



# The Summer of Lethe's Demise

GothicTempress

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# Summary

After 22 years of marriage, they have forgotten what is important. This Summer will usher in a new beginning. It's time for them to remember...to finally see. Awards winner - Voted Best One Shot, Best Romance, Best Drama & Best Family/Friendship

# Chapter 1

Many thanks to my dear friend and amazing Beta, RandomCran, for recently encouraging me to revisit my first attempt at writing and helping me fix the mistakes in the original, un-beta'd version of this story that won 1st place in public vote and 2nd place in the Summer Lovin' Anonymous contest in 2010. It was also awarded Best One Shot in The Gem Awards and was voted Best Romance, Best Drama, Best Friendship/Family, and Best AU in The Single Shot Awards. Thank you to the many readers who have supported this story!

**I dedicate this One Shot to anyone who has ever felt *forgotten*.**

---

oOo~oOo~oOo

The heavy black air licked at his exposed skin as the wind disheveled his hair. He loved his convertible, the sexy hum of the engine and the butter soft leather beneath him, the glistening stars shining high above his perfect contentedness. He had one hell of a day and, while it was far from over, this car was his perfect way to unwind.

He turned into the private drive leading to their lavish home and pulled at his tie to loosen it with one hand as he maneuvered his steering wheel with the other.

It was only 9:30 at night and yet there were no lights on in the house. It was uncommon for his sixteen year old twins or his wife to be in bed this early. He remembered then that the boys were off to surf camp in the morning and his wife would need an early start to get them to the airport. They were probably fast asleep in preparation for their big day.

The garage door opened with a push of his fingertip and he pulled in to park.

When he entered the dark kitchen, he noticed two figures standing on the back deck illuminated by the moonlight, the sprawling wall of glass slid open to let the night air in. He removed his expensive shoes and made his way to them, grabbing a glass of whiskey on the way.

"Boys! I thought you'd be asleep!"

"Naw Dad, what sixteen year old goes to bed before midnight? We were hanging out here, enjoying our last night before we leave."

"Where's your mother? I thought she'd be hovering over you in your final waking hours before you go."

"She said she wasn't feeling well, and went to bed as soon as she got home. We went with Billy and Embry to McDonald's and then shot some hoops on the court. We were thinking about jumping in the pool. Wanna join us?"

"I'm sorry boys, but I've got a conference call at ten with Tokyo. Have fun and, if I have to leave before you are up in the morning, have a great time with your friends in Hawaii. I'll see you in two weeks. Remember to switch off the lights to the basketball court before you hit the sack. I don't want the neighbors banging on our door again, complaining about them being left on all night."

He hugged them both and made his way into his office, firing up his computer to open his e-mail and log onto the video conference program that would ready him for the pending call.

When he leaned over his mahogany desk to switch on his light, his hand tilted his glass, causing whiskey to spill over the desk top and onto the floor.

He moved swiftly into the kitchen and knelt below the sink, accessing the place where the paper towels were kept. When he opened the cabinet door, a thin black book tumbled out, landing on his foot. He picked it up and opened it out of curiosity, his mess forgotten:

**"June 8, 2010**

**~ ACHE ~**

**I watch the days repeating**

**Trapped in the snare of my warden**

**I am the Prisoner**

**I am the Prison**

**I have misplaced the key to free myself**

**I've been too complacent to find it within myself**

**I look at you and I see the same**

**I know not where to cast the blame**

**~oOo~**

**The constant drone of monotony**

**Reigning in my mind**

**Marking the spot where I lost myself**

**Like a dead star**

**I no longer see the empty space**

**That was my heart**

**That came to test what has slid apart**

**And yet I still burn**

**~oOo~**

**See me**

**Awaken me**

**Remind me**

**Love me**

**~oOo~**

**Mnemosyne to remember**

**Or Lethe to forget**

**If I were to choose**

**To recall or loose you**

**What river would I drink from**

**That I wouldn't regret?**

**~oOo~**

**I still wish to be your Naiad**

**Bound to your spring**

**Your blood**

**Never depart**

**Deliver the clue**

**As to what I should do**

**For I desire safe passage**

**Back into your heart**

**~oOo~**

**Steep me in your passion once again**

**Wrinkled and wet I wish to be**

**I choose Mnemosyne**

**Please allow me to remember you**

**And please desire to remember me"**

**~oOo~**

He shut the book to inspect the cover more closely under the under-cabinet light above the sink.

**"Deepest Desires by Bella Swan-Cullen."**

He tucked it under his arm and grabbed the roll of towels, rushing quickly to clean up the mess before his call. He also had time to fix himself another drink. After reading that poem, it would be stiffer than the last.

He moved swiftly and efficiently. His hands were full of damp towels when he heard his Blackberry's message alert. Disposing of the towels and washing his hands, he ran back into his study to see what the office wanted now. Picking up the device, he opened the text message:

"Edward, I am the worst sister-in-law EVER! I forgot to call Bella on her birthday or send her anything! Stupid hormones. I can't remember my own telephone number anymore! I can't wait till this baby is out of me! Please tell her that I'm sending her something and I'll call her this weekend to plan something when we get back from London. Tell her I love her! Her phone is off so I wanted to get this message to her right away, through you. I know you always have this thing on. Love you big brother. Tell the boys hello! Give her a belated B-day kiss for me and Jasper!"

He looked at the digital calendar on his desk and his chest began to ache, panic setting in.

"Shit!"

His voice was harsh as he spat the word out, focusing on the fact that her birthday was two days ago.

*No wonder she doesn't feel well. What kind of husband am I? And father? The boys never said anything to me, which means that they certainly didn't say anything to her. What kind of men am I raising if I don't set the example of remembering their mother with big things like this?*

He felt he might vomit. Or have a panic attack.

Another text alert came in, this time from the office.

"Time pushed back till midnight. Singapore and Beijing will be conferencing in as well. Prepare to play hardball."

He wanted to return the text to Emmett to tell him to take care of this call himself, that something came up, but the finalizations of this meeting were too critical to be left to others. He owned this company and this is what he'd been striving towards for many years. He would do this. He *must*.

He downed his glass and got up to get another. He didn't know what he should do while he waited. He could run upstairs and wake her up. He could apologize to her and spend a few moments with her before his call, but he was afraid that might seem a hallow, disingenuous attempt after how badly he messed up. She deserved

far more than a rushed conversation.

