

*The Private Diary of Edward Anthony Cullen, Part 1*

Fanfiction by **PA Lassiter**

from

**Twilight: The Missing Pieces**

*See more at: [palassiter.wordpress.com](http://palassiter.wordpress.com)*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Author's Intro

MARCH, 2011

*What I Know, The Spanish Flu, The Lost Cullen, The Other Woman (or Esme's Lament)*

APRIL, 2011

*My Baby Girl, My Mysterious Brother, My Generation, Young Talent, Bella's Malady, Age and the Ages*

MAY, 2011

*On My Own, Dream, Harry's Secret, Schizophrenia, Jacob's Fantasy #1, Jacob's Fantasy #2, How Renesmee Saved Her Life, Jacob's Memory #1*

JUNE, 2011

*Teaching Rosalie, Jacob's Memory #2, LOVE, Jacob's Memory #3*

JULY, 2011

*Jacob's Memory #4, Charlie's Second Chance, Jacob's Memory #5, The Edwards Masen, Sex and the Modern Man (PG-13)*

AUGUST, 2011

*Jacob's Fantasy #3, Rosalie's Dream, Our New Friend, Jacob's Fantasy #4*

SEPTEMBER, 2011

*Teaching Fred, Naturists for a Day*

OCTOBER, 2011

*Alec & Jane, Amun & Demetri*

NOVEMBER, 2011

*Fred Goes Hunting, Gianna's Demise, Alice Alone #1 (Jackson)*

## *The Private Diary of Edward Anthony Cullen, Part 1*

### INTRODUCTION

*[This file contains the first forty entries of Edward's diary, while Part 2 contains the remaining thirty-four entries in a separate file.]*

Edward Cullen's gift for reading minds provides him with a glut of information about those around him, some of it wanted, but most of it not. His sense of integrity prevents him from sharing others' secrets, and so to relieve his mind, he took time in 2011 and 2012 to record them in this diary, along with many secrets of his own.

The material in this diary seeks to fill in missing pieces of information about any and all the characters from *The Twilight Saga*. The entries came about in response to hints and holes I found in Stephenie Meyer's four books that begged to be filled. Except for the first one, the stories are told in no particular date order.

Note that this version of the *Private Diary of EAC* is intended for reading on an e-reader and so has had some non-compatible material removed. Captions from missing photographs remain in some cases to indicate where a picture might have been placed in a diary entry. In many cases, these photos are illustrative and add to the experience of reading the diary. You can access the original stories, complete with photos and media links, on my website *Twilight: The Missing Pieces*, located here.

//palassiter.wordpress.com

*PA Lassiter*

*9/13/2013*

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## WHAT I KNOW

Shakespeare's character, Sir John Falstaff—a notoriously vain, drunken, and cowardly knight—once said, "The better part of valor is discretion, in the which better part I have sav'd my life."

In his case, he's referring to the "bravery" of playing dead rather than actually dying by racing into battle, weapons drawn. That's all very well, but I wouldn't want him protecting *my* back.

In my case, I'm referring to the discretion of keeping selected knowledge to oneself. Being discreet in this sense can also save one's life. I should know. I've saved mine many times by keeping my mouth shut around Rosalie.

Discretion is a major tenet of my life as a vampire. Ever since Carlisle discovered that I could read minds—when he realized I was answering his thoughts as well as his spoken questions—and brought it to my attention, I have learned to practice discretion out of necessity.

I am the unintended recipient of loads of information, mostly trivial stuff with little value that just clogs up my otherwise useful brain. I have to wade through it constantly, because it never goes away. (Someone like my father, or me, might wonder about the biology of all that storage. What science is at work to create unlimited "disk space" in a biological organism, i.e., vampires in general, and me in particular?)

Despite the volume of useless information, my brain still has plenty of room to store less innocuous facts about folks that they wish I didn't know. For example, when Rosalie was human, her right foot was one whole size larger than her left. Imagine the horror! That paragon of beauty, queen of all she surveyed in her home town, had an actual physical deformity! She knew a few tricks for hiding that fact, such as never wearing open-toed shoes, and buying Size 7 shoes and stuffing the left one with newspaper (rather than buying a pair of identical Size 6's and wearing the correct size on each foot, something her father certainly could have afforded).

