

Her Other Life

(or, What Would Have Happened if I'd Found Her Happy)

It was one of those waking dream states that I've experienced only a few times in my vampire life during which my mind spins a tale with such minute detail and sensual clarity that I have to shake myself afterward to recognize that I am sitting at our cottage hearth or standing next to a fir tree in the forest.

"Come in to supper, Jaed! Bring your sister!" she called through the top half of the Dutch-style back door.

"Aw Mom. It's not even dark yet," replied the long-limbed, burnished brown boy. His shiny black hair hung loose to his shoulders in the exact manner of his little sister's, though hers showed red highlights in the sun.

"Yeah, Mom. Not even dark," the three-year-old, russet-skinned child echoed her brother as she often did. Little Saren, who was sitting on the ground with her legs stretched out in a "V" shape, stuck her index finger in her mouth and then poked it in a finger-sized hole in the sandy soil, and put it back in her mouth.

"It's spaghetti," her mother coaxed.

"Okay, it's dark now," six-year-old Jaed declared solemnly to his single devout follower.

"It's dark now, Momma," Saren repeated.

The two children walked hand-in-hand to the little white cottage with the red-shingled roof and red door that the village had helped the couple build in an Amish-style "barn-raising" just before they were married.

Tribal members who could afford it were encouraged to invest money in the community building fund and couples like the young Swan-Blacks took out low-interest

loans from it for materials to build their homes. Villagers provided labor in whatever capacity they could and banked hours with the community for bartering with others. Everything from babysitting to carpentry could be traded in a system that allowed everyone in the tribe to get their needs met without requiring a lot of capital. A percentage of everyone's bankable hours went to assist the elderly and disabled citizens.

The cottage—which Jake and Charlie still worked on together when they had time and which probably never would be completely finished (missing trim around the windows, exterior painting incomplete, temporary back stairs, etc.)—was set in the forest a quarter mile from Billy Black's house. That gave the little family just enough distance for privacy, while still being within shouting distance to Jacob's sensitive ears if Billy should need something and couldn't reach the phone. Granddad Billy provided babysitting services whenever they were required and Bella always cooked extra food for delivery to Billy's refrigerator.

The young father crashed noisily through the back door, having just returned from the auto-repair business he ran from his father's shed. Everyone on the rez and dozens of families off it hired Jacob Black to repair and maintain their older cars and trucks. He was said to be able to keep an old vehicle running for years after its natural lifespan was over. He'd begun a scrap business by gleaning parts from those vehicles that had died their final deaths, reconditioning them, and selling them locally or on the Internet. Since his only local competition was Dowling's Auto Shop, which everyone in the county thought was over-priced, Jacob had more business than he could handle most of the time.

He'd taken on his half-brother, Embry, as an apprentice of sorts. Embry didn't have the natural mechanical ability and inclination of his brother, but it was a good living and he was saving up to buy a newer-model Camaro. He'd finally found a special girlfriend and she had let him know that he needed to "up his game" if he wanted to keep her.

The brothers got along extraordinarily well. Though Jacob was clearly shop boss, Embry's easygoing personality made him an ideal worker. Jacob had been trying to convince Embry to go to technical college and learn auto-body repair. There was good insurance money to be made in fixing dented doors and fenders, replacing windshields and repainting cars. Together, they would corner the county market on car repair.

Bella got pregnant with Jaed when she was twenty-three and the couple decided to officially tie the knot before their baby was born, though they had been informally together for four years by that time. After graduating from high school, Bella left Forks for two years, moved to Olympia and attended Evergreen State College. Jacob went there himself after he graduated from the Quileute reservation school two years later, but not to attend college. He went to ask Bella to come back to Forks so they could be together. By that time, her heart had healed—or at least scarred over—enough to move forward with her personal life in a way she hadn't been able to do since, well...