He decided to run upstairs to quietly sneak into their room. He hoped that she was still awake reading and he could at least kiss her goodnight. He hoped that she would forgive him.

He ascended the stairs with deliberation, opening up their bedroom door as silently as possible, slipping inside quietly as the plush carpet muffled his steps.

Her form and face were visible in the moonlight streaming in through the opened window. When he knelt beside her head to touch her face, he could see where the tears fell from her eyes, leading a trail through her make-up, soaking the hair and pillow beneath her.

The thought of her crying herself to sleep was more than he was prepared for and he decided that waking her up might be the better choice.

*I can hold her for a bit. Comfort her. She'll understand that I have a call that I can't miss.*

He moved to stand so that he could sit on the bed and, in doing so, he jostled her night stand. The sound of something rattling in a container landed on the carpet. He reached down to pick it up and realized what he was holding, the label visible in the soft light.

"Ambien. Fuck."

His strained voice was abrasive against the silence of the bedroom as he recoiled away from the pill container in an uneasy gesture. The moonlight suddenly felt like an imposter to his acute realization of remorse, the pale din of the tempered rays surrounding them the only witness burnishing the worry flooding his features and heart.

He knew she would not wake up unless he shook her and she wouldn't be completely aware even if he managed to get her eyes to open.

He would have to wait after all.

He placed the pills back on her bedside and descended the stairs, returning to his study. His eyes focused on the black book on his desk. He knew what he was going to do to pass the time while waiting for the call that seemed less important by the second.

He read her poem again, tears prickling at his eyes as he sensed her plea to remember her, to love her again. He wondered how long she felt this way. He was surprised that he did not sense her feelings before this moment.

He flipped to the first entry and began from the beginning:

**"February 18, 2010**

**I think Edward may be starting his man-o-pause. He bought a Ferrari last month and he's wiping it down, touching it constantly, looking at it whenever he gets the chance. I despise this car. It seats two yet we are a family of four. But really, it's only a car for one, and that one is Edward. He's never asked me if I wanted a ride in it but that must be because he can sense my distaste for the thing. I'm sure it's written plainly on my face.**

**He parked it out in front because it was a sunny day today. As I was walking past his study to the garage, I noticed him sitting completely still, not working as he said he needed to, staring at it through his window, glistening and perfect in the bright sunlight. I called his name so that I could ask him something, and received no response. Smile on his face, far away look in his eyes, he was too entranced by his shiny new mid life crisis of a toy. I would bet money that had I walked into his study and looked at his lap, he would have had a hard on.**

**I can't believe that I'm jealous of an automobile."**

He frowned at the tone of her entry but he could not dispute it's validity. He looked at his car often. Who could blame him? And he felt he was too young for Man-O-Pause anyway. He was only 42.

**"March 5, 2010**

**Seth and Jacob's team placed 2nd in the Robotics Competition. I am so proud of my brilliant boys. They asked if their dad was going to make it back in time from Tokyo to attend the award ceremony but they understood that his plane was delayed."**

Edward remembered that trip. He stopped in LA to order customized mats for his car from the Ferrari dealership there but his plane was delayed due to weather. In Tokyo.

*And I missed something important involving my kids because I made an additional*

*stop for the car. Maybe it is some kind of crisis?*

The next page looked like it was written in a hurry:

**"April 15, 2010**

**We have reservations to go to dinner tomorrow at Carmine's and the boys will be away for the weekend so I'm going to the spa to get waxed and made pretty. I want to be perfect for Edward as we have the whole weekend uninterrupted. It's April and he's been so consumed with work that we have not been intimate since December. I miss the taste of his skin and the smooth sensation of his hair in my hands. I can't wait to swallow him, his come sliding down my throat...have him pushing into my mouth and especially where I need him most. I'm getting breathless and wet just writing this out."**

He did not remember those plans so he quickly turned the page to read more, dread once again rising in his chest:

**"April 16, 2010**

**Edward decided to go golfing this weekend in Palm Beach with Emmett and a few of his other business associates instead. I'm sexually frustrated, completely bare, toes painted, and I didn't even bother to ask if any wives were joining them. If he wanted me to go, he would have invited me."**

His nauseousness rose to new levels as tears once again pricked his eyes, begging for release.

*Jesus Christ, I'm a shitty husband! Emmett's wife met us there and Rose spent the weekend shopping in Palm Beach and getting massages by the pool. Bella might have appreciated that kind of trip too, even though she despises shopping.*

Her next entry was pressed so hard into the paper that the traces of the words were visible on the three pages following:

**"May 9, 2010**

**I feel like I'm in an emotional free fall without a parachute. He used to feed me with his sensual hands and serenade me with his skillful tongue. He used to desire me. But I'm invisible to him now. He seems to be writing a new intro and body to what was our beautiful story and I desperately want to**

**write it's conclusion, to alter the grim end I fear is threatening us. I want to shout that desire in his direction, but I fear that there will just be echoes for answers.**

**Dr. Volturi gave me two prescriptions today. Xanax for the anxiety I'm feeling and Ambien to sleep. I can't believe that it's come to this, medicating the loneliness.**

**Maybe I should start doing pot again, like I did in college. At least I'd get the munchies and eat. I have not truly eaten in months. And I'm starving. Not just for food."**

He was saddened by how depressed she sounded in these entries. He wondered how he did not sense her distress sooner.

*Because you're never here. Because you've been so caught up in yourself that you have forgotten about everyone else. You've forgotten to look for what's important. You've forgotten to really see.*

He turned the page and realized that it was the last entry:

**"July 6, 2010**

**Dear Dream Edward,**

**It's 5:55 pm and I just touched the clock and made a wish.**

**I wish you touched me like you used to.**

**I feel as though I've flat-lined, drudging through life feeling something unidentifiable, probing at my desires, begging for release. It's been so long since you've been inside me, scratching the itch that has turned into an empty burn, so hot it is as though I have swallowed the sun, scorching me to a crisp...But nothing. I want you inside me so desperately, you licking away all my soft parts, making me hard again and again, screaming, panting, wanting. I want to beg for more, to fuck you so hard that we break the bed, to have you want me in this way.**

**Since Christmas Day.**

**It's now July and you don't seem to seeme. I despise Dubai, New York, Tokyo and your fucking meetings that draw you farther into the empty space**

that has been created between us. That space is slowly closing in on me, creeping into the thorny gapes and sealing me off with sadness, for it's slowly forcing me to mourn the loss of you and what we used to be.

