“Let’s get out of here,” I suggested.
   “Yes, let’s. Goodnight, Emmett.”
   “Goodnight, Bella.”
   “Goodnight, Carlisle.”
   “Goodnight, Edward.”
   “Goodnight, Esme.”
   “Goodnight, Bella.”
   “Goodnight, Jasper.”
   “Goodnight, Edward.”
   Bella and I looked at each other.
   “Goodnight, John Boy!” we called in unison. Bella broke into a fit of giggles. The end of the evening had been a little tense and it felt good to laugh.

   One thing I’ve learned after being married for almost five weeks is that if you pay attention—which I do—you learn something new about your spouse every day. After a laugh and a brief conversation, I learned that as a kid, Bella used to watch *The Waltons* on Nickelodeon. It gave her a melancholy, but cozy feeling to observe a family that was so unlike her own, one with a mom and a dad living together, plus grandparents and gads of siblings.

   I could understand her feelings. Both Bella and I grew up as only children in households where our fathers were absent and our mothers were not fully capable of coping with the world. We were both close to our mothers, but also acted as their caretakers in some ways. So Bella liked to watch *The Waltons* and imagine living in a family where the parents took care of their children rather than the reverse and whatever responsibility fell to the children was shared by many, not borne by one. We had that life now in a perverse sort of way. God has a sense of humor.

   When we reached the cottage, we removed the undoubtedly expensive, designer outfit Alice had put on Renesmee that morning, dressed her in pajamas, and laid her in her crib. Nessie had told Alice about her scary wake-up that morning, so Alice enlarged and cropped some photographs from our wedding to produce 8- by 10-inch prints of Bella and I from the neck up. We attached the photos to Nessie’s headboard and around her room so that she would see us when she awoke. Later, we would add pictures of the rest of the Cullens and Charlie, so she would be surrounded by her family.

   I learned in the first child-rearing book I read that babies develop a series of capabilities along a timeline that corresponds to the physical development of their brains. One such concept is called “object permanence,” which is the knowledge that an object (or
person) still exists even though it is not visible. If you hold a handkerchief in front of your face, a six-month-old baby will think that you no longer exist. No wonder Renesmee was so frightened when she awoke. Everybody had disappeared.

“I think that’s all we can do for her,” I said.

“We could make sure we’re in her room before she wakes up.”

“True, not a bad idea. Maybe we could do that for a couple of days and then delay coming in, so she learns to tolerate being alone for short periods.”

“That sounds about right.”

“Did you realize that Renesmee sat up by herself in her crib today? Do you know rolling over and sitting up are six- to nine-month milestones?” I asked Bella.

“No, but if you sing a few bars…”

I chuckled. Bella was still in a giggling mood. I set the sleep machine to “Hawaiian waves,” turned on a dim light in the closet, and left the door ajar. When I took Bella’s hand to pull her toward our room, she leaped onto my back with her arms around my neck. She hadn’t done that since her human days when she rode on my back as I ran. With my arms under her thighs, I giddy-upped down the hallway, turned around at the bedroom door and headed back to the living room and then galloped around the room in circles. Bella hollered “Yee-haw!” and slapped my right hip in mimicry of whipping a horse. When she tried to smother her laughter, she ended up snorting loudly instead.

After a few circuits, I galloped back to our bedroom. Just before reaching the bed, I balked like an ornery stallion, stopping short and dropping my hands to the floor. Caught off-guard, Bella flew over my head, but recovered with a double-flip and landed gracefully on the other side of the room. She whirled around, gave me a look of mock-ferocity, and dove at my chest. I let her knock me down and we hit the floor with a loud “crack!”

“Shhh! Nessie!” she whispered holding an index finger to her lips.

“You said it, you said it…!” I teased in a whisper.

“I did not!”

“Did!”

“No!”

I started laughing and Bella got another attack of the giggles, so I took advantage and rolled on top of her.

“Shhh!” I hissed.

“Shhh, yourself!” she retorted in a whisper.