You and I might think that Rosalie's former physical idiosyncrasy is a trivial fact, but to my sister, it's a dark, hideous secret. In such cases, it *never* pays to intentionally (or even unintentionally) reveal such information. Besides, being valorous—forthright, brave, and true—is a worthy ideal, one that is easier to uphold the more you practice keeping your mouth shut.

So I do, mostly, keep my mouth shut, unless it's to my extreme advantage not to. Like when Jacob was trying to steal Bella from me. It drove him crazy that I could read his mind and speak his thoughts in front of Bella, so I often did. But as I said before, it never pays to do that. Jacob quickly learned how to use my abilities against me.

Anyway, the whole point of this first entry in my diary is to explain—justify?—my intent to record here private information about other individuals that I have acquired through my special gift. Though I don't intend to share anything written here with anyone, I find that the writing itself helps clear the extraneous information out of the front of my mind and makes it easier to think about important things. In computer parlance, it moves them from the cache to archival storage.

(I've been studying computers lately. Immortal beings must attempt to keep up with the times or they risk exposure simply by being too old-fashioned. Imagine how Carlisle would stick out if he never advanced beyond 17<sup>th</sup>-century medicine. He'd still be feeding leeches—instead of being one! Ha! A little vampire humor there.)

So I started this private diary. I specify particularly that it is *private*, because I never intend for anyone but myself to see it. I shall keep it well-hidden and write only when I am alone.

*Edward*

*To die is to be a counterfeit, for he is but the counterfeit of a man who hath not the life of a man; but to counterfeit dying, when a man thereby liveth, is to be no counterfeit, but the true and perfect image of life indeed. The better part of valor is discretion, in the which better part I have sav'd my life.*

*-From Henry The Fourth, Part 1 Act 5, scene 4, 115-121*

## THE SPANISH INFLUENZA

Contrary to what I said in my first diary entry, I do not write this bit of history (“his story”) to purge another's secret from the forefront of my mind, but because it was a horrifying experience that haunts me still. Though many details are lost to time and to my transformation, my feelings about it remain, despite what I told Bella.

The Spanish Influenza pandemic was the most significant event of my human life. It was the worst scourge of infectious disease that the world has ever seen. Remember the Bubonic Plague, transmitted by rats in Europe in the 1300s? (Okay, me neither.) The Spanish Flu killed more people in *one* year than the plague killed in *four*.

It was called “Spanish” because France, where the disease was raging, and the U.S., where the disease was first identified, were fighting World War I and were enforcing strict news censorship. Nobody wanted Germany to know that the *flu* was killing *half* of the Allied soldiers in the trenches. (Psssst...guess what? The Germans already knew, since their soldiers were hunkered down in trenches visible from the French side and the flu was killing them too!) Spain was a neutral country, so when it spread there, newspapers reported it, giving the impression that it started in Spain.

Among the U.S. population as a whole, ten times more people died from the Spanish Flu than died in “The Great War.” Twenty-five percent of the population was infected. You get the idea—it was a killer. In fact, it was the war that made it so deadly. Soldiers in Europe lived in trenches in the worst mud, and rain, and cold you've ever seen. The sickest ones were shipped home or to hospitals, making contact with lots of people along the way. If I had lived long enough to enlist in the army, I probably would have died of the flu anyway!

The epidemic first appeared in March, 1918, in a Kansas military camp out in the “the boondocks,” as we former mid-Westerners would say. Though it spread rapidly and killed soldiers all over the country, civilians were not forewarned. In the late fall, it moved into the general population like a time bomb.

### Army Hospital Ward for Spanish Flu Victims, Ft. Riley, Kansas, 1918

Two hundred thousand U.S. citizens died in the month of October. My father, Edward Masen, Sr., was one of them. In November, the war officially ended, and sick soldiers from around the world returned home to spread the disease anew. My mother, Elizabeth Masen, and I succumbed in that second wave of 1919. I got sick in February and entered Chicago's Lakeside hospital; my mother joined me shortly thereafter. That was where we met Dr. Carlisle Cullen.