Today I feel this even more keenly because it was a day I thought you would celebrate with me. You used to promise me that we would be somewhere on the 40thParallel to celebrate my 40thbirthday, but now the day has slipped by without a word of acknowledgment, and I have never felt more alone. You never notice me anymore. Never touch me. Never kiss me. The 40thParallel exists only in the distance between us, and it's as though I am so far away that I might as well be on the other side of the world.

A cruel bludgeon of sadness has come down on my earth and shoved me with forceful precision, unflinching and taunting. All I want to do is make love with you and have you desire that too. I want to feel my blood rushing again, to feel your love and your heat and your want with my own. I miss discussing the interesting things that we used to ponder together. Mythology. Poetry. Books we've read. Instead, I feel like any oxygen within me has turned to a dark nothingness and I am bleak with knowing.

I am taking an Ambien and going to try to forget that I am my own 40th Parallel, far away from you. Now my thoughts are disturbed and unforgiving.

I wonder what has made me invisible to you. I hope she does not have a name, or a body that bows to your pleasure, like mine desires. I don't think you would do that to me but how am I to know when you have lost me somewhere along the way? How have you gone this long without wanting more than an occasional Hello at midnight when you get home from the office? I'd ask you but you are never here and, when you are *here*, you are never *HERE*.

Maybe when I wake up, this will all have been a bad dream. Maybe when I wake up, we will be young again - constant touching and needing and sex - the passion that fueled our warm togetherness for years. I thought I could masturbate tonight, to try to feel something...anything again. But I can't come, no matter how hard I try. Sexually bankrupt and utterly useless. Another failing factor in my equation, making me feel less like the woman I thought I was once. I have not had an orgasm since Christmas. I feel void of life and desirability, bereft of any positive feelings or joy, beyond the twins. But even they remind me of what we were once. And they force me to question why I have not asked you, faced you head on when it comes to the *why*. When have I become so passive and accepting of the pain? So timid?

**Since I have become afraid of your response. I'm too afraid to know the truth. The pain and loneliness have become the lesser of the two evils.**

**I hope that I dream tonight. Reality is too painful and, with each lonely day that passes, the less willing I am to wake up. And when I wake up, you are already gone, left without a word for another day at the office. That's a blessing, in a way, because then I have no choice. I can't be tempted to ask you *why* because you have already left.**

**I'm a coward. I still mourn what we were. Please wake me up with kisses and not emptiness, Dream Edward. I miss my bright sky. I miss my sun. I miss my ray of light. I miss joy.**

**Sleep...Lethe's mercy is what I hope to get. I love you too much to give up hope but I fear it no longer matters to you.**

**Goodnight, Dream Edward. I still love you with all that I am and my one true birthday wish is that you still felt the same.**

**I blow out my imaginary candle, wishing for a bright, new us."**

He was bent over his desk, his head in his hands. The tears streamed down his face. He was disgusted with himself. He hated himself in that moment and felt her pain so keenly that he was unable to calm the sobs that rose from deep within him.

His tears flowed forth until there was nothing left.

He looked at the clock and realized that he had a few minutes left before the call he no longer wanted any part of. And then a frightening thought occurred to him. She was clearly depressed. He didn't realize that she was popping pills and contemplating illegal substances. His thoughts went back to the bottle of pills he saw upstairs by her bedside. He never thought to worry about whether she drank liquor along with those pills. Or if she might have taken a larger dose in desperation.

He ran out the study, up the stairs and into their room once again, not caring about the noise he made.

He hovered over her sleeping form. She had moved from when he last looked in on her, facing in the other direction. And she appeared to be breathing deeply, as one would in a sound sleep.

He swept the damp, tear drenched and matted hair off of her face. He leaned

down to kiss her forehead.

*I will make this right. No matter what it takes. I will make you see that I love you. Desperately. That I will be better at showing it. Until the day I die.*

He kissed her one last time and made his way quickly back down the stairs, grabbing his phone and calling Emmett with his one hand, refilling his glass with the other.

"Edward? I was just logging into the conferencing program to arrange all the connections. What's up?"

He wiped the tears from his face with his sleeve and took a large drink before answering.

"Emmett, I told you that I might take a few weeks off at the end of the year."

"Yeah?"

Emmett hesitated to inquire beyond a one word response, uncertain as to why his friend would be bringing those plans up now. It was only July.

"Well I'm taking them *now*. I'm handling this call along with you, we'll knock this out of the park and then I'll leave things in your capable hands for the next few weeks."

The prolonged silence over the line proved what Edward had suspected. It was rare to be able to confuse his affable business partner and friend into silence. Emmett rarely had *nothing* to say. Edward could hear Emmett adjust his breathing over the line while he tried piecing together the puzzle that had just been unexpectedly placed before him. When he spoke, his tone was burdened with concern.

"Edward, is everything okay? This isn't like you, sudden shit like this."

Edward removed the glass from his lower lip and placed it soundly on his desk. The echo of the glass colliding against the mahogany under his forearms burdened his senses further.

"I *know*, and that's the problem. Emmett, have you ever forgotten what's important to you because you were so wrapped up in the success of your dreams?"

Many moments passed before Emmett was able to put aside his confusion to reply.

"Is *that* what's happened?"

Emmett's voice cracked beneath the worry penetrating his own racing thoughts as he waited for Edward's response. It was many moments before he received it.

"Yes, and I can't delay till the end of the year. It has to be NOW."

Edward's resolve was tangible over the line. Emmett felt it was imperative to reassure his friend as much as he could. Edward had always been a good friend to him. If there had ever been a time to show him he was capable of taking care of what needed to be addressed and show his friend that he would do whatever he could to support him, it was *now*.

"You know I will take care of everything at the office. Hell, if this goes right in a few minutes, none of us will ever have to be in an office for the foreseeable future. Just do what you have to do, Edward. I can put out any fires and we'll be just fine. Are you alright to take this call?"

"I think so."

Edward always thrived in stressful situations, so Emmett had no reason to doubt his ability to remain mentally astute for the sake of the deal.

"I just got pinged. Let's log on and do this, Edward and, if I don't talk with you after, have a wonderful break. I hope you find it, whatever *it* is."

The line went dead. Edward was relieved that Emmett didn't pry. He couldn't fathom having to explain more when he could hardly wrap his own mind around *it*.

