ask. They'd never needed to and this new necessity confused him. Their beds had been open to one another for six years.

Edward's eyes were lifeless now, his posture indifferent. He shifted his weight. "Never," was his quiet answer and he turned, stalking from the room with his head down.

When the door finally closed, Jasper let the cancer of his absence invade him. It was crimson and bare—like his bedroom at midnight. The red walls were covered with marker and sketches and doodles and poetry they'd once been capable of sharing. The lamp illuminated little and Jasper scowled at the scant scrawlings he could decipher.

His finger was now numbed.

He wondered why Edward was doing this—denying Jasper his comfort. But he already knew. He'd heard the whispers around the house that floated to his ears like an evil, hissed chanting.

*"Aren't they a little old to be sleeping with one another, Carlisle? Shouldn't you say something?"*

Jasper had ignored them and would wait for Edward to come. If ever he failed to, Jasper would go to him. That was how gravity worked. Even during evening dinners, they'd shift together, like a graceful dance. Edward had been so oblivious and uncaring for so long. It had been the sweetest little abomination—this secret longing Jasper had kept hidden.

Jasper was apt at hiding.

But Jasper also knew that Edward's Aunt's and Uncle's displeasure had nothing to do with this. Jasper knew that this was *his* fault. He'd been careless and stupid—had allowed Edward to feel his morning erection and had reacted in an untoward way.

That had occurred earlier that morning and Jasper knew he had ruined it all with one, half conscious thrusting of his hips. Edward had opened his eyes and furrowed his brows, and when Jasper had realized what he'd done, he hadn't scrambled away. Instead, he'd held his hips there and had wanted to do it again. Their eyes were droopy from sleep, and Jasper's mouth felt fuzzy, but he'd been groggy and still enveloped by the euphoria of the dream he'd had about Edward.

Edward, who'd looked so confused and tired beside him.

Jasper had leaned his face closer to Edward, grinding his erection into his warm thigh.

Somewhere deep down, Jasper had convinced himself that Edward would feel the same things. He'd hoped that they could keep it secret and explore each other. But Jasper should have known better. Jasper often heard Edward doting over certain girls at school and knew he'd been attracted to *them*. Not Jasper. Edward liked their brown hair and petite frames, kept magazines hidden beneath his mattress with naked women in them. *These* were the things Edward dreamed about. Not Jasper. Never Jasper.

Edward had shoved him away with an aggressive haste.

Jasper wanted to plead with him as Edward flung himself out of the bed, aghast and horrified. He'd wanted to explain that he couldn't help it and that Edward had the softest, palest, most beautiful skin. He wanted Edward to know that he would gladly deny those reactions if he'd simply stay with him.

He wanted Edward to know that he meant so much more, that Jasper's curiosities and reactions were not the cause, but the effect of his connection to Edward.

Now, Jasper needed Edward at his side to make him feel safe and loved and valuable. To give him a place in the world. He craved the light buoyancy that often invaded his chest when Edward was near, touching him in little, affectionate gestures. He ached to place his head in Edward's lap, to feel his lithe fingers stroke his hair and stare into the green eyes that drove the darkness away.

He pulled the thread around his fingertip tighter, little tingles prickling the flesh. He was close to springing up and running to him. He wanted to catch Edward by the wrists and slam him against a wall in a violent, appalling way. He wanted to tell him that he couldn't survive without him—tell him to open his eyes and see how much they belonged together, *in that way*—tell him to open his mouth so he could finally taste the sweetness of his forbidden lips.

Jasper didn't sleep, and he never turned off the lamp.

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Jasper eventually heard the terms that summer, in the locker rooms, on television, and coming from the dirty mouths of the neighborhood boys.

*Gay. Fairy. Faggot. Queer.*

They spoke of boys, like Jasper, who were attracted to other boys—though the way in which they spoke of it was far more vulgar and demeaning. Jasper had never thought his attraction to another boy as wrong and found it difficult to comprehend why it necessitated its own term. He so badly wanted to ask someone to explain it to him, but found Edward to be evasive of his company.

With no school to occupy him, Jasper followed Edward around the house. He sank at his side on the plush, white sofa. He tried to watch their favorite shows with Edward, but they never talked. Jasper would then follow him outside, wordless and lost, as Edward sought the group of boys he'd come to call friends. Jasper was rarely referred to as a "*friend*."

He hated it when Edward called him his "*brother*."

It didn't take long for Edward to grow annoyed with Jasper's persistence. "Stop following me," he finally snapped one day. Jasper had been trailing behind him, counting their steps as they traveled the sidewalk. Edward's infuriated spin caught Jasper off guard.

He flinched.

Edward rolled his eyes, his hair shining in the sunlight with flecks of ruby red. A drop of sweat trailed from his ear and pooled into his collarbone. "Don't you want to make your *own* friends?" he asked meaningfully, eyes alight with irritation, cheeks flushed with fury. His nostrils flared and Jasper had always thought Edward adorable when angry.

Of course, now, Edward was angry with *him*.

Jasper opened his mouth but couldn't speak. He didn't understand having anything of his *own*. Jasper shared with Edward and Edward shared with Jasper. There was no one thing owned solely by the other. They'd shared clothes and shampoo and candy bars and ice cream and soda pop and toys and... *everything*. He couldn't fathom the line required to sever that concept.

What was the point in having anything if he couldn't share it with Edward?

They could hear the voices of the other guys around the corner, and Edward shifted impatiently. Without waiting for an answer, he spun on his heel and loped toward them, so graceful as his muscular body moved. Jasper was still stuck in his awkwardly skinny body, all twiggy limbs and too tall to know what to do with them. Edward's hair stuck to his sweaty neck and Jasper memorized their curly Q's and matted O's.

And then, because he simply didn't know what else to do, Jasper followed.



Edward stepped right. Jasper stepped right. Edward stepped left, Jasper stepped left. Edward curved his path, Jasper curved his path. It was customary by this point. They even walked the same now. Talked the same. Used the same taboo language in private and liked the same junk food. Edward had adopted a fraction of Jasper's odd, southern accent, and in return, Jasper had adopted Edward's sharp annunciations, their speech becoming one, fused drawl unique only to them. Edward was an extension of him—a dual part of Jasper's body that he had no choice other than to accommodate.

