

IB/TOPS/MACS

CLASS 14 NOTES

WHEN I OPENED MY EYES IN THE MORNING, SOMETHING was different.

It was the light. It was still the gray-green light of a cloudy day in the forest, but it was clearer somehow. I realized there was no fog veiling my window.

I jumped up to look outside, and then groaned in horror.

A fine layer of snow covered the yard, dusted the top of my truck, and whitened the road. But that wasn't the worst part. All the rain from yesterday had frozen solid — coating the needles on the trees in fantastic, gorgeous patterns, and making the driveway a deadly ice slick. I had enough trouble not falling down when the ground was dry; it might be safer for me to go back to bed now.

Charlie had left for work before I got downstairs. In a lot of ways, living with Charlie was like having my own place, and I found myself reveling in the aloneness instead of being lonely.



I threw down a quick bowl of cereal and some orange juice from the carton. I felt excited to go to school, and that scared me. I knew it wasn't the stimulating learning environment I was anticipating, or seeing my new set of friends. If I was being honest with myself, I knew I was eager to get to school because I would see Edward Cullen. And that was very, very stupid.

I should be avoiding him entirely after my brainless and embarrassing babbling yesterday. And I was suspicious of him; why should he lie about his eyes? I was still frightened of the hostility I sometimes felt emanating from him, and I was still tongue-tied whenever I pictured his perfect face. I was well aware that my league and his league were spheres that did not touch. So I shouldn't be at all anxious to see him today.



It took every ounce of my concentration to make it down the icy brick driveway alive. I almost lost my balance when I finally got to the truck, but I managed to cling to the side mirror and save myself. Clearly, today was going to be nightmarish.

Driving to school, I distracted myself from my fear of falling and my unwanted speculations about Edward Cullen by thinking about Mike and Eric, and the obvious difference in how teenage boys responded to me here. I was sure I looked exactly the same as I had in Phoenix. Maybe it was just that the boys back home had watched me pass slowly through all the awkward phases of adolescence and still thought of me that way. Perhaps it was because I was a novelty here, where novelties were few and far between. Possibly my crippling clumsiness was seen as endearing rather than pathetic, casting me as a damsel in distress. Whatever the reason, Mike's puppy dog behavior and Eric's apparent rivalry with him were disconcerting. I wasn't sure if I didn't prefer being ignored.



My truck seemed to have no problem with the black ice that covered the roads. I drove very slowly, though, not wanting to carve a path of destruction through Main Street.

When I got out of my truck at school, I saw why I'd had so little trouble. Something silver caught my eye, and I walked to the back of the truck — carefully holding the side for support — to examine my tires. There were thin chains crisscrossed in diamond shapes around them. Charlie had gotten up who knows how early to put snow chains on my truck. My throat suddenly felt tight. I wasn't used to being taken care of, and Charlie's unspoken concern caught me by surprise.

I was standing by the back corner of the truck, struggling to fight back the sudden wave of emotion the snow chains had brought on, when I heard an odd sound.

It was a high-pitched screech, and it was fast becoming painfully loud. I looked up, startled.

I saw several things simultaneously. Nothing was moving in slow

motion, the way it does in the movies. Instead, the adrenaline rush seemed to make my brain work much faster, and I was able to absorb in clear detail several things at once.

Edward Cullen was standing four cars down from me, staring at me in horror. His face stood out from a sea of faces, all frozen in the same mask of shock. But of more immediate importance was the dark blue van that was skidding, tires locked and squealing against the brakes, spinning wildly across the ice of the parking lot. It was going to hit the back corner of my truck, and I was standing between them. I didn't even have time to close my eyes.



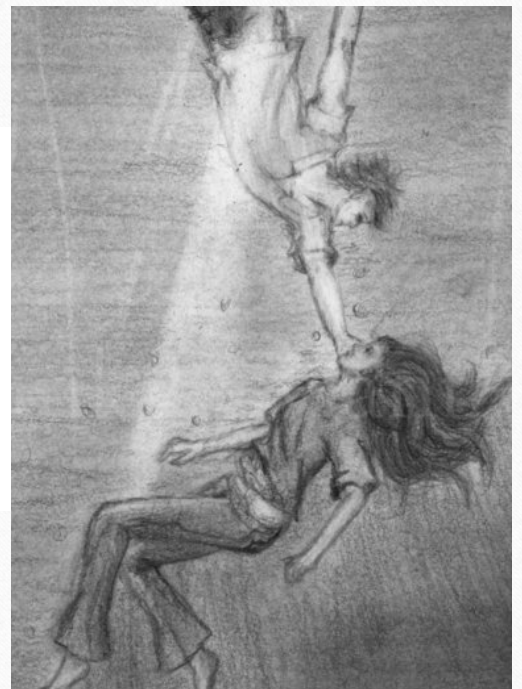
Just before I heard the shattering crunch of the van folding around the truck bed, something hit me, hard, but not from the direction I was expecting. My head cracked against the icy blacktop, and I felt something solid and cold pinning me to the ground. I was lying on the pavement behind the tan car I'd parked next to. But I didn't have a chance to notice anything else, because the van was still coming. It had curled gratingly around the end of the truck and, still spinning and sliding, was about to collide with me *again*.

A low oath made me aware that someone was with me, and the voice was impossible not to recognize. Two long, white hands shot out protectively in front of me, and the van shuddered to a stop a foot from my face, the large hands fitting providentially into a deep dent in the side of the van's body.



Then his hands moved so fast they blurred. One was suddenly gripping under the body of the van, and something was dragging me, swinging my legs around like a rag doll's, till they hit the tire of the tan car. A groaning metallic thud hurt my ears, and the van settled, glass popping, onto the asphalt — exactly where, a second ago, my legs had been.

It was absolutely silent for one long second before the screaming began. In the abrupt bedlam, I could hear more than one person shouting my name. But more clearly than all the yelling, I could hear Edward Cullen's low, frantic voice in my ear.





"Bella? Are you all right?"

"I'm fine." My voice sounded strange. I tried to sit up, and realized he was holding me against the side of his body in an iron grasp.

"Be careful," he warned as I struggled. "I think you hit your head pretty hard."

I became aware of a throbbing ache centered above my left ear.

"Ow," I said, surprised.

"That's what I thought." His voice, amazingly, sounded like he was suppressing laughter.

"How in the . . ." I trailed off, trying to clear my head, get my bearings. "How did you get over here so fast?"

"I was standing right next to you, Bella," he said, his tone serious again.



I turned to sit up, and this time he let me, releasing his hold around my waist and sliding as far from me as he could in the limited space. I looked at his concerned, innocent expression and was disoriented again by the force of his gold-colored eyes. What was I asking him?

And then they found us, a crowd of people with tears streaming down their faces, shouting at each other, shouting at us.

"Don't move," someone instructed.

"Get Tyler out of the van!" someone else shouted. There was a flurry of activity around us. I tried to get up, but Edward's cold hand pushed my shoulder down.

"Just stay put for now."

"But it's cold," I complained. It surprised me when he chuckled under his breath. There was an edge to the sound.

"You were over there," I suddenly remembered, and his chuckle stopped short. "You were by your car."

His expression turned hard. "No, I wasn't."

"I saw you." All around us was chaos. I could hear the gruffer voices of adults arriving on the scene. But I obstinately held on to our argument; I was right, and he was going to admit it.



"Bella, I was standing with you, and I pulled you out of the way." He unleashed the full, devastating power of his eyes on me, as if trying to communicate something crucial.

"No." I set my jaw.

The gold in his eyes blazed. "Please, Bella."

"Why?" I demanded.

"Trust me," he pleaded, his soft voice overwhelming.