He logged onto the conference call and they proceeded to iron out the finer details of a 100 million dollar deal that would propel Cullen, Inc. into another stratosphere of success.

They had done it.

It was 5am and the sun was barely lifting above the horizon when the call ended and specifics finalized. He rested his head on the weary arms folded on his desk, exhausted from his emotions over discovering Bella's journal.

His eyes drifted shut as his thoughts hit the brick wall.

He did not dream.

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oOo~oOo~oOo

He sat up suddenly when he heard the front door slam shut. It took him a moment to remember where he was and, when he did, he leaned sideways in his chair to look outside. His sons were bounding for the car dragging their suitcases and surf boards, laughing at something the other said. Their laughter became obscured by the car as they loaded their gear into the back of the SUV and then hopped in, two doors slamming in near perfect unison.

His eyes traveled from their laughing faces in the windows of the back seat to that of his retreating wife. She was dragging her feet with each step as though her shoes were heavy stones. Her shoulders were sloped forward, head hung, her hair escaping out of the tight bun that was on the back of her head. She was thinner.

Enervated.

Not *his* Bella.

The tears began to fall again as he realized that he was responsible for doing this to her, allowing her to feel these things over many months, allowing her to become the shell of a woman he was looking at now.

He wondered why he hadn't noticed her deteriorating state before this moment. He was struck by the fact that he had been so blind.

He watched as she placed her coffee mug on the hood of the car, freeing a hand to open the door. He watched as she slid into the seat, closed the door, started the engine, backed out of the driveway and drove down the street, the coffee mug clinging for life to it's metal perch.

He wondered if it made it to the airport in one piece and if his wife did either.

---

oOo~oOo~oOo

Saying goodbye was never easy for her, especially to those she loved. This goodbye was no exception. The traffic was terrible and the trip took far longer than anticipated. Both boys laughed at the coffee on the windshield as she stopped

abruptly after a police officer unexpectedly directed her into a spot in front of the terminal. Coffee was everywhere.

They exited the car. The boys hugged her furiously before loading their belongings onto a cart, pushing it in the direction of their friends, who were also teasing Mrs. Cullen about the coffee splattering the front of her car and pavement.

She introduced herself to the chaperone who was accompanying the group to Oahu and said her final goodbye's to her sons. The police officer was growing impatient with her delays and was waving her back to her vehicle, pointing to it with his ticket book. There was no mistaking his meaning.

Demurely lifting her skirt, she slid back into the driver's seat. She started her engine and looked at her sons one last time, both spitting images of their gorgeous father. At sixteen, they were extremely responsible. She knew that they were smart, kind, and would be fine on their own.

She *knew*, yet her heart ached. But that achy sensation was old news by now and something that she thought she was becoming desensitized to. She had grown accustomed to the pervasive numbness that had taken root deep within her. That thought depressed her further and she could no longer look at them laughing near the terminal entrance.

She was about to pull away from the curb when someone banged on her passenger window. She screamed in response, jerking her head to the right. She sat in disbelief, staring at the perfect smile and shining green eyes of her husband.

Her sons came running to the car and she watched as he hugged both boys, shock also evident on their adoring faces. They hardly saw him as it was and their faces were unable to mask their surprise. She understood their confounded reactions.

She turned off the ignition, grabbed her purse and stepped out of the car, carefully minding the moving vehicles on her left and the police officer who was now frowning at her. She was no longer concerned about the possibility of a ticket. She had bigger things to worry about, like her inability to digest the alternate dimension she had inexplicably entered into.

Her husband was *there* but she was still unable to believe it.

She moved slowly back onto the sidewalk, gaping at him, not knowing what to say or how to act. She let the boys introduce their father to all of their friends and then she watched as he hugged them both again, whispering something to each of them.

She was not used to seeing her sons stand next to their father.

*When did her boys become men?*

He turned to look at his perplexed wife, who remained silent with her mouth slightly agape the whole time. Her voice quivered with disbelief.

"Edward, we weren't expecting you. How did you get here?"

He pointed at the shiny blue Ferrari two cars back and she rolled her eyes.

He chuckled at her reaction and she was taken aback by his uncharacteristic buoyancy. She didn't know what to make of his new lightheartedness, as he was always so serious. He started laughing in earnest when Jacob, Seth, their friends, the policemen and the airport attendants started hovering over the flashy piece of machinery.

Edward yelled to the crowd around his treasured possession, promising Jacob and Seth's friends that they could each have a ride when they got back from Hawaii. Then he turned to look at his disconcerted wife, who was accustomed to no one being allowed to touch or ride in that car except him.

She felt a tinge of jealousy resurface and grew even more confounded when Edward's mischievous smile bored further into his cheeks.

"Bella, do you have your purse on you?"

She held it up in the air in response.

"May I have your keys?"

Her eyebrows met the center of her forehead in confusion as she handed him her key chain, the sound of rattling metal audible in their exchange despite the clamoring of busy travelers around them.

He handed the keys to the parking attendant who approached them.

"Please check it in for us, will you? I'll give you my ID so you know who it belongs to. And I'll throw in an extra hundred if you wash the coffee off of it as soon as possible."

The attendant's nod was animated with excitement as Bella found her voice.

"Edward, what are you doing? I need my car..."

He shook his head, effectively silencing her long enough to answer her question.

"You *don't* Bella. We're going in mine."

She turned her head to look at the Ferrari with disdain. He chuckled.

"Where are we going? I have a meeting at noon with Angela. You have to be at work..."

"Canceled and no. Your chariot awaits..."

He walked over and held open his passenger door, yet she didn't move from her spot. She looked at him as though he'd lost his mind. She was pretty certain of it.

Their sons and travel companions looked on in rapt attention. The police officer stood nearby just in case he was needed. The parking attendant couldn't stop smiling at the wad of crisp one hundred dollar bills Edward slipped him.

*One...two...three...four...five...six...he was getting the latest Xbox 360 he'd been dying for!*

She still refused to move.

He stepped back onto the sidewalk, grabbed her waist with his arm and brought her against his chest, leaning into her right ear to whisper his indecipherable intentions.

"Bella, I want to take you for the ride of your life. Will you come with me? We have two weeks while the boys are gone. Let's make this something we never forget. Come with me. *Please.*"

He pulled back and looked into her eyes, begging with his own for the answer he wanted to hear from her lips.

