

ROSALIE & ME

There's a reason why my sister and I have had some difficult times, such as after I met Bella. Rosalie became a real harpy then. She and I have known each other for a long time, and though things were a little rough between us in the beginning, we had worked it out and gotten along rather well after that. Especially after Emmett came and rubbed all the sharp edges off of her.

I've always tried to give Rosalie a lot of grace. Though I hadn't liked her much even before she joined our family, I endeavor to remember how she became one of us. It was horrific. The fiend, Royce King, destroyed her, mind, body, and soul. Underneath her haughtiness, vanity, and pride lay the heart of a teenage girl who wanted nothing more from her life than to marry and raise children. If she hadn't been so beautiful and her father so hungry for wealth, that is probably what she would have gotten.

But with her beauty came a debt that she was made to feel she owed her family. With assets such as hers, she was pressured in that most ancient of traditions to buy her family's way into a higher social stratum. That was how she got pushed into the arms of the evil Mr. King.

Rosalie was not the first young woman Royce King had defiled and destroyed. He made a game of selecting, seducing, and abandoning tenderhearted girls, leaving a trail of feminine destruction in his wake. Several young women had left town hurriedly after attracting his attention, only to return eight to twelve months later much, much older, if not wiser. When necessary, his father bought Royce out of such scrapes. It was only a matter of time before his eyes fell upon Rosalie, truly the most beautiful and well-placed young woman in that small town. And what he subsequently did to her was his worst offense by far.

Royce's family pushed him as hard as Rosalie's pushed her to pursue a proper match. Royce was, after all, his father's only heir to the family fortune, and his parents thought he might "settle down" if he married.

How little they knew their own son! He went along with it, never intending to change his ways, even if he was pressured into marrying Rosalie. When Royce wasn't drinking, he could turn on the charm and make a reasonable case for himself. Most of society had no idea that he was not only a cad, but a dangerous man.

The night of Rosalie's demise, he had gathered a group of drinking buddies on the street. He was waiting to escort Rosalie home and to show her off to his friends. The longer she made him wait, however, the drunker he became. He started boasting about the beautiful Rosalie and bragged that he could have her anytime he wanted. It wasn't true. Rosalie was chaste and determined to stay that way until she had a wedding ring on her finger. She wasn't in love, though she may have thought she was. She was enamored with the idea of being in love and of setting up her own household.

As Royce stood beneath a lamppost, quite intoxicated, he began to get angry that Rosalie wouldn't "put out." After all, they were engaged and no other girl had ever refused him—at least not after he'd exercised a little biceps' persuasion. By the time Rosalie appeared that night, walking home late from a friend's, Royce had convinced himself that he had every right to her body and that she had no right to say no. Perhaps under other circumstances, she would have given in to his demands, but the absurdity of being pawed in the street by her drunken fiancé made her angry.

"Get your hands off of me!" she shrieked when Royce grabbed at her clothing and began tearing it away, much to the amusement of his drinking companions.

How dare she embarrass me in front of my friends! he'd no doubt thought, and slapped her face. She struggled, trying to get away as his friends cheered him on. Royce became so enraged that he dragged Rosalie into the shadows by her hair, shoved her to the ground, and forced himself upon her. He held her down with the weight of his body and bit her lips closed between his teeth to keep her from crying out. He brutalized her throughout the ordeal and when he was finished, he spit on her and invited his friends to violate her too.

I don't know how such a thing could ever go as far as it did. It still boggles my mind to think of a group of men becoming so vicious and out-of-control that they would do half of what they did to Rosalie. She was raped numerous times over the course of the night in unthinkable ways. After they themselves were satisfied, they tortured her with objects...beer bottles, a broom handle, a knife. When finally, mercifully, she fell unconscious, they left her for dead in the icy street. If it hadn't been for the freezing temperatures that night, she would have died quickly. As it was, the cold slowed her blood loss.

Now perhaps you can understand my reaction when I found a similar group of men preparing to attack Bella in Port Angeles. Memories of Rosalie's ghastly death scene leaped to my mind in that moment. I knew exactly what could happen when vicious thugs set their sights on a vulnerable female. That's the closest I've come to killing humans since I gave up drinking their blood decades ago.

Bella was luckier than Rose, though Rose was rescued in another way. Carlisle, on his way home from the hospital, smelled Rosalie's blood and found her beyond medical help. She was mutilated, hemorrhaging internally, and bones both in the front and back of her body were poking through her torn flesh. She was injured so severely that, had she survived, she would have had no chance of bearing children.

Carlisle was so profoundly moved by Rosalie's tragedy, her life cut short in such a malignant way, that I believe he looked for a justification to change her. Though I didn't realize it until much later, Carlisle imagined that Rosalie might become to me what Esme was to him.

