

## THE STRENGTH OF TEN

During the first couple years of our marriage, Bella's newborn strength was simply overwhelming. This was a constant source of irritation and temptation for Emmett, of course. Bella soon grew tired of Emmett's goading and his daily demands for "just one more" arm-wrestling rematch.

Except for that first slipup when she figured out that Jacob had imprinted on Renesmee, Bella had been extraordinarily even-tempered for a newborn, which, I suppose, allowed Emmett to forget that she was still a newborn. One afternoon, he was reminded of that after he pushed my wife just a little too far. Reckless Emmett!

"Come on, Bella! Just one match. It's been over a year and you're losing your strength. Give me a chance!"

Bella already had declined Emmett's challenge for an arm-wrestling match, but our brother wouldn't be denied. Bella left the house to get away from him, but he followed her, goading, prodding, insisting that he could beat her now, never mind that she'd humbled him in less than a second the day before.

"Emmett, I don't want to wrestle again. It's getting old. Give me a break!"

"Speaking of break," Emmett commented dangerously, "I heard that tree crash out by your place last night. What were you two up to, anyway? Hanging by your—"

He didn't get to complete his sentence. Bella charged him with her forearms raised like an offensive lineman. Her irritation must have been building for a while, because the impact produced a deafening crash, the sound of two boulders colliding at high speed. As Rosalie and I looked on, Emmett folded over at his midsection and flew butt-first through the air toward the river. His arms and legs flailed, trying to gain purchase on empty air. Thrashing and cursing, Emmett landed

*in the current of the Sol Duc River, creating a concussion of sound in two deep notes, the first one when he hit and the second when the displaced water rushed in to fill the gully he'd created in the water's surface.*

*Renesmee, asleep in my arms, started to lift her head from my shoulder to see what was going on, but couldn't overcome her grogginess and fell back to sleep.*

*Bella was instantly mortified. "Emmett, Emmett, are you okay?" she called anxiously. "I didn't mean to...I meant...oh, Rose, I'm sorry, it was an accident... Is he okay? Are you okay? I'm so sorry, Emmett, I'm so sorry..." She ran to the riverbank and reached out to help Emmett as he splashed his way out of the water, an angry expression on his face.*

*Emmett jerked his arm away and growled when Bella touched him. Our brother was known for his good nature, but being bested in a physical altercation was an altogether new experience for him and his shock and humiliation erupted in a rare fury.*

*"Leave him alone," I said to her softly. "Here, take Nessie and go on to the cottage. I'll join you in a minute." Bella took our daughter from my arms.*

*"I'm sorry, Rose. I'm sorry, Emmett. I'm really sorry..." she continued muttering as she hopped easily over the river and took off running through the woods.*

*I knew Bella was embarrassed and ashamed, but Rosalie had her hand in front of her mouth, trying not to let Emmett see her amusement. I was holding back laughter myself.*

*One step over the line, big brother..., I thought. He'd had it coming. Though he'd been relatively faithful in holding up his end of the "no sexual innuendo" bargain he'd made much earlier with Bella, he'd slipped up while trying to provoke her into wrestling with him. I moved toward Emmett to talk to him, but his brows were pushed together and he was holding his elbows away from his body as weightlifters do when*

they're trying to look meaner and bulkier than they are. I could practically see the steam coming out of his ears.

"Em...", I began.

He snarled at me and then bent over and shook his head like one of the wolves after a swim in the river. Water flew from his hair, covering both Rosalie and me, but we held our tongues. He stuck a finger in his right ear and rattled it around to encourage the river water to flow out. He repeated the maneuver in his left ear and then stalked off, looking straight ahead.

"You had it coming," Rosalie pronounced as he brushed by.

Emmett knew that and he wasn't mad at Bella so much as embarrassed by her obvious physical superiority. He was kidding himself if he thought something had changed. She was as strong as ever. I should know.

When I reached the cottage, Bella was exiting Renesmee's room after tucking her into her bed for the night.

"Oh, Edward, is Emmett okay?"

"His dignity is a little scuffed, that's all," I told her, chuckling.

"He knows I didn't mean to do that, doesn't he?" Bella was wringing her hands, so I took one in each of mine.

"Yes, of course, he does," I assured her. "Don't worry about it, love. It was his fault. He knows better than to poke a bear with stick."

"I'm horrible!" Bella dropped her head on my shoulder and I wrapped my arms around her.

"You should just enjoy it. It won't last forever and then I'm sure Emmett will do his best to pay you back."

She raised her head. "You know, you're right. He will!"