The Spanish Influenza was a horrendous disease, nothing like the colds that humans call “the flu” today. It turned an ordinary cold into the neutron bomb. People would seem fine at dinner and be dead in the morning. People literally dropped dead in the streets. When you caught the bug, it quickly turned into pneumonia that filled your lungs with bloody, bubbly phlegm as thick as Elmer's glue. You couldn't spit it out; you couldn't choke it out. You just coughed until you drowned. Patients turned blue within a few hours as they suffocated to death.

The most gory symptom was a freakish type of nose bleed. The flu caused great damage to the mucous membranes of the nose and throat. Without warning, a patient might cough or sneeze and blood would squirt out of his nose, shooting several feet. Now there's a nice way to spread disease!

Medical staff was decimated first by the war and then by the flu so that few professionals remained to care for stricken civilians. The hospitals were jammed with patients and empty of staff. Medical students were instantly given doctors' certificates and sent to help.

There wasn't anything to be done for most of us, though. You either got well or you didn't. Hot whisky toddies were the only available “medicine.” The whiskey probably killed some germs and it did help one relax, which made breathing a tiny bit easier for a while. Besides bringing whisky, hospital workers endlessly fetched and carried—water, bedpans, linens, and, yes...bodies. Hundreds of bodies a day.

Carlisle said that the hospital morgue was nightmarish. There was a shortage of coffins and crematoria space, and not enough people to bury the bodies, so they stacked up from floor to ceiling like firewood. And this was at Lakeside—a nice, for-profit hospital. If it was bad there, it's hard to imagine what it was like at the indigent hospitals! I never saw the morgue, because by the time Carlisle took my mother and me there, she was already dead and I was nearly so.

Despite what Bella said about it after jumping off the cliff, drowning has to be one of the worst ways for a human to die. You don't just pass out and float off into dreamland. Terror is a huge part of it, especially if you can breathe just a little. The body's attempt to save itself is very hard work, the choking, the coughing, concentrating to relax your throat so that what little air can get through does get through. All the while, you're panicking at every breath. And coughing takes air—a lot of air.

I'm sure you can appreciate my level of panic, then, when Bella began choking up blood on the day she died. It filled her lungs just like the pneumonia had filled mine. Despite my best efforts to clear her airways, she began turning blue, just as I and my parents had when we died. In truth, I'm not certain that I was even fully present at that moment. I was so traumatized that if Jacob hadn't been there to take over, Bella could have died for real.

Now there's a secret for you—despite the kudos Carlisle gives me, I carry that shame with me always. It is noteworthy that, though Bella was dying from complications of childbirth and I was dying from the Spanish Influenza, we would have expired in exactly the same way: from lack of oxygen. In the end, we were both saved by a Cullen vampire.

*Edward*

*One can stand it to see one, two or twenty men die, but to see these poor devils  
dropping like flies sort of gets on your nerves.*

—From a letter written by a doctor at Kansas army hospital, Sept 1918

*I had a little bird,  
Its name was Enza.  
I opened the window,  
And in-flu-enza.*

—From a children's jump-rope rhyme, 1918

### Emergency Tent Hospital for Spanish Flu Victims

This is a “funny” song and video about the pandemic, complete with relevant pictures:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JV938U4Y96w>

## THE LOST CULLEN

No doubt you've heard that as a human Esme bore a child. Bella has described my vampire mother as "a little rounder" than the rest of us (though she's still quite slender). She has that voluptuous appearance because she delivered her baby only three days before she became a vampire. The baby's name was Charles George, for Charlie Chaplin and George Gershwin, both of whom Esme loved, though if asked, she would say that "Charles" was for her husband, and "George" was for her father. I knew better.

Another little-known fact about Esme: her baby was born only six months after she was married. Charles Evenson was a cad, forced to the altar by the proverbial shotgun (yes, ol' George was known for his twitchy trigger finger). So, three months into her marriage, six months pregnant, her husband found himself a little something on the side and poor Esme was left alone every day, and many a night too. She knew she could endure, though, because she already had someone else to love.

Esme was a real beauty; still is, as a matter of fact, and by all accounts, so was little Charlie...green eyes, soft blonde hair. A cutie if ever there was one. For three days. *For. Three. Days.* Can you imagine? Now that Bella and I are parents, I can begin to understand how horrendous it would be to lose a child.