But then the guys' voices got closer and Edward's fists curled at his side. Jasper furrowed his brow at them, tilted his head and pondered their meaning.

And then Edward spun.

Jasper flinched.

Edward put his palms to Jasper's shoulders and shoved him with an angry growl. Jasper watched his face as if in slow motion—the furling of his pink lips, the forward sway of his messy hair, the darkness of his eyes, and the creasing of his pale forehead.

Jasper—shocked and puzzled—tumbled to the ground and landed on his bare elbows with a blinding "crack."

He cried out in pain, could feel the coarse pavement below him scrape his skin away from bone and burn. It reminded Jasper of that excruciating moment when leather had met his flesh as a child. It wasn't the pain that hurt. Jasper found the pain to be oddly stimulating and, though the sensations burned, the throbbing made him acutely aware of his every nerve ending.

Jasper liked that.

No. The pain did not hurt Jasper.

Jasper was hurt by the persons who intentionally inflicted it.

His watery gaze was trained on the figure above him, and Jasper whimpered. Even though his elbows bled, it was his chest that ached. Jasper found it difficult breath. Edward's face was pale now, not flushed. His green-apple eyes were wide and aghast, and he staggered back, mutely shaking his head from side to side.

Jasper felt a tickle of pleasure from the remorse and horror that covered Edward's face like a tragic mask. Jasper was so weak physically, so vulnerable, and he hated feeling that way. This

guilt was his only power over Edward. His perfect lips parted, and he *did* apologize, but when the guys grew nearer, Edward *did not* offer Jasper his hand. He hung his head and his remorse transformed to pity. Then Edward's face was blank, and he was turning to the others with a small, guilty shrug.

Blood trailed down Jasper's arms as he stood, using his blonde hair to veil his humiliating tears. He dusted the dirt off his back and when he extended his arms, a smatter of pain speckled his sensitive and raw skin. The guys all shot him odd looks and continued their laughter and walking.

Edward followed them, but Jasper followed nothing.

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Esme and Carlisle were beginning to worry about Jasper, and he knew it. He hid away in his room for the remainder of the summer and spent his time dreaming and sulking. He only came out for dinner, never capable of containing his bitter tears when Edward would return home at twilight, flushed and sweating and exhausted from a long day of playing baseball with the other guys.

Jasper hated baseball—not that he was ever invited to play, of course.

One evening while the two were washing dishes, Jasper heard Esme asking Edward why he was never invited. "It's just a little odd that you were so attached at the hip, and now you won't even take him out to play with you," she wondered aloud.

Edward lied quite easily, "I asked him to come and he said 'no.'"

This produced a term from Dr. Cullen when Esme went to him, concerned: "Social dysfunction."

Jasper balked at these words, infuriated at Edward. He wasn't certain how, but he made a plan to get back at him—to make Edward feel as excluded as he did. He began listening to music that he knew Edward would loathe. He chose the loudest, heaviest, most obscene and frowned upon songs and played them whenever he was certain Edward would be home. He was always quite pleased whenever he'd catch a glimpse of Edward's face, wrinkled in distaste.

But Jasper actually found himself relating to the words of the songs—angry and withdrawn.

Before school began again, Esme took Jasper out to buy his own clothes, since Edward's bedroom—and consequently, his closet—were now off-limits to Jasper. He chose clothes that were the farthest from what Edward wore.

Edward liked blue and green and yellow, and so Jasper chose black and white and grey.

When school started again, Jasper found it difficult to watch Edward with the other boys. He had to sit at his own table Sophomore year, exiled from his usual spot at Edward's side. Outwardly, Jasper remained emotionless and numb, but inwardly, Jasper was anguished with every moment that he had to watch Edward's smile from across the room.

Jasper stopped caring about his grades, found it difficult to remain focused on the boring material. He'd spend his afternoons gazing out windows and concocting fantasies of Edward's ultimate absolution. In his daydreams, Edward would come to him, remorseful and pleading, and Jasper—never capable of saying no to him—would accept him with wide, open arms and a joyous grin.

They'd kiss in Jasper's fantasies.

It wasn't always on the mouth.

On Halloween that year, Edward took Tanya Denali out on a date, to a costume party that Jasper hadn't been invited to. Tanya went as Marilyn Monroe. Edward went as John F. Kennedy. Jasper went to the Cullens' liquor cabinet when they fell asleep and got drunk for the very first time.

He vomited in his closet.

When his "parents" had found their liquor missing that Thanksgiving, they'd punished Jasper—a first. He was prepared for a myriad of methods used to accomplish this. Jasper knew by then that Dr. Cullen would never strike him. Instead, they grounded Jasper to his room, where he had round-the-clock access to a brand new computer, high speed internet, and websites where he could watch men do what he always wished Edward might.

As if he went anywhere else.

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The numbness never came. Jasper always read and heard about people becoming numb to this kind of pain, but he wasn't so lucky. Rage filled Jasper like a violent waterfall, brimming over the

edges and threatening to spill over at any given second. Whenever it did, he'd be forced to lock himself away like a volatile prisoner, too afraid of his flagrant transparency to simply... snap.

God, how he wanted to snap.

Now, Jasper was watching by the ledge, his ribbons of smoke twirling like a zephyr toward the night sky as it twinkled. He tucked himself away in a dark corner of the balcony and watched. He was always watching. Two glowing eyes in the darkness of the forest. Something's off, but you don't know what.

He flicked his cigarette and narrowed his eyes—his jasper-colored eyes.

He hated that fucking gemstone. He hated the humid breeze, caressing his flesh with nothing but chill. He hated the sounds coming from below him and the rattling of the windows like monkeys in cages. He hated so much these days.

He hated himself. He hated his scars. He hated his blonde hair and its course curling. He hated being sober, and he hated lying to his "parents." He hated *them*. He hated his red bedroom and the cold floors. He hated the memories—and—he—fucking—*loathed—Bella—Swan*.

Edward looked so strange now, sitting on the hood of his new car and laughing. He threw his head back, and his abdomen tightened with the chortles. Jasper could sense its dishonesty in the oddest way. He wanted to be there to look a little closer. He wanted to set his jaw and narrow his eyes and peer into that bizarre sound. He dissected it with careful incisions. High. Low. Deep. Repeat. Bounce of the diaphragm. Tosses of bronze.

