

The Accident

We have yet to understand the full nature of Renesmee's biology, but before her wedding, we knew much less than we do now. It was evident from birth that she'd inherited the vampire's resistance to physical and biological assault, though to a lesser degree. What she did not inherit only became evident later when a tractor-trailer loaded with logs bound for Longview crossed the center line of a local highway and plowed into her Audi coupe. The truck driver had fallen asleep at the wheel, and the resulting impact tore the car in half lengthwise when Jacob tried to take evasive action.

It was...nightmarish. Worse even.



After Alice's vision interrupted our lives with its dire prediction of Renesmee's death twenty years ago, the possibility of losing her to something as mundane as a car crash rarely occurred to me. I had

worn a groove in the dense matter of my brain with perpetual if/then statements:

“If Nessie doesn’t marry Jacob, then she won’t get pregnant and she will be safe. If Nessie marries Jacob, but doesn’t get pregnant, then she will be safe. If Nessie marries Jacob, gets pregnant, but aborts the fetus, then she will be safe. If Jacob dies before...”

As it happened, this horrendous, entirely unrelated event for a short time rendered moot all worries about Nessie’s death in childbirth. In retrospect, it reminds me very much of the World War I soldiers who cowered in trenches in Flanders and Arles and Ypres waiting to be gassed or blown apart were decimated by the 1917 Spanish Influenza instead. So obsessed was I with preventing danger from one quarter that I wasn’t as mindful as I should have been of more pedestrian threats to my daughter’s wellbeing.

Therefore, when we got the phone call from Sam, the words “car accident” didn’t register immediately. The threat hadn’t even been on Alice’s radar—a fact that caused a falling out between my sister and me for months afterwards. How the hell did she not see it coming?! Something as catastrophic as that? She still can’t explain it to my satisfaction. It comforted me not one whit that in order for Nessie to be present in a deadly childbirth scene, she would have to survive this earlier calamity.

With the strength of ten men, Jacob managed to extract his legs from under the steering column of Nessie’s car where they were trapped. When I saw the wreckage, I couldn’t imagine how he avoided losing them altogether. It’s enough to make one believe in miracles. Despite the massive injuries Jacob suffered, he somehow forced his body to phase so he could summon the pack to help. Seth sprinted home from the forest to phone Sam while the rest of the pack raced to assist Jacob. Sam phoned me.

As alpha wolf to the Uley Pack, Sam no longer participated in the group mind of the Black Pack and therefore had no images of the accident for me to see. Once alerted, I searched out Jacob's traumatized thoughts and filled in the details for myself. The shock of the scene sent a bellow of anguish rolling from my gut through my chest and I had to throttle it with a stiff punch to my throat to keep the sound from escaping and frightening Bella.

Jake's pack beat us to the scene, but Carlisle, Bella, and I weren't far behind. By the time we arrived, Jacob had already fashioned makeshift harnesses out of belts yanked from the Audi's mangled engine and tire chains ejected from its gaping trunk. Quil and Embry had slipped the harnesses like nooses over their powerful wolf necks and were pulling against them to wrench apart the metal in which dear, dear Nessie lay entombed.

The pack is at its best in such emergency situations. I don't know how they otherwise would have managed to address the horrifying reality of the situation. Jacob was absolutely frantic, though in no way had he been rendered useless by his personal trauma.

Once on the scene, we knew we didn't have long before the Washington State Patrol got word of the crash and sent emergency rescue vehicles. It wasn't that we didn't want assistance so much as we couldn't allow Nessie to be taken to a hospital and examined. Like the wolves, she had to be protected from discovery by modern medical science, and Carlisle was our only recourse for medical attention for my daughter. Fortunately for us all, he is more than capable of bearing that burden.

The driver of the semi-truck had expired of a broken neck upon impact, something I read from Jacob's mind, and so we were free to turn our full attention to Renesmee, whose inert body lay impossibly sandwiched between her car's chassis and its crushed-in roof. Seeing her there, of course we assumed the worst.

Memories of my myriad mistakes flashed before my eyes. When Nessie grew tall enough to drive, I'd decided she must have the equivalent of Bella's pre-change vehicle with its armor plating and bulletproof windows, tires that could be driven on their rims, and a built-in, independent air supply. As stubborn as her mother ever was, my daughter refused the gift. She did, however, let me buy her a good, sturdy Audi A5 for her 16th birthday (or what we adopted as her 16th birthday when she was four human years old) and had driven it for nearly two years without incident, so I suppose I had become inured to the danger of her driving.

Compared to the rest of the family, Renesmee seems incredibly vulnerable to injury, but in truth, she is far more durable than full-blooded humans and even sturdier than the Quileute wolves. She is not indestructible, however.