She moved into her father's house and resumed her English literature studies by correspondence, keeping house for Charlie in exchange for room and board. She worked part-time clerking at World of Books, a used bookstore that had opened in Forks a year before. Bella had become good at repairing books when business was slow and had begun doing book repair jobs for the local library. She also had started recommending and collecting donated books to enhance the library's collection.

Jacob slammed the cottage door—a bad habit—and strode up behind Bella at the stove, lifting her off the floor in a bear hug.

"Jake! Put me down!" she ordered, the wooden spoon in her hand dripping spaghetti sauce.

"Smells good, honey. I'm hungry as a wolf!" He grinned and gave her a big lip-smacking kiss on the side of her neck. Bella stiffened. She didn't like it when Jacob kissed her neck and had asked him many times not to. He knew it upset her and he knew why,

but Jacob was Jacob and couldn't always help himself. For her, it brought back memories of her first love, Edward Cullen, who happened to be a vampire and who had been gone from Forks for a long time.

"Hey, kids! Wanna go to the beach tomorrow?"

"Yes!"

"Yeth!"

"Can we Mom?"

"Can we Mom?"

"Jake, Jaed has school."

"Ah, missing one day won't hurt him. He'll learn about rocks and shells and tidal pools. You always liked the tidal pools, remember?"

"Still do," Bella replied, giving Jacob a stern look that the children couldn't see.

It was just like him to speak before thinking. In some ways, Jacob was an overgrown kid with his children as playmates. They loved their time with him, which was always fun, always exciting. Jacob carried a lot of responsibility on his shoulders and had done so since his early teens when his sisters left home and he stayed behind to look after his wheelchair-bound father, Billy. Since then, he had become the Alpha wolf in one of the two Quileute werewolf packs and had acquired a wife and family. Somehow, through all of that—or perhaps because of that—he loved to let loose with his kids whenever possible.

"I'd like to go with you," Bella said after thinking about it. "If you could wait until Saturday, we could all go together."

Jacob looked at his wife, understanding what she was trying to do. It wasn't good to give the children the idea that going to school wasn't important and that rules were

meant for everyone except them. Jacob applied one finger to the side of his mouth and rolled his eyes upward as if he were thinking hard about it.

“You know, it would be a lot funner with your Mom along,” he said as the children watched him. “I’m not sure I remember the way to the tidal pools. I think she’s gonna hafta show us on Saturday. Or...we could go tomorrow and sit on the boring old rocks. Hmm...I don’t really want to wait, so let’s go tomorrow and sit on the rocks.”

“I wanna see the tidal pools,” Jaed whined.

“Me too,” Saren magpied.

“I don’t know. I kind of had my heart set on sitting on the rocks all quiet and bored.”

“Saturday! Let’s go Saturday!”

“Saturday! We wanna go Saturday!”

“Oh...all right,” their father agreed reluctantly.

Bella’s mouth twitched as she put a small plate of spaghetti in front of each of the children and a platter of spaghetti in front of her husband.

“Thanks, Doll!” he said, grinning widely at her. “Jaed, do you want to learn how to tear down a carburetor? I’m gonna take one apart after school tomorrow.”

“Yeah, Dad! That’d be great! Can I hand you the tools?”

“Yes, if you work hard at school alllllll day.”

“I will, I will!”

“Me too!” piped up Saren.

“You don’t even go to school yet,” her brother pointed out.

When the children had finished their dinners and taken their plates to the kitchen sink, Bella said to their father, "Baths or dishes?"

"Baths," Jacob replied. "Come on, kids. Let's get cleaned up before bed and then I'll tell you a wolf story."

He gave Bella another bear hug from behind while she ran water into the kitchen sink, but this time kissed her on her cheek. She turned her head toward him and gave him a warm kiss on the lips, looking into his eyes.

Later, after the kids had gone to bed, husband and wife lay together on their extra, extra long, 96-inch, queen-size mattress that they special-ordered over the Internet from Tall Paul's Tall Mall. Jacob built the custom-sized frame himself.

"Renee and Phil are coming for a visit after school's out in June."