She was so confused by the thoughts and reactions she was experiencing. His intensity was so out of the ordinary that she was extremely hesitant, but her body reacted very differently. She was wetter than she'd been in...well, since Christmas. She was afraid she was going to ruin the leather seat of his stupid car.

"Come," he begged, another throaty whisper that rocked her to her core.

"I think I'm about to."

His eyes danced with excitement and his lips turned into the cocky smirk that she had not seen since they were in high school.

She loved that smirk and missed it. In that moment, she realized how much.

He grabbed her wrist and led her to the passenger seat, holding her hand gallantly as she eased in.

She was not used to the sensation of his hand in hers. She'd forgotten how nice it felt. She didn't want to let go.

The kids started clapping and whooping on the curb and Bella's blush matched the red drop off zone markings on the road beneath them.

She noticed her SUV being driven away by the valet and she shook her head in disbelief at the situation she found herself in.

Edward started the engine and a whole new set of sensations surrounded her body, her lower extremities purring under the vibrations of the engine powering the car. When he hit the accelerator, her body begged to be pushed farther into the seat so she slid back, causing Edward to smirk knowingly.

As he went faster out of the terminal area, the buzzing became overwhelming.

"Woah. Edward, I may be in love with this car."

His smirk grew wider and he shook his head.

"Don't get too comfortable love. We are getting out up here."

She wanted to protest. They had just gotten in and she couldn't comprehend what his meaning was. Nothing about him was making any sense to her.

"What?"

He pointed up at the sign above the street.

*International Departures.*

"WHAT? Edward, be *serious*. I don't have my passport..."

He was smiling so wide that the sun reflecting off of his perfectly white teeth nearly blinded her.

"I have it."

She no longer allowed her disbelief at the turn of events to keep her from saying more.

"With what clothes?"

"We'll buy whatever we need. And Bella..."

He leaned into her seat as he kissed her neck below her left ear, dragging his lips up to her earlobe.

"I plan on not needing many anyway."

She jerked the car door open and jumped up from her seat, her body and her mind teeming with the excitement about whatever it was that he intended, hesitations be damned.

She was just thankful that she shaved her legs this morning.

He laughed aloud at her sudden exuberance and she stood on the curb as he gave the keys to the valet, with another handful of bills. The valet could barely contain his excitement but his countenance changed when Edward's voice grew louder and more forceful that she'd heard him use in recent memory.

"Son, have you ever seen the movie Ferris Bueller?"

The valet smiled in response.

"Hell yes, that's a classic!"

"Well don't get any ideas. I know the mileage down to the sixteenth of a mile. It's got GPS tracking on it. The car stops when I tell it to. I know where it is and I know where it's going. Capiche?"

The young man nodded and moved his hands with such ferocity that Bella was surprised he was able to remain standing upright.

"Yes sir! We will treat this baby like the king of the lot. I promise!"

Bella rolled her eyes again but this time Edward did not laugh. They pushed through the crowds near the entrance and entered the main terminal area.

"Someone is taking that thing for a joy ride, and you know it."

He lifted his shoulders in response and he grabbed her hand, guiding her until they were standing in front of the massive departure screen.

"Edward, where are we going?"

He moved behind her, pushing into her back with his broad and tight chest. She couldn't wait to lick it.

His hot breath caressed her left earlobe as he spoke.

"40th Parallel, beautiful girl. You choose. North or South?"

She turned to him and the tears began falling down her cheeks, her smile telling him that they were not tears of sorrow.

"I'm sorry that I have been such an insensitive, forgetful oaf Bella. It will be a few days late but it's still your birthday week, so..."

She jumped up into his arms and kissed him with all of the pent up passion and frustration she felt over the last few months, mouths wide as their tongues danced the way the rest of their bodies wanted to. She pulled away when she made a decision.

"You know how captivated I am by Greek Mythology. Lemnos."

He nodded and smiled in response.

"My nymph is being cast out of her 30's and, as Hephaestus was cast off of Olympus and landed in Lemnos, so shall you. I had an inkling that you would choose the 40th Parallel in Greece. I think British Airways goes to Athens..."

He grabbed her hand and walked in that direction. He found her a seat on a bench near the counter while he went to wait in line. She watched him text on his Blackberry and the line moved swiftly. Ten minutes later, they were in possession of two First Class tickets to their destination and one hour until boarding time.

He led her to the security checkpoints which was always a tedious process. They

made it to the gate just as the plane was boarding and, when they were about to take off, they continued to hold hands. It was the first prolonged contact they'd had in months, the heat of their skin noticeable as they gripped tighter. The plane launched them into the sky.

"Sleep if you can."

His tone was soft, his warm breath teasing the sensitive skin on her neck.

"I'm not sure it's *possible*, Edward. I'm too excited."

He smiled in leaned in closer.

"Try, love. There won't be much rest once we get there."

She was afraid she was about to awaken from one of the best dreams of her life. She never wanted it to end.

"Don't tease me, Edward."

His smile faded and his eyes pleaded with hers for understanding.

"I'm *not*. It's a promise."

She gasped in response, unable to find a way to respond to his bold volition. The intensity of his gaze made her smile the first genuine smile in months. Years. She wasn't sure anymore and she no longer cared. All that mattered to her now was that they were here, together, on this spontaneous journey that seemed to be the beginning of something *more*.

She felt alive, unbound by the sadness that had consumed her lately, and that freedom allowed her to finally slip into sleep. He reclined next to her, their seats slanted comfortably back. He watched her sleep, engrossed by the happiness flooding his heart with the reality that she was still next to him.

Even after all of the things he did or missed along the way.

He soon found sleep as well.

---

oOo~oOo~oOo

She woke up once during the flight, turning to look out of her little window over the blackness of the sky with her weary eyes. She could not differentiate the black sky and the black earth. She recalled that prior to this afternoon, this illusion would send her into the familiar tailspin of despair. The glimmering stars freely scattered above now inspired her to not care about the blurred line that formed the invisible abyss between earth and sky. The illusion would no longer frighten her. She felt dauntless, beautiful and optimistic, as though she was deserving of this trip, of the exorbitant cost of their impetuosity...of the promises he was making to her.

That truth made her smile.

She turned to look at his sleeping face, peaceful and stunning. She sensed he would protect her from that abyss.

*This plane could crash and he would save me.*

She closed her eyes and drifted into the stars.

---

oOo~oOo~oOo

Athens welcomed them many hours later and they both felt surprisingly refreshed after their flight.