Rosalie thinks that I was disgusted by her sudden appearance in our family. I wasn't disgusted, actually. I was horrified by her condition and by her plight, but I also knew that she would be difficult to live with if she retained half of the haughtiness, vanity, and disdain she'd displayed as a human. And as vampires, we generally become intensified versions of what we were before. I couldn't imagine her wanting to join us. Also, she was going to be difficult to hide, as well-

known as she was, and affianced to the richest, most powerful family in the state besides. We would have to make her disappear.

Of course, Esme took Rosalie to her heart immediately, welcoming her to our family with open arms. Carlisle also, after explaining to her what she was and what her life would be from then on, without reservation invited her to stay with us. I thought she would run away, bitter as she was, but she didn't. She was afraid to be alone, having never been so before. She'd been pampered and cared for to the degree that she wouldn't have known how to survive on her own. After a time, she still seemed so unhappy with us that Carlisle offered to take her to Alaska and introduce her to Tanya's coven. He thought perhaps she would be less tormented if she were surrounded by women. She declined.

I knew that Rosalie was unhappy, because she hung on to her pain with a ferocity that defied reason. If she could have let the memory of her traumatic demise fade, as human memories do naturally, she would have adjusted and gotten a chance at a new start. As it was, she relived the trauma a hundred times a day, either in her mind by herself or aloud with Esme, who provided a comforting shoulder. She reviewed it again and again until every detail of the tragedy was burned into her new memory. She set about planning, then executing (literally) her revenge. Uncharacteristically, Carlisle did not intervene, for he felt she was owed something for her suffering. Though killing her tormenters gave Rosalie some short-term satisfaction, she remained unhappy.

Amidst all this turmoil, Rosalie reacted to my presence in an unusual way. After she had recovered from the shock of her new life and taken her revenge on Royce and his friends, she seemed emptied out like a deflated balloon. There was nothing left for her to live for, nothing to propel her forward. In her desolation, she turned to me.

While human, Rosalie Hale had been the belle of every ball, had been desired by every man she encountered. She fed upon such attention. It's what charged her spirit and made her days interesting. I was an enigma to her, a completely different type of man than she had known. I was not interested in her as a woman—not in the least. I knew that she was beautiful, but her beauty did not move me. No female had

ever moved me in the way that Rosalie expected. I had never found one who touched my heart and that, as I was to discover later, was the only way a woman could excite my body. My indifference to her beauty and her sexuality drove Rosalie crazy (and I mean that literally too).

When it became clear to Rosalie that I did not desire her, she began to behave in ways that, for me, ensured I never would. Her grisly near-murder had transformed her from an innocent girl into an aggressive vixen. Since I was the one and only man she had ever met who did not display sexual desire for her, she made it her business to provoke me.

At first, she feigned innocence. She would ask me to button or unbutton the back of her dress, for example, or she'd reach beneath her hemline and begin rolling down her stockings in my presence. One time, as I passed by her room on the way to my own, she suddenly appeared in her doorway, half-naked, staring at me as if in challenge.

When I did not respond to such tactics as she expected, she became angry and even more aggressive, cornering me in the hallway and pressing her body against mine, or grabbing my private parts as I passed by her. Once, she backed me against the wall and placed my hand between her legs.

When she caught me unawares, I responded with surprise and immediately reverted to the gentlemanly ways I had been taught, saying "Excuse me," and pushing her away gently, or maneuvering myself out of her way. However, as a newborn, she was stronger than me and she could pretty much force me into whatever awkward sexual situations she chose. Once I'd cottoned on to her, though, I monitored her thoughts, predicting her behavior and either dodging her or removing myself before she could act on her impulses.

Rosalie's behavior didn't trouble me much. It was bewildering as much as anything. I couldn't understand what she wanted from me. I don't know how aware of it Esme and Carlisle were. Certainly, they recognized Rosalie's inappropriate behavior once when she tried to kiss Carlisle in a non-daughterly manner. He pushed her away, gently

chastised her, and chalked it up to the trauma she had suffered. Esme redoubled her efforts to simply shower her with love.

So you can see now why Rosalie despised Bella so thoroughly when I first showed a preference for her. She simply couldn't believe it. Rosalie had given up on me long before she met Emmett, deciding that I was a eunuch or a homosexual. When she first observed me touching Bella seventy years later, it infuriated her, for she realized immediately that I wasn't unable to love a woman in that way, just that I'd been unable to love **her** like that. She had failed to engage my interest.

It was all quite irrational, of course. Rosalie never desired me. She simply wanted to exercise power and control. It's easy to understand why she needed that after having been treated the way she had, having had every bit of choice brutally stolen from her.

We were so happy when Rosalie found Emmett. It changed her overnight. At first she loved him almost like a mother loves a child, and he responded immediately to her beauty and allure. His unique combination of child-like innocence and hyper-masculinity has healed her and, by so doing, has healed our family. I only wish that she and Emmett could have children of their own. After Renesmee was born, we all observed the change in Rosalie. Some hunger or longing that she's always carried with her has been at least partially fulfilled. Rose is much easier to love these days.

Edward