So few could see his strangeness, really comprehend or grasp its existence.

To Jasper it was a flashing billboard on a crowded interstate. It reminded him of little bugs, teeming beneath tree bark and gnawing until nothing was left but a hollow stump. Slender fingers. Animated as they waved. Words spoken, vibrations of sound that twisted and distorted through a crooked smile. Edward brushed her hair back from her neck. Fingertips grazed her skin, and she smiled, smiled, smiled.

He blew his smoke into the air slowly, allowing the noxious cloud to obstruct the view of lips touching. Hands on backs. Whispers in ears. More laughter, stretching wide around the space and calling, "Look at me! Look at me! Aren't I so motherfucking divine?"

Tiny, tiny hands, grasping and clutching as their lips glistened under the pale moonlight. Her fingers trailed his shoulders and sank into the blue fabric of his shirt. She hooked her knee

around his hip and moaned against him. She reached down and cupped his groin, and he shoved his fingers into her hair with a fevered grunt.

Jasper—drunk and dizzy—vomited over the railing.

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"Where did you go?" Edward asked as she took her seat. His hair hung in his eyes. Flopping down. Wide eyes. He picked at his chicken and avoided anything outside his bubble of perfection. He wasn't oblivious to Jasper's cutting stare. He was just ignoring him. Jasper wished he could ignore Edward, too.

She grinned. "To the lady's room, of course." Her hand sought his, wrapped it up tight, held it down and locked it away. Their fingernails were bright and entwined and laying atop the Cullen family dinner table like the prettiest picture. Everyone was smiling. Jasper inspected her fingers and, against his will, envisioned them wrapped around Edward's rigid cock.

Jasper ground his teeth and tapped his boot, shoved the food into his mouth.

"Your home is so lovely, Mrs. Cullen!" Bella exclaimed like screeching chimes that made Jasper cringe. Eyes bright like headlights scanned the walls, and she gushed, gushed, gushed. Jasper felt sick again. The pleasantries swelled around him. "*Everything tastes delicious! I love that painting! Your pearls are gorgeous!*"

And this was the most horrific thing about this Bella fucking Swan. She hadn't an ounce of malice in her. She was polite and kind, attractive and sensual, sweet and sugary, intelligent and strong-willed. And she was genuine in her care for Edward. When all pretenses were stripped away, Jasper could only come to one conclusion.

Jasper hated Bella most because he had no logical reason to.

Esme beamed with pride and joy. Carlisle was engrossed in a newspaper. Edward was nodding along and eating small, menial bites. Shoving them down the hole. Holding her hand. Grazing her shoulder. Smiles so crooked and bizarre were flashed and disarmed her anxiety.

Jasper fucking hated that smarmy, crooked smile of his. He shouldn't be smiling like that—teeth and pink and bright green eyes, seeking brown. Every time he saw the smile—the one meant for Jasper—he wanted to stand and scream and toss his chair about like a petulant child. Didn't they understand anything?

Edward was *his*.

Edward kissed Bella goodnight in the foyer as Jasper passed to climb the stairs. Hands on hips, thumbs on cheeks, and tender whispers. Edward stared after her form with sparkling eyes and a thrilled stare. He probably liked watching her ass sway, Jasper seethed. Then the door was closed, and Edward was trodding away. Bounce in his step.

He never looked at Jasper anymore. It felt as though Forks was a chasm below him and he was falling. He was a weightless, yet somehow swollen mass that kept dropping. He waited to hear the final "*crack*" of his landing. Waited to feel the pain of his ending. Waited for the ground to finally give way to nothing.

He *had* nothing.

Jasper's fingernails penetrated the flesh of his palm, and when he finally, *finally* bled, his lips twitched like a dying body.

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The stale linger of its taste in his mouth was the worst.

It was bitter, with an edge of saccharine, like blood and candy. He could feel it's violent dance on the tip of his tongue with every passing day. It never waned. Like a ghost, it haunted his empty halls, floating through the vacant rooms and searching for tattered toys and discarded, broken soldiers. How he wished he could give it back, shove it into his arms and laugh, laugh, laugh.

He could taste it the strongest at midnight. Could smell soapy hair and feel damp breaths against his neck. He could hear soft breathing, see twitching-dream fingers. Could feel hot, tender flesh beneath his eager fingertips.

Jasper had always been such a weird, dark little shit.

Jasper still found himself waking at the twelve chimes of the hallway grandfather clock. He'd forget the betrayal, and his feet would take him through the house, up the stairs, and to the door he was once welcome to enter. It wasn't until his hand wrapped around the brass knob that he'd remember.

It would wrap its bony fingers around his throat and squeeze until he'd gasp in the darkness. He'd stagger back and let the handle go without really meaning to. He'd feel Edward's words every night, thick like cold venom coating a candied shell.

*"I don't sleep with fags."*

And there—in front of the entrance which was once a soothing balm to his wounds—Jasper would cry.

He wouldn't sob. Jasper wasn't a sobber—he refused. But the tears would trail down his cheeks like searing tracers, regardless of his efforts to disallow them. He was always so weak like this—tired and scared and utterly fucking alone. Where was their compassionate fucking boy now?

And then Jasper would go back to bed. He would remove his boxers and lay naked beneath the covers. He would grab a white down pillow and shove it between the sheets, turn on his side and grip it between his thighs. He would move his hips against the smooth coldness, releasing a sigh. He would smash it against his throbbing erection.

His hand had always been lacking, so cold. Had felt so clinical and to-the-point. He'd wanted to imagine a pale, lanky body beneath him as he came. He wanted to feel above it, in control of it. He wanted to dominate it. This is the method he still preferred. Jasper couldn't even jack-off like a normal boy. But though that sickened him, made him feel shame, he continued.

He'd eventually turn to lay on top of it.

He would prop himself on his elbows and tuck his chin to his chest so he could watch himself fucking it. The tip of his cock would slide against white, peeking out from between his stomach and cotton. He'd imagine a little tuft of coppery hair, a trail from a belly button, hot breath on his face.