When they disembarked their plane, Edward checked his Blackberry and she noticed his cocky grin was back.

He led her away from the main terminals and they walked into the area for chartered flights. An hour later, they were in Lemnos and there was a man waiting with a sign with the name CULLEN.

Bella saw it first and pointed to it.

"Edward?"

"Alice."

Her eyebrow raised higher in surprise.

"Alice?"

He nodded and squeezed her hand tighter.

"Her friend of a friend. You know Alice knows *people*. Just so happens that one of her *people* knew the perfect place for us to stay while here. Secluded. Available. Perfect."

She blushed as she replied in the slightest whisper.

"Secluded..."

"...I told you we probably wouldn't need much."

She was unable to keep her nervous skepticism from forcing her tone higher.

"But I have nothing. My teeth are fuzzy. No mouthwash. Shampoo. Deodorant. Bathing suit. Underwear. Clothes..."

His smirk returned to his handsome face.

"Bella, you doubt my sister? She thinks of everything. It will all be there for us."

The man holding the sign waved at them and they stepped into the warm sun for the first time in 20 hours. They got into the smallish white car and he drove them through Myrina, pointing out sights in broken English.

He drove into a secluded drive off the main road and they continued along the top of the hill until they saw the small cottage in the distance. It was situated on the crest of the slope, with a small cove and beach nestled below. They were surrounded by hills and the smell of the sea heightened their excitement further.

They exited the car and the driver handed them a large, rusty key. He chuckled and drove off. They were left with the sound of the waves beneath where they stood and the thumping of their excited heartbeats.

They turned towards the house and he inserted the ancient looking key into the lock, the heavy wood door swinging open, revealing the entire room bathed in shades of white. Floors, walls, furniture...it was if they were entering their own heaven amongst the clouds.

He turned and lifted her up, swinging her legs into the air, her head flung back in laughter as he carried her over the threshold, the heavy door shutting behind them with the heavy thrust of his foot, barricading the outside world.

They took in their surroundings for a brief moment before their gaze focused in on each other.

That is when something clicked, so primal that they both became overwhelmed, the electricity of their bodies recognizing the fire slowly igniting in both, throwing them into a passionate tizzy of lips and gripping limbs.

She maneuvered in his arms, throwing her legs apart, wrapping them around his waist. He turned her so quickly that the sound of her back slamming against the heavy door reverberated through the empty, cool room beyond them.

She pushed her dripping wet sex against him as the hem of her skirt rose to her waist, the shared moan simultaneous as their lips crushed together, their tongues moving in the same rhythm as their hips, pushing them together where they needed the friction most.

"I can feel how hot and wet you are through my slacks."

She moaned in response and pushed harder into his concealed, rock hard erection. Her knees gripped his waist tighter while trying to gain more friction. He grabbed her backside and pulled her tighter against him, the smooth texture of the door dragging up her blouse, exposing the pale skin of her stomach.

His hips kept her in place as he let go with his arms, grasping her collar and pulling it violently in two directions, ripping the buttons from the blouse and sending them flying against the pale floor beneath them, exposing her white lace bra and heaving chest.

"I would have worn a different one had I known."

It was barely a whisper, yet insecurity was laced in her words, and he did not like that. *At all.*

"It's coming off anyway love. I want it gone."

He was thankful that this one had the snap at the front. He flicked once and it opened, his mouth instantly on one exposed nipple as he began to pinch the other.

Her head flew back with a loud thud and she pushed her breasts up, trying to give him more.

"Fuck Edward..."

"I intend to baby..."

The length of his hardness was rubbing into her with precision and, as she rolled her hips to meet each thrust, he pushed her harder into the door.

The sound of the metal hinges creaking in time as they moved against each other resounded off of the walls surrounding them, the vaulted ceiling resonating the rattling and thumping sounds even further.

The intensity of the experience was overwhelming and she desperately wanted him inside of her. She wanted him to literally fucking pound her into the door. Into next week. Next month!

"Maybe later. I want your come dripping off of my tongue first."

She didn't realize that she mentioned the door fucking aloud, but she got even wetter at hearing his plans for her.

"Oh my God, Edward, yesssssssss..."

He grabbed the cotton straps of her panties on each hip, and ripped them from her, yanking them from between their panting bodies.

"They are so fucking wet, *Naiad*. I can't wait until I'm drinking at your source with my eager mouth."

He re-calibrated her position and swung her away from the door, diverting them both downwards towards the floor, descending much more smoothly than she thought humanly possible. By the time her back was stretching against the cool floor, she managed to slip her hand beneath his slacks and was gripping his engorged length tightly, trying to pull it out from beneath the waist of his slacks.

"Not yet, love."

He pulled her hand out by her wrist and pushed both hands up onto the stone threshold behind her head. The cold stone scraped against her skin, the rough texture dragging against her hands, making the contrast of his soft, hot mouth more erotic.

When she glanced down, his copper hair was near the inside of her bent knee, his tongue tracing up along the inside of her thigh, his other hand deftly undoing the buttons of his shirt.

"Edward, I have never wanted you so badly in all my life."

He was sucking on her inner thigh and she reflexively opened her legs wider for him. As wide as they could possibly go.

"So wide for me baby. You ready for my tongue, my lips, my teeth?"

She couldn't respond coherently...she couldn't form words to voice her excitement. She only wished it was capable to open her legs even wider for him as he did exactly as he promised, coating his chin and mouth, devouring her wetness as though it were his magical source for life.

The corona surrounding her was liquid fire, singing her senses as every nerve ignited with the intensity of a thousand suns. She was uncertain if she would *live* through this. It was too much.

*La Petite Mort, indeed. At least I die happy.*

She reached between her heaving breasts and began gripping his hair, desperately trying to drag his mouth deeper and deeper. And when his teeth lightly bit onto her dripping, swollen clit, and his tongue swiped against it once before his lips encircled it and drew it into the suction of his sweet mouth, she was no longer on that floor. She was screaming wildly, floating in a haze above where she knew they were. She understood, for the first time in ages, that she would never be the same after this. That she *was* working properly.

That she never wanted this to end.

She felt insatiable and she wanted to capture this moment and entrap these sensations for the remainder of her existence, *ad infinitum*, replacing her blood with the rapturous energy coursing through her.

She realized that she was still breathing.

Bella opened her eyes and saw him above her, a proud smile on his cum soaked face, glistening in the sunlight that was streaming in from the window beside the door.