"Oh, yeah?" Jacob replied as he slipped a hand up his wife's t-shirt and fiddled with the front clasp on her bra.

"Yes, I'm going to ask Charlie if they can stay at his house and have him stay at Sue's for that week."

"Sounds like a plan," Jacob said as the clasp gave way. His hands were so large that he could hold both of Bella's breasts in one of them if he stretched out his fingers and squeezed her breasts a little closer together. He did so as he slid her t-shirt up over them and kissed her enhanced center cleavage.

"Jake...," Bella warned, taking a ragged breath. "I doubt the kids are asleep yet."

"I locked the door," he replied, kissing across the tops of her pooched-out breasts and then stretching his tongue down to lick her right nipple. It hardened immediately to his wet, overheated touch. He flicked his tongue across it, once, twice, while Bella pulled the leather tie from his long braid and ran her hands through his silky black hair whose smell reminded her of bay leaves, damp moss, and musk. Jacob pulled her nipple into his

mouth and sucked until it turned bright red, full of blood, then he turned his attention to her left nipple, licking and then sucking it hard into his mouth. Bella moaned and Jacob slid sideways to lie between her legs. With one hand, he unsnapped and unzipped her jeans and she raised her butt slightly off the mattress to wiggle them down her hips. He yanked them below her knees and she kicked them off onto the floor.

“Cute pussy,” he said, grinning, and slipped a finger inside the damp crotch of her lace bikinis. He lay his finger crossways and stroked upward over her dark-red pubic hair, then down, then back to the top and back down. As Bella became increasingly aroused, her inner lips swelled up through the outer. He continued the motion down and up until she was panting.

“Jake...” she breathed. She was so excited that her clitoris had swelled and was poking out above her inner lips. On the next stroke, his finger rolled across that special spot and Bella gasped.

“Oh...,” she moaned, her voice dropping to a low note. He continued the rolling motion and Bella’s hips chased his finger up and down to maintain longer contact with her clitoris. He took her left nipple between his thumb and forefinger and rolled it gently back and forth. Bella’s moan had become continual. He pulled on her nipple and stroked down her vulva again.

“Pleeease, Jacob,” she begged him. Though he had tried many times to resist her begging and continue to tease, he never lasted long before giving in. He yanked at her panties, tearing a side-seam in the process, but laying bare her bright red, swollen, inner lips. She raised her knees and spread them as far apart as she could, raising her hips from the bed. “Pleeeeeease,” she whispered.

Jacob placed the tip of his hot, hot tongue against her delicate, swollen flesh and licked her slowly, starting from the bottom. When he reached the top, she muffled a cry.

His heat and gentle touch sent her into a private place where she was utterly alone with her pleasure, trusting the slow build, trusting him not to disappoint.

Jacob had never disappointed her, not from that first kiss on Little Tahoma while her new fiancé stood not fifty yards away taking care of business to keep her safe...alive and safe. She remembered how she had craved his touch then, his cold, smooth fingers bringing goose bumps to her skin wherever he touched her. She had longed desperately for him to make love to her, to feel the shock of his ice-cold, marble-hard penis entering her—the combination of her hot with his cold stimulating her beyond what she believed possible with a human man.

But Jacob wasn't exactly human, either. With a body temperature over one hundred eight degrees, she preferred making love to him with all the windows open and a fan blowing across her sweaty skin. Once she had fainted from heat exhaustion while they were making love and since then, he'd learned to watch for the signs and make sure that the two clip-on fans attached to their headboard were on their highest settings. If he planned ahead, he tried to bring a glass of ice to the bedroom to cool her down in case of emergency. She liked it besides.

It hadn't occurred to Jacob that when she asked him to push an ice cube inside of her, then another, then another, and to rub another across her swollen clitoris that she was thinking of someone else. Sometimes he alternated his tongue with an ice cube...tongue...ice cube and she always came hard and long. He didn't give it any particular thought—he'd just discovered one day that it worked for her. She would never tell him about her ultimate fantasy...russet and alabaster...fire and ice...together.