He would thrust urgently against it, the blankets on his back rising and falling with quick, sharp bounces and falling off his bare shoulders. His mattress would squeak, just like he always knew it would. He'd stare at himself moving against it and talk as if Edward were there, beneath him, writhing. Jasper had a vivid imagination and he'd say the most disgusting things to Edward's effigy.

The most disgusting, horrible, honest and arousing things.

At first he'd whisper sweetly, softly, tenderly to his absent lover, secret and gentle as he bucked into the pillow. He would shift his knees and he would push harder, offering husky praise to vacant space as he lifted his stomach for a better view.

He imagined Edward being so tight...

And then he would fall and writhe and rock into the bed with a pleading, begging groan as he came. Shuddering, he'd call his name as if Edward might hear him from across the house. He wanted him to rush through his door and swear that he'd never leave him again. He wanted to feel his sinewy arms encasing him yet again, holding Jasper's sweaty head to his chest.

Instead, Jasper would lay his cheek down, staring at the door and panting as he pressed his dick into the soiled pillow, just a few more times. It was so much easier this way. He'd forget the pain of standing before Edward's door—too exhausted and breathless to think. And then he'd fall asleep, sticky and empty.

Jasper did his own laundry now.

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He'd waited for this moment since Junior year. It was the best fucking day he could remember having since Edward had kissed his wrist. Jasper walked on air through the halls of his high school, a secret grin on his face as he drifted from class to class, sticking to the shadows and the crevices of classrooms.

The girls were more chatty than usual and this... this pleased Jasper. The guys weren't much better, their whispers only minimally softer but ultimately decipherable. He'd lean in over his desk to catch their phantom and intangible murmurings, wanted to pluck them out of the air and shove them in his pocket for safekeeping. His hidden smile grew wider with every second.

Edward had stayed home today, as had Bella.

If it weren't for the school gossip, Jasper would have never recognized his fortune. For in the hallways and the stolen seconds before and after classes, the student body was abuzz with particularly satisfying information.

Bella Swan kissed one of the Quileute boys. Edward found out.

They were no longer together.



Nothing could dampen Jasper's high spirits. Not even when the assistant principal cited him for dress code violation because his pants had fallen too low on his hips. Not even when Mr. Berty informed Jasper of the possibility he might not graduate, due to his laughable GPA. Not even when he missed the bus and had to walk home, the rain already beginning to fall.

Jasper was positively soaked to the bone by the time he reached the large white mansion in the forest. Esme and Carlisle's cars were both absent from the garage. He checked. The house was an eerie kind of silent, as if maybe a calm after the storm.

Jasper went straight up the flight of stairs and passed his own room. Edward's door was closed, as he'd expected it to be. Internally, his heart was fluttering wildly in anticipation, all abuzz like the campus had been. He didn't even bother knocking.

But he wasn't prepared for what he saw: Edward curled up on the bed beneath his sheets, staring at the far wall with vacant, bloodshot eyes.

Jasper inspected him with much misery, the buzz in his chest subsiding to a deep aching that he never wanted to experience. Edward's pain was Jasper's pain.

In that moment, Jasper realized that he'd been so very wrong about Bella Swan. He had ample reason to hate her, every fiber of her being. She possessed Edward's heart, his perfect, flawless, fragile, delicate heart. Jasper had never entirely realized the depths of Edward's feelings for the girl, but there was no denying them now. She'd had his heart, and Jasper knew this with certainty, because clearly, she had crushed it.

Jasper knew how that felt, could see the symptoms and signs miles away. If ever he were doubtful of this fact, all he had to do was look in the mirror.

He felt no sense of vindication. There was no glory for Jasper in seeing Edward like this: crumpled and discarded and empty. There was only a deep sense of empathy, an impossible longing to comfort and soothe, a craving to absorb as much of that ache as he possibly could.

So Jasper removed his wet jacket and moved closer to Edward's bed, growing more and more miserable with every second that Edward completely disregarded his presence. Jasper pulled back the blankets and slid underneath, dampening the sheets with his soaked denim and dripping hair.

Edward was so motionless that Jasper thought him much like a statue. Except that he wasn't. Statues stood tall, they didn't lay curled around white bedsheets, despondent and limp. When Jasper was close enough, he lay his head upon the pillow, placing his eyes directly in Edward's

line of vacant vision. There was only a slight spark of recognition in Edward's green eyes, but it was enough for Jasper to feel relief.

But then Edward whimpered.

It was a soft, anguished sound that pierced the depths of Jasper's soul. And he couldn't restrain his arms from seeking Edward's body and encasing them in what little comfort Jasper had left to give. Edward did not return the embrace at first, but Jasper smelled his hair and smoothed it back, hooked his wet leg around Edward's calf, the way he always had.

Jasper had never been the strong one. All he could do was hold Edward's prostrate body until he felt his arms respond, one draping itself weakly over Jasper's side. It was only an echo of what he knew they once shared. It was dark and miserable and painful in ways that Jasper couldn't possibly enjoy. Even though he finally held Edward in his arms, it was, in many ways, tainted with despair.

As was their sleep.

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They must have slept for hours upon hours, if not days. Jasper could sense Edward in the depths of his seemingly neverending slumber, could reach him and touch him and cradle his head in his hands. He could also, almost instinctively, feel the sun's set and rise as he dozed contentedly.

Jasper seemed to awake to a weight in his chest that puzzled him. He squinted his eyes and wondered what the hell was fucking with his hair, something seeming to flutter through his tresses in a darkly, aching familiar way. Jasper hadn't had anyone touch his hair since...

He opened his eyes to bare skin and a waistband, a little trail of coppery hair disappearing beneath it. Jasper's head rose and fell with Edward's breaths, his skin exploding into a current of electric gooseflesh with every pass that was made against his scalp. Edward's fingers. Jasper knew they were Edward's fingers. He must have, even in his dreams, because the weight that filled his chest was something that Jasper hadn't felt in so long.

Jasper sighed, his arm wedged uncomfortably against Edward's side. He was afraid to speak, terrified to spook the moment and watch it flutter away and dissipate into nothingness.

Edward's voice was gravelly and weak. "I guess everyone knows." His fingers, his smooth, long, gentle fingers, never ceased in their tender caresses.

Jasper suppressed a shiver. "I'm sorry," he whispered and was surprised to hear the utter sincerity of his voice.