Bella stopped and listened for Renesmee’s slow, steady breathing. Amazingly, our shenanigans hadn’t awakened her, but Bella couldn’t stop giggling. I knew a cure for that. I centered my body and pressed my hips forward, rocking rhythmically against one particular pressure point. I put my lips beneath her jawline and kissed her as I used to do…slowly down her jaw to the hollow beneath her ear, then down her neck and across her left collarbone. By the time I’d crossed over to her right collarbone, the giggling had changed to panting. She was aroused… mmm…
Bella’s hands began to wander around my back, through my hair and over my shoulders. She was wearing her habitual t-shirt, not a button-down blouse, but I wanted to unbutton her top slowly, so I tore the neckline down two inches and kissed her sternum, tore it another two inches and kissed her a little lower. Bella was undulating her hips against me as I tore another couple inches, enough to peel the two sides apart and reveal her gorgeous, round breasts with their stiff nipples. I wandered to her left side with my lips and flicked her nipple with my tongue. Bella gasped. I kissed my way to the other side and licked her right nipple.

Bella’s panting was frenzied as she reached down to undo the buttons on my trousers and unbutton and unzip her own blue jeans. I ripped her shirt again, kissed her belly, and finally ripped it all the way open, moving my lips lower and lower following a line through her center. She’d worked her jeans down her hips a ways, so I kissed her through her red pubic hair and dragged my fingers behind. I yanked her jeans to her ankles and she kicked them off, raising her knees and spreading her thighs for my visual pleasure.

I loved looking at her. Not counting her newborn’s eyes, this was the only part of her body that retained the red blush color that used to flow up her neck into her face. All that color had faded from the top of her body and concentrated itself there between her legs. It was like spreading apart the petals of a beautiful white rose and finding a brilliant red one inside. Gorgeous!

Bella was dripping wet. When I licked her, she tasted like herself—the sweetness of freesia, the muskiness of lavender, and the fresh scent of rain in the desert. Her fluid was more viscous than before her change, thicker and slicker. I’d been wondering how her body kept us so well lubricated, a stone piston moving in a stone cylinder. Whatever the chemistry or fluid dynamics, it worked. Though our skin was rugged and injuries healed instantly, neither of us had gotten any cuts or abrasions and we’d been going at it like rabbits every night—all night—for a week.

Biologically, vampire sex makes no sense. Since vampire women cannot bear children, there is no genetic reason for them to have all the right hardware and software, so to speak, to do so. And because we don’t procreate, we don’t evolve, which means that vampires will remain the same forever, changing only insofar as humans themselves change. However, since male vampires can procreate with humans, vampires could change the evolution of humans over eons of time if enough human women survived long enough to birth their children. I wasn’t advocating, of course not. It was just theoretically interesting—and obviously, a mental distraction.

Inside the red rose inside the white rose, Bella’s clitoris had the deepest red color of all. It swelled slightly when I licked it, not as much as when she was human, but noticeably so. Bella was careful not to tear out my hair as I played with her using my tongue and my fingers, prolonging her pleasure for fun. When she grew close to orgasm, I stopped stroking until her excitement subsided and then started again, once, twice, three times.

“Make me come…now,” she finally begged in a raspy voice.
I did as she asked, touching and licking her, and as she neared her climax, I pressed three moistened fingers into her, two front and one back. Bella shrieked—a sound that resembled the ringing of a very small brass bell, the tone higher than a human’s ears could hear. She climaxed then, long and hard, my fingers filling her up. I kept my tongue moving slightly until the sensation became too much for her and she abruptly clapped her knees together, boxing my ears with her thighs.

“Ow!” I complained. Bella pulled away from me and sat up, taking my head in her hands as I lay on my stomach.

“Oh, Edward, I’m sorry. I’m so sorry. Are you okay?”

I raised my head suddenly and gave her a peck on the lips.

“Fooled you!”

“Oh, you….”

In a fraction of time that could not be measured, I was on my back—trapped—Bella’s powerful hands holding my arms spread-eagled and her feet restraining my ankles. I was truly helpless. I watched her inspect me in my not unpleasant predicament and her eyes held a gleam of mischievous desire.

She slapped my wrists together and held them in one hand at the front of my body. I remembered holding her arms above her head on one occasion before her change to prevent her from removing her blouse. This might be payback. She nestled her free hand inside my unbuttoned trousers and stroked me. Ahhh! Already at the height of arousal, I was paralyzed by the intensity of the sensation.