His smile immediately turned to shock as she rolled him over to mount him, pulling down his zipper, reaching in to free his furiously straining cock out of it's prison.

Edward was even more shocked when she, without saying a word, slid him in and began bouncing up and down, using her legs as leverage, forcing him in to the hilt.

Her head was thrown back in ecstasy and her eyes wild, her mouth hanging open as she gasped for air.

When she stopped moving, he dragged his gaze from her breasts, refocusing his eyes on her face. He found her intensely holding his gaze and she leaned forward, placing her palms on the floor above his head.

"I want them in your mouth as I push you into this unforgiving floor, deep into the part of me that needs you the most. It's been screaming for you. It's *begging* for it..."

His dick twitched in appreciation of her *demand*. He slipped his hands on the sides of her breasts and pushed them together, allowing him to suck and bite both nipples at once. She arched her back, pushing her tender flesh even deeper into his scorching hot mouth.

Her moans escalated when she began sliding him all the way out, only to impale herself fully once again, maneuvering easily back into her torrid cleft.

She was sure she would not be satisfied until he split her in two.

His sucking increased as she jerked against him, taking him deeper, harder and harder and harder and faster, sliding him up and in and out and over her clit and through her dripping slit until she was building, igniting every nerve, their grinding parts nearly fusing at their apex due to the heat from the friction, their bodies screaming to be detonated, anticipation radiating out and they wanted the exquisite agony to be set free, set free, set free throughout their aching bodies and then she was gripping him, her insides not allowing him to move at all as she pulled him in again with a vice like tug, veritably coaxing his orgasm into her womb.

And yet she was still going, pushing him down so harshly into the floor that he was sure they were going to break through the boards as she gyrated violently, her voice hoarse from the guttural and animalistic groans and noises, screaming until there was no voice left, the corona imploding onto the sweltering lovers as their completion and exhaustion sent them descending into satiated silence.

Recognition.

Realization.

Peace.

They remained amongst tangled limbs, skin against skin, prone against the hardness of the floor, but both were awake. They just couldn't bring themselves to move.

"Jesus Christ, Edward. Where have we been?"

He heard her whisper despite their pounding heartbeats.

"I don't know, but we've wasted so much time forgetting what it felt like to be like *this...*"

He dragged his fingertip over the goosebumps on the arm wrapped around his waist.

"I know. It's as if we forgot what was beautiful between us. I never want to forget again."

She lifted herself from his chest to face him, pleading with her frightened eyes. "Please promise me that we never allow each other to forget."

His heart ached at the desperation he sensed in her features and in her words.

"I *promise* you, love."

She rolled to sit on the floor as he sat up slowly, his bones and muscles screaming in protest. Once he stood he picked her up and carried her to where the large bed was, draped in flowing white netting and pale blue pillows, laying her carefully into the soft bedding.

She purred in appreciation and closed her eyes, slowly drifting into sleep. He watched her slip under.

Many minutes passed before he was able to allow his racing mind to settle and close his own eyes. That's when he heard her dreaming pleas continue in breathy, desperate whispers.

"Mnemosyne."

*Even her subconscious was concerned. I will spend the rest of my life proving how much I love her and that I will never forget.*

He finally drifted off to sleep, certain that they would remember and cherish the time they had left together on this earth.

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oOo~oOo~oOo

The next ten days were spent in relative isolation, with little jaunts to explore the ruins and explore the surrounding countryside. The island was magical yet they were always content to return to their personal piece of heaven...the most magical place of all.

They had one night left and they'd gone shopping for food to last the remainder of their stay, as they were unwilling to leave heaven again until they must, for good.

They sat on the small terrace overlooking the sea, both feasting on creamy yogurt smothered in warm, sweet honey. The shop keeper promised it was a Grecian delight that should not be missed.

They ate quietly. The setting sun lined their faces with the sensual glow of perfect light, casting hues of a scintillating, otherworldly luster on the romantic tablescape he set out before her.

When a small amount of honey dripped off the spoon onto her lower lip, the sunlight glistened on the sweet viscous layer. He reached with his left hand and swiped the thick liquid onto his index finger. She did not hesitate to slightly extend her tongue to lick the tip of that finger as he dragged it along the base of her plump lip.

Edward gasped her name, lust enveloping them both in an impassioned haze of *want*. Once again, their bodies hummed.

He withdrew his finger from her luscious lip and leaned forward. He swept the same finger into the honey and moved his hand near the entrance of her mouth once again.

"I love you, Bella."

He smiled at her, contrition and devotion evident in his shining eyes.

Bella swirled her tongue around his finger and then she sucked the tip into her mouth.

She freed his fingertip and looked into his lust-filled gaze.

"Are you going to finish yours, Edward?"

"I think I like feeding you instead, my beautiful wife."

He dipped his spoon into the mixture and held it beneath her mouth. She opened her mouth for him, moaning as the coated spoon caressed her tongue.

She swallowed slowly, closing her eyes to appreciate how delicious it was in her mouth.

When she opened her eyes again, she saw his hunger and his look was reciprocated. She was aching for *more*.

"I'm done."

Her voice did not sound like her own.

"Are you?"

Neither did his.

She nodded slowly, her head slowly tilting to one side.

"With *this*."

She pushed her bowl away.

His eyebrow lifted as she stood and sank to her knees beneath where he sat, his mouth dropping open as she pulled his dick out from under his swim trunks and licked him from base to tip. The image of her lush mouth engulfing him entirely made him impossibly harder.

Back into her throat he went, down deeper than he ever remembered before. Her teeth scraped deliciously at his base as she slipped him forward and backward with her willing mouth, twisting her head and twirling her tongue, creating a suction that was intense and unrelenting. He watched her hard at work, her jaw stretched and begging, the veins of her neck pulling at the surface, writhing like purplish eels almost ready to burst through her beautiful skin as she sucked harder and harder and harder. His dick twitched and she hummed in appreciation, inspiring him to release.

She drank him down, dragging out the last drop, licking him clean.

Her eyes never left his. It was exactly as she remembered, the look of awe and appreciation on his face the most touching part of all.

That is when she had her epiphany.

He always loved her, even when she felt his absence most. The illusion of his being *gone* was only lost when she finally decided to look at him in this moment...when she broke through the surface of stagnation and she saw the soft reds, oranges, and grays of the lingering sunset off the horizon behind the man she was looking at now, blissed out from being sucked off.