Somewhere behind Jasper's head, Edward shrugged. "So am I."

When the deep chasm of silence fell upon them, neither abandoned their position. Jasper's eyes remained saucer-wide and stared fixedly at the patch of hair before him. He'd always imagined it, had seen the beginnings of its growth, but had never had the opportunity to view it matured. He memorized the way each hair curled against Edward's belly, scattering outward into nothing but pale flesh.

"Jasper," Edward eventually called, his fingers faltering. "Can I ask you a question?"

Jasper was unnerved by the slowing of Edward's caresses and the frailty of his voice. "Okay," he resigned with more than a little wariness. He was incapable of denying him.

Edward's voice was dreadfully knowing as he asked, "Why did you change your hair?" And then, as if to punctuate his own suspicions, Edward grasped at a thick lock and twirled it around his forefinger.

Jasper wasn't sure what to say or how to answer him. He'd changed his hair months prior, had seen no visible evidence that Edward had even noticed. Swallowing nervously, Jasper coldly declared, "You really don't want to know," and prepared himself for Edward's ultimate rejection and callousness.

"I do," Edward insisted.

Jasper released a long sigh and began to turn his head. He realized that this was likely the last moment he and Edward would share with such scarce proximity. The pit of his stomach hardened and tensed in preparation.

Jasper looked Edward in his bloodshot eyes, propped on his elbows and stoic. He wasn't ready before, but this time... Jasper knew exactly what to expect.

"You prefer brunettes."

---

Jasper was back in his bedroom. He and Edward had slept for so long that he was no longer tired. He'd left Edward's bedroom that morning confused, hopeful, pissed off, and some how more confused.

Upon Jasper's confession, Edward hadn't kicked him out. Then again, he hadn't stayed in bed, either. Looking rather awkward and still just as empty as he had the previous day, Edward had excused himself, citing that he'd desperately needed a shower.

Jasper was uncertain what to make of his lack of reaction. He worried that maybe he'd been more transparent all this time than he'd known. Then again, Jasper had never been able to hide from Edward. He wasn't surprised that Edward had likely known the truth all along.

Which was why Jasper now lay in his bed, staring at the ceiling and fantasizing, hoping. This was what pissed him off. Jasper didn't want to get his hopes up just to watch them crash and burn. But try as he might, he couldn't stop himself from envisioning that trail of hair or Edward's green eyes. He couldn't stop himself from recalling the way Edward's bed had smelled—more like man than boy.

Jasper's mind kept stampeding between thoughts, first tender, and then violent, lascivious, longing, giddy, despondent, before finally continuing the circuit with no resolution. That was, until he heard a slight rapping on his bedroom door.

Jasper's eyes snapped to the source of the sound just as Edward's head peeked through, hand grasping the knob. Edward appeared rather uncertain as he stepped into the room, explaining, "Can't sleep."

Jasper swiftly sat up, scooting his back flush to his headboard and quickly running his fingers through his dark hair. He was caught off guard and knew that he must have looked like shit. "Me either," Jasper hurriedly agreed, eyes darting to the space at his side.

Without the necessity of Jasper's gawky request, Edward gracefully traveled to the bed, the mattress shifting once his weight was settled.

Edward's lips were set into a hard scowl. "I fucking hate him," he declared, eyes crinkling around the edges. Jasper didn't need to ask him to elaborate. Edward ranted, "Jacob Black. He's a complete moron. Has no tact, whatsoever. He's rude and smells like a dog."

At this, Jasper's lips pulled up into a bitter smile. For all the hilarity of Edward's slight, Jasper knew what fueled it. "I think Bella's the moron," he corrected, a little more harshly than intended.

Edward winced minutely at the mention of her name, shoulders folding inward protectively. "I can't hate Bella," he admitted, suddenly weary as his chin dropped.

Jasper resented his voice for consoling, "It probably didn't mean anything." He instantly wondered why he was defending Bella of all people. He should have been playing on Edward's vulnerability and demonizing her further, but he simply couldn't stand to see Edward so broken.

Edward snorted, nose wrinkling weakly. "But... don't kisses always mean something? They're so... intimate." He looked to Jasper, a plea in his stare that Jasper couldn't possibly fulfill.

"I wouldn't know," Jasper replied, a little embarrassed at his inexperience. He couldn't have eased Edward's mind even if he had known, incapable of judging the relationship between Bella and this Jacob Black.

Edward, suddenly curious, quirked an eyebrow and doubtfully hedged, "You've never kissed anyone?" But then his eyebrow fell and he turned his face away. "Because you don't like girls."

And there it was, so certain and defined.

Jasper had never said as much aloud. The evidence was contained to his midnight whispers, his indifferent attitude, his well worn computer, and his classroom fantasies. There was some satisfaction in his own nervously spoken, "Right," that he hadn't quite expected.

Nodding, Edward lifted a hand to wrap around his neck, rubbing awkwardly. "That must really suck," he offered, but then turned an immediate and delicious shade of scarlet.

Jasper realized the hidden context of Edward's words and found his own face flushing. Ignoring the uncomfortable atmosphere that had settled between them, Jasper shrugged. "Eh, who really wants some asshole slobbering in their mouth, anyway?"

Edward finally met his gaze, rolling his still-puffy eyes. "There's more to it than just slobbering in someone's mouth, Jasper." Then Edward's eyes seem to grow brighter as he explained with an enthusiasm that made Jasper uncomfortable, "There's something about having someone open themselves up to you, let you get close enough to kiss them, that's... special and meaningful. It's a language all its own, a way to tell someone what they mean to you and how much you want them without using words." When Edward finished, he was impossibly more red, the tips of his ears a startling magenta.

Jasper realized then that Edward was one of those laughable romantics and felt a fleeting swelling of what might have been a mocking chuckle. Had Jasper not felt overwhelmingly unfortunate to have never experienced what Edward described, he would have.

But he was filled, brimming, with a profound sadness that must have shown in his expression, for Edward's wistful smile quickly faded. Jasper lacked the grace and nobility necessary to suppress his whispered plea.

"Show me," Jasper implored, though he knew that doing so would be risking whatever scant closeness he'd only just regained.

Edward's hand was once again around his neck, anxious as he scratched and avoided Jasper's stare. "I don't know..." he trailed off, uncertain but—to Jasper's exultation—not entirely repulsed.