Like Esme, most of us remember whatever caused our human death as the most significant event of our human life. For Carlisle, it was the horror of being bitten by the London sewer wraith and crawling off to die. (You might have noticed that he always wears his collars high on his neck, or covers his neck with a scarf, or protects it with a coat or hat, because that's where his transformative bite was made.)

My most troubling human memory is of the Spanish Influenza pandemic and Rosalie's is of being assaulted and left for dead by her fiance and his friends. Jasper's worst human memory is being tricked by the evil Maria into stopping to assist her and her vampire friends. Emmett is troubled by the bear attack that almost killed him. (He still likes to wrestle bears because he's forever trying to win that last battle.)

Of all of us, only Alice has no disquieting human experiences in her memory, none at all. The "treatment" for asylum residents in the 1920s was electroshock, which steals the victim's humanity by wiping out her memory. Therefore, I surmise that electroshock was the worst experience of Alice's human life, though she doesn't remember it.

Bella's worst memory is of Renesmee's near-death from suffocation before she was born. (In truth, I'm only guessing since I can't read her mind. I will never ask, though, because the other possibility is my having abandoned her in the woods a number of years ago. I simply couldn't bear it if that was her answer.)

For Esme, the worst thing that happened to her as a human was losing little Charlie. His lungs hadn't fully developed, apparently, or perhaps his heart was not strong enough, or maybe his immune system wasn't yet activated. For whatever reason, he developed "lung fever" right after his birth. We call it pneumonia now and it's caused by fluid building up in the lungs. It's similar to what killed most of the Spanish Flu victims (including me).

Esme wouldn't have jumped off of a cliff if her baby had survived his illness, but sometimes I fantasize about what our family would be like if he had, if Carlisle had changed Esme, but her baby somehow, miraculously, had lived. Would she have made off with the baby and brought him along with her to live as a Cullen?

The answer, my friend, is yes, yes she would have. Esme would have been incapable of abandoning her baby; our family would have begun differently and would live differently to this day. For one thing, the child would have grown up always wondering if he was adopted. And the family's answer to that would have to be "yes, yes you are." There's no other way we could have explained to little Charlie why his skin was a different color than ours; why everyone looks exactly the same year after year in the family photographs except for him; and perhaps worst of all, why we'd never let poor Charlie join in any of our "reindeer games."

We'd all feel badly, of course, that he could never legitimately win at any competition with his family members...not cards, not chess, not trivia, not arm wrestling, not bird-watching, not rock-paper-scissors. No, I take that back. Probably, he could beat us all at pie-eating, though with Emmett's competitive spirit, you never know.

It is interesting to think about how Charlie would have grown to adulthood, married, and had children of his own. The Cullen family would have heirs, descendants, a family tree! That would be something. It makes me wonder whether Renesmee will be able to bear children someday. If so, might they be half-puppy? I shudder at the thought. (Though I must admit that Seth was always a good kid.)

*Edward*



## THE OTHER WOMAN (or Esme's Lament)

The most painful event of my mother's human life was losing her newborn baby boy. She will tell you that herself. What she won't tell you is that, as a vampire, she carries with her a pain of another sort.

I was seventeen when my human life drained away in an influenza ward, just one of the 675,000 U.S. victims of the 1918—1919 pandemic. My parents, Elizabeth Masen and Edward Masen, Sr., were two others.

Once admitted to the hospital, my father never regained consciousness and died swiftly under the watchful eyes of Dr. Carlisle Cullen, who was working the night shift at Lakeside Hospital throughout the crisis. When my mother and I were admitted four months later, the good doctor was already acquainted with us and our plight.

Carlisle was unique among the staff of the hospital. No other doctor, nurse, or aide would have remembered us. There were simply too many patients who passed through there on their way to the morgue. But unlike his peers, Carlisle's memory was infallible. To this day, he remembers the name, age, and severity of disease of every patient he saw, and a lot more besides.

For some reason, he carried a particular affection for my mother and me, though we were not his patients for long. No matter how busy he was, he made time to visit us at least once every day to check on our conditions and to chat with my mother, Elizabeth.