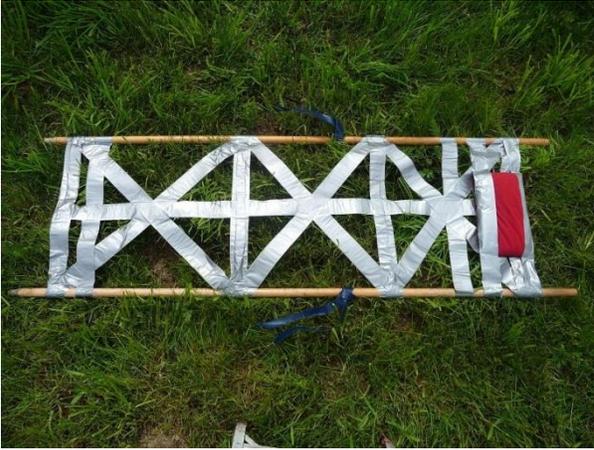
Coming upon the scene, we could easily see that Renesmee's body was crushed. I couldn't prevent Bella from leaping onto the wreckage with no word to Jacob or eye contact with anyone and mindlessly ripping at the steel, pulling it piece by piece away from the blood-soaked space where Nessie lay apparently lifeless. I joined her immediately with one eye to clearing Nessie and the other to keeping my wife from causing worse harm in her haste, though worse hardly seemed possible from the look of things.

When we finally dislodged our daughter from the wreckage, her ribs and skull were visibly crushed and her limbs hung at awkward angles more akin to a store mannequin than to an actual living creature.

Throughout the disinterment, Renesmee's eyes remained closed, though Bella cajoled and cried and begged her to open them. I do not know where my daughter got the courage and the strength to play dead as she did—or perhaps I do—but even in her state of shock, reeling from unimaginable pain, her thoughts were clear to me. She was trying to protect Bella from knowing she was conscious. After we laid Nessie on the ground and Bella had gone to dig in the wreckage of the trunk for a blanket with which to cover her, Carlisle looked at me for my assessment. I gave a subtle shake of my head and he understood the situation immediately.

Morphine, he thought, and I nodded vigorously. We had to ease her suffering somehow. I thank God every day for my father's numerous and great gifts, and in this case I was grateful for the presence of mind he displayed in having grabbed his well-stocked medical bag!

I held Bella and tried to reassure her that Renesmee was alive, though she could hear our daughter's heart beating as well as I. We watched anxiously as Carlisle injected her with increasingly larger doses of morphine in response to my recognition that it was doing no good whatsoever. Meanwhile, Seth and Leah created a rugged stretcher out of two tree limbs and duct tape, and we carefully lifted Nessie onto it.



When the emergency sirens became audible to our sensitive ears, I knew we had little time. Against Jacob's wishes, Bella and I took the stretcher and began running at full speed back to our home, the only place we could go to provide for Nessie in whatever way might help her.

With the severity of his injuries, Jacob could not keep up with us, but followed at a slower pace after directing Embry to remain as a "witness and victim" of the crash he had emerged from so miraculously unscathed. Embry was a witness, in a sense, for he had seen everything Jacob saw of the experience by virtue of the pack mind.

It was the best story we could concoct on the spur of the moment. We trusted that Embry could navigate his way through the procedures and paperwork the authorities would insist upon without us. He would claim that he had borrowed his sister-in-law's car for the day when this tragic accident occurred. The paramedics would attempt to provide him with medical treatment, but the Quileute had become adept over the years at manufacturing plausible excuses for refusing the attention of doctors. Considered sovereign nations, local indigenous tribes are generally given lots of leeway in their interactions with local authorities. Before we left Embry alone at the scene, Jacob thought to set a spark to the car's leaking gas tank to obscure signs of blood and any other evidence not in line with Embry's report.

Much later, when Carlisle finally insisted on examining Jacob—after Nessie's injuries and condition had been fully assessed and addressed to the degree possible—he discovered ten broken bones in Jake's body and evidence of a ruptured spleen. The werewolves heal

quickly, but Jacob's injuries proved nearly as bad as the ones he'd suffered in our battle with Victoria's hapless newborn vampires. A standard-issue human would never have been able to perform the way he did under such pain and disablement.

More than to pure adrenaline and enhanced physical powers, I credit his unfathomable heroism to his deep, unswerving devotion to Bella's and my daughter. It is because of this and so much more that I don't just love Jacob like a son—I love him AS my son.

One thing I didn't consider until Bella brought it to my attention later was how much more Jacob endured that day than any of us realized. Beyond his own physical pain and the terror of losing his beloved new wife, the incident also was a reliving of the nightmare of his mother's death. He must have felt like he was reenacting her fatal accident—which also crippled his father—in some uncontrollable, unconscious way, a nightmare of epic proportions.

Despite the severity of Jacob's physical injuries, he healed completely and relatively quickly. It took Renesmee much longer—months—suffering a degree of agony most humans could not imagine. Only I was privy to the extent of her pain, and she made me promise not to tell. She is so like her mother in so many ways.

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