Jasper licked his lips and excitedly promised, "I'll never tell anyone, Edward, I swear to fucking God. Please," he begged, body already poised in anticipation of Edward's resignation.

"Bella..." Edward worried, brows pinched tightly in concern.

Jasper couldn't contain his anger as he snapped, "So, what? It's okay for her to go around kissing motherfuckers while you're together, but you have to sit and pine away for her once you're apart? What kind of fucked up double standard is that?" Jasper quickly caught himself at the sight of Edward's tormented expression, softly adding, "She'll never even know."

So expectant was Jasper becoming of Edward's rejection—*he'd really ruined his chances with his quick temper*—that Edward's quiet, "You promise not to tell?" completely took him off guard.

Vehemently, Jasper nodded, so much so that his faux-brown hair flopped and swayed, and when Edward finally raised his eyes to his, Jasper thought he might just fucking explode right then. He'd never had reason to imagine his fantasies might come to fruition. Every one of them began with Jasper kissing Edward.

The air seemed to buzz as Edward took a deep breath, turning his body to Jasper's and noting bluntly, "This is kind of weird." But Jasper didn't think it was weird at all. Jasper thought it was right and perfect and meant to be.

Then Jasper wondered if Edward's hopeless romanticism wasn't rubbing off on him.

Jasper wanted other things of Edward's to rub off on him.

Trying desperately to shake himself, Jasper lied, "It's not a big deal," and pivoted toward Edward, his every cell electrified in wait.

Edward didn't use his hands or touch Jasper in any intimate fashion. Instead, without any preamble, he leaned into him and placed his lips over Jasper's. Jasper was thrumming with excitement as his breaths grew sharper, nervous as his hands raised to touch Edward's face, apprehensive as he attempted to cavalierly mimic what he'd seen so many others do.

Edward's lips felt tight in the infancy of the kiss and Jasper wondered if it was normal. Then as Jasper's hand met Edward's hair and the hot skin of his jaw, they began to slacken, the kiss growing loose and languid, slow and sensual.

Below the soft wool of his pants, Jasper throbbed and twitched.

Tongue. Jasper wanted tongue. He was rushed and greedy in his impatience, prodding the crease of Edward's lips with the pointed tip of his tongue. Edward's lips tightened once more, but were ultimately parted in Jasper's wild persistence.

Jasper was zealous and hungry and lightheaded as he clutched Edward's face to his and moved his tongue throughout the cavern of Edward's warm mouth. Jasper's breaths were gritty and abrasive, his head tilting to accommodate his near-maniac enthusiasm to explore.

Edward suddenly yanked himself away, eyes wide as Jasper's tongue guiltily sought his own wet lips. Jasper worried and inwardly scolded himself for being so aggressive in his haste to absorb the perfection of the moment.

Edward brought the back of his hand to his mouth, wiping away the gloss of Jasper's kiss. "A little... sloppy," Edward murmured. He made a poor attempt at hiding his grimace.

Jasper's heart plummeted to his stomach. He'd been a shitty kisser, and now, that was the only intimate impression Edward had of him. Edward had said himself, kisses were important. Jasper was horrified at his poor technique. "Let me try again," Jasper begged, moving closer to Edward's body.

Before Edward could answer—his nose still a little wrinkled—Jasper swiftly captured his lips with his own, and though Jasper held Edward in what could have been interpreted as an aggressive manner, his lips were the antithesis of his grasp in Edward's hair. Jasper offered soft

pecks that he figured weren't sloppy at all. Edward—stiff and reluctant—sighed against him, an exasperated sound that Jasper used as an advantage to force his tongue inside.

Jasper was much slower this time. He even drew his tongue back with each prod, Edward eventually acclimating to his wet rhythm of dive and retreat, dive and retreat, dive and retreat. He swallowed each time his lips closed, hoping that he wasn't being 'sloppy' anymore.

Edward didn't yank himself away this time, instead indulging Jasper in what felt like an hour long make out session, but was probably more like a two minute kiss.

"Better." Edward offered a small smile when he pulled away, his lips a satisfying, shiny pink as a result of Jasper's soft suction.

Jasper was engulfed in a sense of ecstasy at Edward's praise, proud and particularly blissful. "Practice makes perfect," he pondered, a serious jest that he accentuated with an excited smile.

Edward emitted two dry chuckles, his eyes still echoing of a distinct void. "I think you're good," he said before lying down and closing his eyes.

"Third time's a charm?" Jasper nervously dared, a little disappointed at Edward's answering yawn.

"Mind if I crash here?" Edward asked, though he was already burrowing his feet and legs beneath the blankets.

Jasper answered by turning off his lamp and nestling himself into Edward's side. He was momentarily afraid that the kisses might make Edward resistant to his affection, but Edward was compliant in his exhaustion.

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"I don't know about you, but I'm exhausted." Jasper accentuated this with a rather dramatic yawn, stretching his arms high into the air for effect.

Carlisle and Esme both nodded, but Jasper's gaze was fixed to their motionless nephew, lounging on the sofa and watching the television with disinterested eyes.

"Yeah. Okay," Edward replied in a monotone voice and rose, following Jasper up the stairs.



They went to bed together now.

Jasper ignored Esme's prying eyes as they followed the boys up the staircase, down the hall, and disappeared behind Jasper's bedroom door.

Once inside, Jasper could no longer contain his ardor. He turned to Edward, grasped the back of his head and crushed their faces together. Jasper's lips moved over Edward's in a militant fashion—invading and assailing. Jasper sucked and pulled in his frenzy, gasps hissing from his nose in broken octaves and caustic whirrs.

Edward's hands hung limply at his sides, his head and face and lips accommodating as they shifted to adapt to Jasper's nearly violent kisses. Jasper's hands weaved through hair as he ducked and straightened in a series of indecisive poses. He settled with running his palms down Edward's sides and grasping his narrow hips.

Jasper's tongue protruded and coerced Edward's lips into an obedient separation, as it always did. Jasper loved the taste of Edward, would have smiled had he not been so occupied with his rampant lips.

He tugged Edward closer to his bed, careful not to break their sacred chain of dive and retreat, dive and retreat, dive and retreat. Jasper was getting closer, his hands roaming Edward's hips with the thrilling promise of fleshy palmfuls of Edward's tight ass.