Carlisle has said that he thought I would die first, because I was so much sicker than my mother. In all likelihood, she would have survived her less severe infection had she taken Carlisle's advice and kept to herbed, but she could not. There was so little staff to care for patients, their numbers having been decimated by the war, and then by the flu, that my mother got out of her sick bed to nurse me. It weakened her so severely and so precipitously, that when Carlisle came to work on our third night in the hospital, she was at death's door. With her last few breaths, she begged for my life.

"Save him!" she cried. "You must do everything in *your* power. What others cannot do, that is what you must do for my Edward." Carlisle said that her eyes bored right through him as he held her hand and watched her tortured face become insensible.

Somehow, my mother knew that Carlisle was more than what he appeared to be. Perhaps she thought he had a special connection to the Almighty—it wouldn't be the first time Carlisle has been mistaken for an angel. I think it likely that she had a gift for discerning another's thoughts or intentions and it is that gift which I have inherited from her. However she perceived it, she knew that Carlisle had special abilities and in her final hours, implored him to use them—not for herself, but for me.

That moment was the first time in his vampire existence that Carlisle had felt recognized for who and what he was. It changed him. Elizabeth had pierced the shell of loneliness that had isolated him for 235 years.

And that is when Carlisle decided to save my life, to grant Elizabeth's dying wish. He had longed for a companion so often, but could never bring himself to damn another creature to his unchanging existence. He did it then, and afterwards, it became easier for him to change the others in our family. He came to believe that transforming a human into a vampire was not wrong when there was no other hope for saving their life. Obviously, he did not regard it as a panacea, or he would have changed many more dying humans since then. He chose each of us in particular for reasons of his own.

I know one thing for sure. If I had died first, as Carlisle expected, he would have changed Elizabeth. For you see, Carlisle loved my mother. It was not something he could declare to her, her husband having recently passed, and she and her son sick and under his care, but he thought she would survive her illness. He thought he would have time. Unfortunately, her sickness grew worse much faster than mine in the end, and time ran out.

So Carlisle changed me—not only for Elizabeth, but also because of Elizabeth. In his hesitation to perform the act he considered unholy, he missed his chance with her. He mourned the loss deeply as he wheeled her body to the morgue. In his despair, he came back to spirit me away and make me his own. That is not to say that Carlisle doesn't love me...indeed, I believe he loves me all the more because I am my mother's son. I am a powerful reminder of her that he shall keep forever. If you've ever thought that Carlisle favors me, you would not be wrong, and now you know why.

Carlisle told Esme about Elizabeth before asking for her hand. Esme, who is such a loving and generous soul, took it in stride, offering Carlisle her understanding and reassurance. She has never let him see that she harbors inchoate, vague feelings of being his "second choice." She wasn't—of course she wasn't. After all, Carlisle changed Esme.

Clearly, Carlisle and Esme are perfect mates and ecstatically in love—neither would be complete without the other. It doesn't change the fact that Esme retains that small measure of sadness and doubt.

One might think that Esme would resent me, but generous as she is, I believe she loves me especially because I am the son of one whom Carlisle loved. Despite that, I have seen the sadness in my vampire mother's mind from time to time, when the past pays a visit.

If my father knew, he would do everything in his power to make it right. He would explain that what he felt in the past in no way lessens the joy of his love for Esme in the present. That he feels honored and happy that she chose him. Perhaps he could ease her mind.

But he doesn't know, has never realized. And much as I love them both, it is nothing I can ever reveal outside these pages.

*Edward*

## 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*

## THE BLACK STORY

Billy Black's wife, Sarah, died in a car accident when Jacob was small. His memories of her are few and indistinct, which is why he never talks about her. Like me, I suppose. Sarah Black ran the family car off the road and into an ancient Douglas fir tree after confronting Billy about his affair with Lily Call—and about her suspicion that he was the father of Lily's toddler. Two decades later, Billy still wonders whether the car crash was an accident, and if not, whether Sarah was trying to kill him or herself. She accomplished the former, but only crippled her husband, leaving him forever to wonder.