*"Yes, so don't waste any tears on him now." I chuckled. "Besides, he's given me an idea."*

*I took Bella's hand and pulled her out the front door of the cottage. Pointing to a big-leaf maple, I said. "Let's climb." I scaled the huge tree about twenty feet up and balanced on a sturdy branch where Bella joined me. We had not knocked over the tree Emmett had referred to. A rotted fir had blown over in a high gust of wind the previous night and crashed in the forest.*

*"What are we doing up here?" Bella asked.*

*"I rather liked the image Emmett had in his head. I wanted to try it." I smiled at her salaciously.*

*"What was it?"*

*"I'll show you," I said as my fingers moved to unbutton her blouse. She turned around nervously and sniffed the air to check that we were alone.*

*"No one's here and Nessie's window faces the other side of the house. If she wakes up, we'll hear her before she sees us," I assured her.*

*I pushed the cotton fabric off Bella's shoulders and flicked her blouse into the air. We watched it float to the ground and then I yanked my sweater over my head and flicked it away too. Cupping my palms around Bella's smooth, round breasts, I rubbed my thumbs back and forth across her nipples as I leaned forward and kissed her throat. She inhaled sharply and let her head fall back to create more room for my lips to move... up her throat to her taut jawline, over to her earlobe, taking it between my lips, down the side of her neck onto her shoulder. Grasping my head in her hands, she pulled my lips up to hers then and we kissed deeply as I caressed and squeezed her breasts.*

*"Mmm...I'll never get over how your hands feel on me," Bella murmured. "I couldn't wait for you to touch me there. I wanted you for so long."*

*“And I, you, my love,” I whispered against her lips.*

*“I don’t think it possibly could have been the same, Edward. You’d lie with me in my bed every night and I’d be soaking through the crotch of my underwear and my sweatpants. That’s one reason I wore sweatpants to bed, you know, even in the summer.”*

*“Why?” I inquired, moving my lips to the side of her neck.*

*“So I wouldn’t make a puddle in the middle of the mattress. Sweats are very absorbent.”*

*“You poor thing, sleeping in wet underwear every night,” I teased, though I knew it was true. I could smell her arousal a mile away back then, that musky lavender scent that made me ache in all the right places. It was different now. She still emitted a musky lavender scent when she was aroused, but amidst the ever-present undertone of freesia, there was a stronger sweetness to it, like hyacinth, and overtones of pungent peonies, and the smell of clean air after a rainfall. It was as intoxicating as ever, perhaps even more so than when she was human.*

*“You know, I had to stop myself from tearing off those sweats many a time,” I admitted. “It was a continual challenge not to.” Speaking of which, I unfastened the placket of her blue jeans and combed the deeply colored red hair behind it with my fingers. I let one finger wander lower. “You seem rather wet now, actually,” I said, dipping into her. Bella gasped and unzipped my trousers, pulling my penis free of the fabric with her hand. She wrapped her fingers around me and began stroking me up and down. “Bella...,” I groaned.*

*Quicker than lightning, she ripped the front of my trousers down and forward like a Chippendale dancer’s tear-aways, except that these weren’t and I heard the fabric rip all the way through, leaving the two detached legs to fall to my ankles. That was a good trick, I thought, as I kicked them off one at a time, clutching a branch for balance. I watched as Bella removed her blue jeans and tossed them away. Then she took my nakedness in both of her hands and stroked me, up, down, up, down and I groaned, pushing two fingers inside of her and then*

three, two in front, one in back. She began to flex her knees slightly to feel my fingers moving inside of her. I was doing the same, sliding against her palms and finding her clitoris with my thumb.

“Mmm, mmm, mmm...” she panted, her excitement increasing mine. With one hand she continued stroking the length of my penis, her fingers not quite circumscribing its girth. Just then, I felt her other palm move lower and grasp my scrotum, cupping and stroking. I stopped breathing as I watched her move that hand to her mouth wetting down her third finger. The movement was fast, but not so fast that I didn't notice it. Then her hand returned to my private parts below and I felt that same finger press against my back side. I pulled away reflexively, discovering to my surprise and mild consternation that I could not move. Her grip was too strong. I could not prevent her from doing as she liked.

I gasped as her finger entered my body, partly in pain, partly in shock, both of which dissipated immediately as I felt the tension building between my legs. I barely cared what else she did while her palm was stroking my fully aroused, stone-hard appendage. The fuse had been lit and I breathlessly anticipated the explosion. She stopped stroking then and wiggled her finger inside of me. I drew in a sharp breath.

“Bella...,” I exhaled heavily, trying to press myself against her hand, but still, I couldn't move. She moved her finger nearly out of me and then back in and I felt the urgency build in my scrotum. I wanted to orgasm... needed to... badly. Waiting on the precipice of release with her touching me in such a way was excruciating, if that word can be applied to pleasure.