“You like that?”

“Mmm…yes.”

“Shall I do it again?”

“Yes, do….” My voice had dropped half an octave.

She stroked me again. I closed my eyes and groaned.

“Again?”

I just nodded.

“Please?"

“Pleeease…,” I pleaded.

Before I knew what was happening, she slid down my trousers and I felt not her hand, but her lips on me. She took my penis into her mouth, stroking with her lips and tongue.

“Grrrrrrrrrrrr…” My growl was loud and deep. Bella had released my wrists and was crouched perpendicularly to me, focusing her attention on that most sensitive part of my body. My hands itched to touch her and I reached for her legs, rotating and lifting her until she was atop me. She sustained the motion of her lips and tongue and added her hands to the mix. The stroking, the weight of her, and an exceedingly erotic view of her body converged, raising my arousal to higher heights. As I caressed her legs from toe to tail, my growl became a continuous low rumble and I felt my muscles grow taut. When I could hold
out no longer, I tried to warn Bella. I had never confirmed whether vampire semen was altogether safe when ingested.

   “Bella, stop….” The words weren’t convincing. “Bella, don’t… Ahhhh…!” Too late. There was nothing to do but give in to the extreme pleasure of release.

   In spite of my distraction, it was not difficult to maintain the movements of my hands and fingers on Bella’s lower half, focusing attention on gradually more restricted areas of her body… stroking… stroking. Bella released me from her mouth and laid her head between my legs as her body responded to my touch. She began to hum a single note which rose higher and higher until the air whooshed out of her lungs and her body began to shake. Eventually, she fell limp and melted into me. Lazily, she ran one hand down my left leg and onto my foot.

   “I like that,” I murmured as she tickled her fingers through the hair on my calves. She interlaced her fingers with my toes and squeezed the ball of my foot. I felt a surge of energy flow up my leg and land in my groin. She did it on the other side, sending energy flowing up that leg. It was not so much sexual as simply pleasant and relaxing.

   “How are you?” I inquired, tickling up and down her legs and on the bottoms of her feet with my fingers.

   “Mmmm… happy.”

   “Come up here with me.” Bella put her hands and toes against the wooden floor, flexed her knees and elbows and popped into the air, simultaneously spinning one hundred eighty degrees. She landed with her mouth directly above mine.

   “10!” I cheered.

   “Damn, the Russian judge only gave me an 7.5,” Bella said. “I’ll never make the Olympic team.” We both started laughing.

   “You get three tries,” I reminded her. Bella repeated the impressive maneuver twice, ending once more face-to-face with me.

   “Brava! 10 and 10!” I enthused.

   Bella adopted the voice of a sports announcer, “And the Russian judge says… wait for it… 9 and 9.5!”

   I flipped her onto her back and sprawled on top of her. I kissed her deeply, then leaned back to look in her eyes.

   “Madam, may I dip in your steaming love tunnel with my stiff, throbbing manhood?”

   Bella burst into giggles. “How romantic.”

   I stared into her eyes. “The arching bow of your rosy lips sets my loins afire. I long to nestle my countenance in the peerless orbs of your heaving bosom and go…” —I pressed her breasts together, stuck my face in her cleavage and flapped my face back and forth— “…booga booga booga!” Bella shrieked with laughter.

   “I want to suckle the pert buds atop your succulent hillocks and make you moan like a rutting moose.”
She was giggling uncontrollably when I flicked her left nipple with my tongue and watched the pale pink areola tighten slightly. Then I took it between my lips and sucked on it, massaging her breast with my hand. The giggling was fading into jerky breaths when I switched sides.

I moved a finger into the crevice at the top of her thighs and touched her wet flesh. She raised her knees, reached between my legs and guided me to her center. I suckled her breasts as I slowly eased into her, feeling her interior muscles grip and release and grip again. Her hands grabbed my buttocks and her hips followed mine as I pulled back and slid forward, backward and forward.

When I was inside her, we two were one…one heart, one mind, one body. I needed her like a human needs oxygen. She was my first and last, my alpha and my omega.