With an inhale through his nose, he quickly descended until his hands were there, splaying across the swells beneath the denim and burning with the need for less clothing. But that was the next step, Jasper reminded himself. He had been so patient, had spent an entire month just badgering Edward for kisses alone.

With time, Jasper had been able to escalate their nightly meetings, from innocent kisses meant to provide Jasper with experience, to fevered, pious displays that Edward rarely objected to. In fact, Edward never said a word.

Jasper was becoming quite frustrated.

Edward never touched Jasper. He never made the sounds Jasper emitted. He never initiated or begged Jasper for more. He never closed his eyes. He never tensed or strained under the struggle of his arousal.

Edward was passive, at best.

Jasper's kisses grew more aggressive and frenetic, as they always did. Edward's complete indifference was maddening to him, made his lips furl and flame in persistence and censure. His tongue prodded and shoved—a hopeful poke to an inanimate body.

But Jasper had much to be thankful for. He had Edward's tongue in his waiting mouth, his lips on his own, his ass beneath his eager palms, his groin only inches from Jasper's aching erection. And Jasper had gained even more than that. Edward spent more time with Jasper, even ate lunch at his table during school. He'd always talk softly with Edward while the brunette Swan girl sat across the room, silent and visibly morose.

Jasper enjoyed seeing her red eyes, her pallid skin, and her obvious remorse. She'd cast Edward the most desirous of glances from across the room while he sat before Jasper with his back to the girl. Jasper basked in her dejection, would chat happily with Edward about menial things as the hour passed. He'd long to hold his hand beneath the cover of the table, and had only recently worked up the nerve necessary to do so.

Edward hadn't even spared him a puzzled glance. He'd merely accepted Jasper's grasp, staring into his plate of food with a blank expression. Jasper had soared as his thumb had rubbed and caressed, his voice never pausing. He'd felt as if he were the luckiest fucker in the entire lunchroom. Jasper didn't even care that no one could see.

Jasper had decided to be patient with Edward, as his gratitude for these small developments was simply unquantifiable. At nights, Jasper would kiss Edward and display his unbridled hunger for his tongue and lips and hair and skin and it was the best portion of his day, most of which was spent at Edward's side anyway. It was so much like how it had been, and Jasper was wholly euphoric to be back in Edward's good graces and then some.

But Jasper's patience was wearing thin. He needed Edward to touch him. He was growing fretful with Edward's lethargy and grabbed his warm hand while his face smashed itself closer, always greedy. Edward didn't protest as Jasper brought it between them, crushed it to his throbbing dick, and groaned into his wet mouth.

Jasper used his hand to guide Edward's, sliding it up and down his erection as he plunged and withdrew, plunged and withdrew, plunged and withdrew. Jasper was aching now, his belly tight and burdened, coiled cord around a tender bale. He whimpered and growled, forcing Edward's pliant hand faster and faster and faster. He recalled how he'd often fantasized about this, Edward's hand finally, finally, touching Jasper's cock. It was just as he'd imagined it, except—

Jasper ceased, pulling away and panting as Edward simply stared at the wall behind him. Edward's hand fell away from Jasper's bulging crotch with a listless sway. Whereas Jasper's chest rose and fell with labored and excited breaths, Edward's remained calm and shallow.

"You should really think about painting," Edward droned, flopping onto the bed with those eerily cadaverous eyes. He murmured, "It seems so dark in here."

Instead of answering, Jasper's face contorted into a raged grimace. He approached Edward at the edge of his mattress, reached down, and grasped his denim covered crotch. Jasper had fantasized about this too, but it wasn't quite the same either.

Because he was only *partially* aroused.

Edward's erection was fragmentary. *Incomplete*. Jasper searched Edward's eyes, finding only green mixed with confusion and an elegant oblivion. Then Jasper pulled away and wondered whether or not he could possibly settle for partial perfection.

"Fuck it," was Jasper's response. "I like it dark." He removed his shirt and descended upon Edward's submissive form. He remained silent as Jasper straddled his lap, took a thick fistful of Edward's hair, yanked his head back, and engulfed his lips. His hips pressed into Edward's stomach and drew back, repeating and mimicking the dive and retreat of his tongue.

He flattened Edward's hands to his chest and forced them to feel and stroke and caress. Edward's palms were so warm, so soft. Jasper's active imagination aided him in believing that his hands traveled trails of Edward's creation. He imagined that the way in which they circled his waist and embraced him was solely of Edward's volition, and not his own.

Since Jasper could only stomach forcing Edward's hands to do so much, he finally rose, his hooded eyes watching Edward as Edward watched him. Jasper reached for his belt and unfastened his pants. He shoved his hand inside, palming himself with a grind of his teeth. He continued doing so, up and down, grind and stare, until he spilled across his wrist, shoulders jerking inward. Edward held his gaze without watching.

Jasper's hands felt so cold.

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Edward looked better today, and Jasper was especially uplifted by the sight of him in the hallway. It had been nearly two months since his breakup with the Swan girl. It was about fucking time. Edward loped between the rows of lockers, headed to the lunch room like the rest

of the Senior class. His lips were pulled up into a small grin that made Jasper's chest feel airy and light. Jasper intercepted him with a smile and clap on his back.

Edward seemed to stiffen at the contact, his smile withering ever so slightly.

"Wanna' go see a movie tonight?" Jasper asked as he sat. It was a Friday and he figured, given Edward's good mood, that maybe a night out might do them both some good.

Edward rested one arm on the table and looked away, muttering, "Not tonight." His eyes were glued to the large doors of the room, watching the people swarm their way through.

"That's cool," Jasper supposed, a little disappointed.

They never went out.

"We could go down to the river or something, Or Port Angeles?" Jasper suggested with a hopeful shrug.

But Edward didn't answer because, at that moment, Bella Swan walked through the doors, met Edward's gaze and began walking to their table with a timid smile. Jasper's eyes narrowed as his hand sought Edward's beneath the table. He grasped it possessively, his malignant stare cutting and obtuse.

Edward jerked his hand away, straightening his back as he greeted, "Hey, Bella." He smiled at her. It wasn't a small grin or hollow or forced. It tucked inward and curled around his face, lifted his cheeks and brightened his eyes.