The man she made speechless, incapable of finding his voice in the aftermath of what she just did, and would always want to do for him.

Her dull and flavorless winter and spring were nothing like that perfect come in her mouth, hot and wet and all of him, baptizing her insides and filling her up.

It was always him surrounding her and filling her. It would *always be him*.

She realized, looking at the awe on his beautiful face, that her web had been stretched too thin. She decided somewhere along the way to be on the outside looking in and she was determined to create more strands to add for their future...to watch them mingle and glisten in the sunlight...Encourage them to grow.

She could write that conclusion to their story after all.

*No more stagnation. No more being an emotionally stunted shit-stain. Ablation of my self-doubt and inaction and sitting on my hands and burying my head in the sand when I could be doing so much more to find my voice and living the life I want, with the man I love. Under this perfect Grecian sunset, I make this promise to myself.*

"Bella, are you alright? Jesus, that was one of the most intense sensations of my life."

His voice drew her away from her burgeoning resolutions and her smile grew along with the blush that was now marching down her cheeks.

"For me too."

He was suddenly skeptical of her response. She looked too unsettled for the

*intense* he was referring to.

"Are you sure you're okay? I can't read that look on your face and I would kill to know what you are thinking right now."

She nodded, her response just above a whisper.

"I was just thinking about how I've been a forge without fire...an engine without gas...my own worst enemy. I was blaming you for my loneliness and yet I did nothing to try to rectify what I thought was wrong with us."

The pointed intensity of his gaze was unexpected. She pulled back slightly to get a better gauge of his facial responses in the expanding silence.

"That's not true, Bella! I allowed my business and my selfishness to take precedence. I was very neglectful of your needs."

She shook her head slightly, her voice growing louder.

"I could have mentioned my feelings and concerns to you..."

He reached to grab her clenched hands within his own, silently pleading for understanding.

"And I should have been more observant. Somehow, along the way, I lost my ability to *see*..."

Bella pulled her hands from within his grasp to encase his large hands within her trembling palms.

"...Edward, I'm not going to let you shoulder this alone. I was choosing to survive, meek and my head in the sand. I want to *live* now. Not survive, but *live*. I was not living on the proper wavelength. Maybe you weren't either, but we both see it now. We'll make this right."

Her confidence was back, any pain of rebuilding what they thought they lost a distant memory. All of their walls had come down and they were staring at the naked truth...a happier truth...and they would map out a new route together...The collaboration of *remembering*.

They sat silently, content to watch their last Grecian sun dip beneath the waves.

oOo~oOo~oOo

"Edward."

Her voice was scratchy from sleep. He stirred in response.

"Edward, let's go to our beach one more time before we leave. We have a few hours left before we have to be at the airport."

"Definitely. Let's get our suits on."

He watched her slip out of bed and walk across the room, unashamed by her nakedness. She was no longer the self-conscious woman who resembled the walking dead.

This woman had vigor and life. Her inner ray of light had returned, nearly blinding him in her beauty.

He became excited when she re-entered a few minutes later wearing the blue bikini. It was his favorite among the many that Alice had waiting for her on their arrival, strappy and barely there.

The warm summer air enveloped them as they walked hand in hand down to their beach.

They removed their sandals and spread out their large towels where the tide had receded, happy for the warmth surrounding them, soft sand sinking between their toes.

She turned and ran into the calm, crystal blue water, diving beneath the surface, surrounding her in what they had come to refer to as "the womb"...the warm sea water the perfect temperature. She heard his muffled splash while she was still submerged beneath the surface and, when she felt his strong arms encircle her waist from behind, she sank blissfully back into his warm, bare chest and brought her head above the surface.

It was his chest that contained the heart that she cherished above all others. She never wanted to lose it. Or him...ever again.

Her head tilted back against his shoulder when she felt his hand trace lower down her stomach, beneath the water.

Beneath her belly button.

Beneath her bikini bottom.

He hissed in her ear as his deft fingers began to spread the viscous proof of her want over her sex and then he began to whisper in her ear.

*"That gently, o'er a perfumed sea, The weary, wayworn wanderer bore."*

He slipped a finger into her wetness and then a second, both sinking inside of her.

*"To his own native shore. On desperate seas long wont to roam,*

*Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,*

*Thy Naiad airs have brought me home."*

With his free hand deliberately resting where her heart was trying to break free from her chest, she knew his meaning, and the sensations of his overpowering love overwhelmed her, coming on his fingers as they remained surrounded by the warm sea.

"I will never forget us again, Bella. Ever."

His voice was determined and assured. She nodded as she turned within his embrace and surrounding his torso with her trembling arms, responding with her own undoubting declaration as she rested her cheek against ebullient heartbeats that matched her own.

"Neither will I."

The happiest tears poured from their eyes, sinking into the water below...water no longer fed by the River Lethe. In this summer of remembering and of new beginnings, their happy tears now dripped into what would become their beautiful new sea of *hope*.

And they never wanted more.

oOo~**The End**~oOo

## End Notes:

Edward quotes Edgar Allen Poe's *To Helen*.

The last line of this story, as well as the overall tone of the story (welcoming rain/disturbances in our lives if it means that the line in the sand is drawn to usher in a new beginning), was influenced by VNV Nation's *Solitary*:

"And if rain brings winds of change

Let it rain on us forever

I have no doubts from what I've seen

I have never wanted more.

With this line I'll mark the past

As a symbol of beginning

I have no doubt from what I've seen

I have never wanted more."

The poem "ACHE" was taken verbatim from a personal journal entry I wrote back in 2003, as were many of Bella's journal entries. This story was based on real life events in my marriage many years ago, where the bones of this story began forming into what you see here. Sandy, SuzyQ402 and KarenSanDiego, thank you for encouraging me to use those life experiences as inspiration to get my creative juices flowing.

Dear reader, I would like to end this A/N with this message because I know each of us experience disappointments (romantic or otherwise) at some point of our lives:

Whether you choose from Mnemosyne or Lethe, remember that it is *your choice*. That is your *power*, however you wish to look at your decision, for it truly is *your decision to make*. So to remember or to forget? Whatever your choice, may the decision result in you feeling empowered and truly loved. May you discover and embrace your inner ray of light. Most importantly, and my deepest and most heartfelt wish for you, is that *you never want for more*.

Brightest of blessings and may joy and peace surround you always,

Becca