“You want to come?” she whispered with her lips against my ear.

“Pleeease,” I begged. She moved her finger nearly out of me and then all the way in, rubbing against an internal pleasure point I'd only recently learned existed. With her firm grip, she slid her fingers all the way to the head of my penis and then all the way back to the

bottom, once...twice...then stroked me inside and I felt hot lava rise to the brink.

*One...more...stroke, I begged silently, as my jaws clamped around a mouthful of my lover's hair. I was beyond cognizance, beyond any perception of anything at all but the movements of her fingers when suddenly, the dam burst and I growled with the ferocity of a lion setting on a wounded deer. Semen shot from me and splashed onto Bella's stomach and then ran slowly downward toward the hand I'd forgotten I owned. I was completely captive to her, utterly paralyzed, and left waiting for her next stroke, her next movement against my skin. I held my breath and tried to focus the efforts of my own hand, but was stunned again by the pleasure of release. I gasped and she stroked me again. I gasped again. I lost track of time, of our surroundings, of everything but the enormity of sensation Bella had provoked.*

*"This wasn't...exactly what...I had in...mind," I stammered when I could speak again.*

*"But you're not sorry, are you?" Bella asked as she kissed my throat.*

*"Surprised, but I couldn't say that I was sorry, no." I removed my hand from between Bella's legs and pulled her to me, my lips searching hungrily for hers. She released me from her grip and pulled my hips forward so she could rub herself against me.*

*"Here," I said, whispering against her lips. "Leap up." I grabbed the back of her thigh to help her. She looked at me curiously, but then hopped up and wrapped her legs around my waist. Holding onto a branch with one hand and cupping Bella's bottom with the other, I lifted her slightly and then lowered her slowly down onto my carved-marble penis.*

*"Ahhh..." she sang, echoing my sentiment.*

*"Hang on," I said, then bent my knees and leaped to grab a heavy horizontal branch above our heads. I initiated a gentle swinging*

motion back and forth and as Bella rode atop me, she suddenly understood the point.

“Oh, oh, oh...” she cried as the swinging caused our bodies to move together in new and different ways. “Is this what Emmett was thinking?” she gasped between panting breaths.

“More or less,” I chuckled. Actually, he and Rosalie had acquired a specialized two-person swing and tied it in a tree high above the ground. I was merely translating the effect without the extra equipment.

I pumped my legs like a child on a schoolyard swing while Bella panted and moaned in response to the motion inside of her. It was highly gratifying for me too. Each time we reached a certain angle of the arc, her internal muscles squeezed in the most delightful way.

So absorbed was I by my love’s response and by my own pleasure that I failed to notice the increased creaking of the maple branch as we swung back and forth.

C..C..C..R..R...A...C...K!! The thunderous noise cut through the forest as our branch splintered near the trunk and snapped off, dropping us into a short free-fall. Bella clung to me as we went down and when my feet hit the ground, I heaved the huge tree limb behind me so that it didn’t whack either of us in the head.

Recovering, I wrapped my arms around Bella’s back and began to laugh. “Do you think Emmett heard that?” I asked loudly, knowing that if he was still at the house then he had heard both the crash and my question.

Bella began to giggle uncontrollably, causing very interesting things to happen to certain of her interior muscles. When she finally regained control of herself, she squeaked, “So now what?” and began to giggle again.

I smiled and dropped to my knees, still hungry for her, though I was pretty sure that she’d already drained my interior reserves. I laid her

on her back and began to move inside her until Bella's giggling transformed to panting. Then without warning, I found myself flat on my back beneath her. She had grabbed my wrists in one hand and was holding them above my head as she kissed me and rode me like a pony.

Just for fun, I made an effort to escape, twisting my wrists to break her grip and pushing my feet into the ground to roll her onto her back. I watched her face to see what she'd do, but she did... nothing. Her eyes remained closed, her lips slightly parted near my own. Neither of my wrists was free and my efforts hadn't disturbed her at all. She hadn't even noticed my squirming. She was utterly absorbed in her own pleasure, her free hand reaching down between her legs.

"Mmm, mmm, mmm," she moaned, sliding forward and back. I tried my escape move again to no effect. How the tables had turned! I remembered a similar situation before she was changed when I was enjoying myself and she had tried to push me away. She'd had to repeat the effort several times before I noticed, as absorbed as I'd been in her body at the time.

I grinned. It was rather amusing how my tiny wife could utterly incapacitate me without even trying. She held me down with the strength of ten and helped herself to my body there under the maple tree. I sighed with pleasure, happily helpless beneath her.

## Edward

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