

LOVE

Alice always said that she had seen Jasper coming, but I know that she had to wait twenty-eight years before their paths finally crossed. When I asked her why she didn't go looking for him sooner, she said that if she had, he wouldn't have recognized that he needed her. He had to go through everything he went through beforehand or things wouldn't have worked out.

Jasper was a little leery when Alice walked into the café and invited him to come with her, but through his ability to sense the emotional states of others, he knew that meeting him was vitally important to Alice and that her approach was sincere. Alice, with her knowledge of the future, had known Jasper for nearly three decades before they even met and she already loved him.

Jasper had been nearing the end of his rope, though our kind can dangle there in misery forever. After spending over seven decades training, using, and then destroying newborns in Maria's service, Jasper's soul was dying. For the entirety of his vampiric existence, Jasper had had nothing positive in his life. Though Maria professed her love for him and rewarded his loyalty with her body, she was merely recompensing him for his service. Having never known real love, Jasper was wary of all relationships and trusted no one.

Toward the end of his association with Maria, Jasper finally made a friend. Peter was a year-old vampire whom Maria allowed to live because she found him useful as a newborn caretaker. He and Jasper became peers and Jasper developed a brotherly affection for him.

Peter had made a friend too, a newborn named Charlotte. When Charlotte was nearly a year old—the age at which newborns were always destroyed—Peter realized that he did not want her to die, that he couldn't let it happen. When the moment came for Jasper to kill her, Peter yelled, "Run away!"

Charlotte ran and Peter followed. Jasper cared enough for Peter that he let the couple escape. What Jasper had just witnessed was something he had never seen in his life as a vampire—love. When Peter returned a year later to tell Jasper of a better life in the North, Jasper trusted him enough to leave Maria and join them.

The nomadic life that Jasper shared with Peter and Charlotte was far better than his life had been with Maria, but decades of killing had taken a huge toll. For every vampire Jasper had destroyed, he carried with him a memory of how each one felt as his existence ended. With perfect recall, Jasper relived thousands of deaths thousands of times until depression became his constant companion. In his state, he couldn't tolerate feeding on humans either—their feelings were every bit as painful as those of the vampires had been.

Jasper left his friends and wandered alone for eight years with no hope and no way to die. Then one day in a little Philadelphia diner, a tiny vampire woman walked up and held out her hand as if they were old friends. "You've kept me waiting a long time," she said. Jasper knew that whatever she held in store for him would be better than how he was living. He felt a glimmer of hope.

Alice explained their future to him and their ultimate destination. She had been practicing vegetarianism to prepare for their new lives and Jasper decided to try it to please her. Emotionally, he found hunting animals to be a great relief from his depression and despair, though he still craved human blood and found the habit hard to break. Still, he persevered for Alice.

What happened between Alice and Jasper was much more significant than a lifestyle choice, though. At first, her tiny stature and seeming vulnerability stirred his inclinations as a southern gentleman to protect her, something that has never changed. It is extremely difficult for Jasper to trust that Alice is more of a lethal weapon than her appearance suggests.

When Jasper learned of Alice's blank past and her infinite visions of the future, he knew he had found a kindred spirit. Living with such a gift,

though sometimes a blessing, also requires remarkable strength of character for it can be an enormous burden too, as Jasper well knew.

In the glow of Alice's love, Jasper changed. He began to understand what had happened between Peter and Charlotte because he was falling in love with Alice. Immortality began to seem possible with her by his side. Their love developed into the irreversible bond that forms between vampire mates.

Alice and Jasper lived and traveled together for two years before joining the Cullen family. During that time, they loved and cared for one other, she teaching him to be a vegetarian, he recovering from his depression. They were lovers, but were not sexually intimate.

Jasper was no stranger to sex. He had engaged the services of the women who followed regiments for that purpose, as did nearly all soldiers of his time. He also had carried on a sexual relationship with Maria over many decades—it was how she rewarded him when he pleased her. He had learned that sex was for physical pleasure, for release—it had nothing to do with the kind of love he felt for Alice.

It was only after Alice and Jasper joined our family that they decided to formalize and consummate their partnership. They went to Las Vegas to marry and stayed there for several weeks to celebrate their nuptials. They returned more intertwined than ever.

Jasper told me much later that Alice, though incarcerated since her late teens, was not a virgin when they first made love. Alice has no memory of being with a man before Jasper, though. My best guess is that she was assaulted in the asylum. It's an easy crime to get away with because nobody believes crazy people when they say "crazy" things. It's also possible, though less likely, that her maker engaged in sex with her while she was still human.

Whatever happened, it was probably better for Alice that Jasper was not her first. Women who are virgins when they are changed tear inside during sexual intercourse and then heal afterward, only to tear the next time and the next. In effect, they remain virgins forever.

Alice and Jasper's relationship runs deep. They have decades more time together than Bella and myself, of course, but perhaps there's another element as well—they both lived bleak lives and suffered a great deal before finding each other. They were also used and betrayed by those who purported to care for them.

Though Alice's memories of her childhood and of her days at the asylum have been wiped away, I believe remnants of our most disturbing experiences remain in our bodies and can scar our souls. Whether for that reason or another, Alice and Jasper pass more between them in a look than most couples do in either verbal or physical intercourse.

Edward

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