"Are you sure it's okay to sit here?" she asked Edward, biting her lip anxiously as she regarded the seething form before them. Clearly, Jasper made absolutely no attempt to hide his ire.

"No. It's not oh-fucking-kay if you sit here. Get lost—" Jasper snapped, feeling quite pleased at her obvious flinch.

"Shut up, Jasper," Edward warned in a hard voice. "I asked her to sit with me. If you don't like it, then we'll go somewhere else."

As Jasper moved his stare to Edward, Bella slowly lowered herself to the seat beside him. Edward's face was a facade of calm, but Jasper could sense the anger that brewed just beneath the surface.

It was the most emotion Edward had shown in months.

"Why would you do that?" Jasper breathed, his throat unbearably tight. He wanted to match and exceed Edward's anger with his own, but found himself incapable. He was much too afraid to feel anything else.

"Because I want to eat lunch with my *girlfriend*." Edward's jaw was taut and defiant, his eyes challenging and yet final. When he turned to Bella, every inch of him softened and glowed.

Jasper simply couldn't believe it. "Wh—What?" he stuttered, incredulous. "You're calling this... this... *slut*—" They both winced. "—your fucking *girlfriend* again?" Beneath Jasper's skin, his blood boiled. It simmered and scorched until his fingertips felt numb.

Edward's fist came down on the table with a blunt "bang" that drew stares. "Don't you talk *ever* about her like that," Edward spat, lips curled back into a daring sneer.

Jasper removed his gaze from Edward, locked his jaw, and turned it on Bella. His jasper-colored eyes narrowed. "Whore, slut, bitch, cunt, ugly fucki—" But Jasper did not finish, because Edward had a healthy fistful of Jasper's shirt, yanking him forward.

"I said, don't you *ever* fucking talk about her like that!" The entire room seemed to be watching now, Jasper's face only inches from Edward. He stared at him blankly as Edward smoldered and puffed. His green eyes were so enraged, nearly murderous. Jasper had never seen anything like it, simply sat, gaping at the image of utter vehemence before him.

Jasper wanted to kiss Edward in that moment, more than any other. He didn't want a *partial* Edward. An empty Edward. An Edward who kissed him while wanting *her*. Jasper licked his lips instinctively, feeling an impossible draw to Edward's seething mouth, longed to steal a little portion of passion that was intended for Bella, not him.

"You promised," Edward forbade with a flash of alarm.

Jasper felt so sick.

So quickly was Jasper's anger disrupted and swallowed by a tidal wave of grief that it stole his breath. "You never—" He gasped for air, licking his lips furiously. "You never care when they talk about me. You never say a fucking word, and I don't even deserve it, like her... You never—" And Edward's eyes dimmed, so trivial a gesture as he released Jasper and looked away, a flicker of shame.

Jasper had been abandoned by Edward before, but this felt so much worse. In the recesses of his mind, Jasper wondered why? Hadn't he been preparing himself? No, he realized. These last months with Edward had given him the falsest sense of security. With every kiss that Edward didn't deny him, Jasper had unknowingly fortified a counterfeit niche in Edward's heart. Seeing the contrast between *this* Edward—Bella's Edward—and the Edward Jasper had been with for weeks was undeniable proof.

"We should sit somewhere else," Edward eventually whispered to Bella, who sat staring back and forth, confused and stricken.

"You never—" Jasper repeated, still incapable of concluding his thought, of speaking the words aloud, of making them tangible. But Edward and Bella—his *girlfriend*—were already rising from their seats and turning their backs on him.

He could hear the two walking away, could discern the soft, quiet tenor of their voices as he sat motionless, staring unseeingly at the table. After a moment, his chest felt so tight that he thought he might suffocate. He pulled air into his lungs in starved gasps, felt his lips tingle with numb and cold and the memory of Edward's never-sincere kisses.

No, Jasper reminded himself. They were never Edward's kisses. They were always Jasper's. Edward just accepted, but never took and never gave. With every passing second, Jasper's quiet wheezing grew louder, sharper, until he heard an alarmed voice.

"Oh my God! Are you okay?" He didn't know whose voice this belonged to, didn't care.

He didn't regard them as his hand clutched his chest where Edward's had, his stomach doubling over as his eyes grew warm, blurry. There was something of a twisting within, the room seeming to spin around him as the cacophony of lunch room voices invaded his head and distorted into indecipherable chatter. Still his eyes grew warmer, fuzzier as he struggled for air. He wondered if he might go blind.

When the tears fell, Jasper was shockingly startled. They dribbled onto the table inches from his face like awkward and fat raindrops, spattering and swelling. Jasper felt hands on his shoulders and knew they belonged to Edward, could smell his cologne and hear his rushed questions, could feel his sheer lack of affection.

"Jasper? What's happening?" Edward's asked, shaking his shoulders.

But Jasper did not answer. He could only repeat the same two words, over and over and over, like dark, jagged hymn.

"You never—" *loved me.*

When he stood, it was oddly, physically painful and he groaned in discomfort. He didn't want to be standing straight like this. It sent shockwaves of pain down his chest and stomach and he simply had to escape. He had to put as much distance between himself and his own unutterable words. He hoped the farther he got, the less true they'd become.

Jasper wasn't that stupid.

He shrugged himself away from Edward, could see the look of panic mingled with pity in his expression as Jasper fled the room. The image of Edward's face as Jasper clamored through the double doors would be forever etched into Jasper's memory as the moment he realized exactly what he was to Edward Cullen: a discarded toy, a boyhood pet, a bygone, a stigma. His dirtiest little fucking secret.

Jasper didn't stop. Instead, he ran the entire way home. When the rain came, it penetrated the cotton of his shirt, the denim of his jeans, and the fragility of his flesh. He felt translucent, crystalline. His tears came in short, errant surges that he could find no rhyme or reason to.

When he grew too tired to run, he jogged. When he grew too tired to jog, he walked. When he grew too tired to walk, he chanted. When he entered the empty house, he trodded up to his dark, scarlet room and stood before the bed he had kissed Edward upon, not even twelve hours ago. The bed that his white knight had saved him from, time and time again.

Jasper slid himself beneath it.