Billy's mind is relatively quiet compared to most people's. He's not as hard to read as Charlie Swan, but nearly so. However, when Jacob was severely injured in our battle with the newborns, Billy's mind kept wandering back to Sarah's death and to the tremendous pain it caused him to lose her. He didn't know whether he could survive such a loss again. Fortunately, Jacob had inherited his father's werewolf gene and had reached the age when the gene had kicked in. Therefore, Billy knew Jacob would heal, but watching his son suffer was painful in the extreme.

Billy had never known for sure whether Embry was his son. Lily claimed he was, but Billy knew that Lily also saw her ex-husband from time to time. It wasn't until Embry turned sixteen and phased for the first time that Billy had to face the truth. The only other men who could have fathered a werewolf son were Quil Ateara, Sr., and Levi Uley.

Billy had ruled out old Quil as Embry's father, because Quil was known to be completely devoted to his wife. Levi Uley was another story. He'd always been restless and wild, a drinker and man about town before he left the area altogether. In spite of that, Billy knew Lily was not promiscuous, so the likelihood was high that Embry was his son.

Billy never owned up to being Embry's biological father, but in the most important ways, Billy was more of a father to Embry than Lily's ex-husband had been. Jacob and Embry were best friends growing up, and because Lily worked long hours to support her son, the boys spent most of their out-of-school hours at Jacob's house. Stuck in his wheelchair, Billy had been available to spend time with the boys, teaching them how to throw a ball, to operate a boat and fish, and how to repair their decrepit vehicles...all those things that loving fathers do with their sons.

Neither Jacob nor Embry knew the truth, because if they had, the whole pack would know and I would have heard it through the pack mind. Billy had kept the information to himself, but he was about 95% sure that Embry was his.

I could see a certain similarity in appearance between Jacob and Embry, though everyone says Jacob resembles Sarah more than he does Billy. If you look at the three musketeers together (Jacob, Embry, and Quil, Jr.), you can pick out the half-brothers immediately. Quil looks nothing like the other two. Jacob and Embry also have some similarities in their personalities, though I'd venture to say that Jacob is both more outgoing and more hot-headed. Jacob used to

be rather shy like Embry until he developed a crush on Bella. After that, he became surprisingly pushy in his pursuit of her.

Embry's mother has lived on the Quileute reservation since before Embry was born, though she is Makah. Her father is Albert Ulmer, the old fisherman whose son, Robert, ferried Carlisle and I across the Strait of Juan de Fuca to Canada some years ago. We were attempting to lead the sadistic vampire, James, far away from Bella so we could do away with him.

Albert, with what appeared to be a latent case of Alzheimer's, tried to tell Carlisle and me about Billy Black's intrusion into his family tree. He certainly believed that Billy had fathered his grandson. Talking about it excessively and inappropriately seemed to be one of the symptoms of his disease.

I'd gotten the impression that Lily's brother, Robert, thought his sister still held a torch for Billy. As Robert motored us across the strait that day in his fishing boat, he'd thought about Lily's long-standing love for Billy. She was heartbroken when Billy lost the use of his legs in the car accident with Sarah. I'm not sure, but my guess is that Billy's spinal break put an end to his baby-making days.

Billy still has an eye for the ladies, though. He spent a lot of time with Sue Clearwater after her husband, Harry, was killed. Billy had a good excuse to do so, since Sue became a tribal elder upon Harry's death. As the tribe's de facto chief (Sam Uley's alpha-wolf status notwithstanding), Billy would be the one to introduce Sue to the secrets of the tribe, and in particular, the existence of the tribe's wolf gene. Sue must have had quite a shock discovering that the tribal legends are real and that her two children, Leah and Seth, are both pups in disguise.

I sincerely hope that Bella and I don't get a similar shock when Renesmee comes of age. She does indeed have 24 pairs of chromosomes, the same number as the wolves. Carlisle has been thrilled to learn about the heretofore unknown breeding compatibility between humans and vampires, which could explain how the wolf shape-shifters originally came into existence. (Carlisle is only excited about the genetic science of it, not the reality. Carlisle would never promote the impregnating of humans by vampires after witnessing what happened to Bella.)

Perhaps Carlisle will solve some of the mysteries of the wolf pack, such as why Leah became a wolf and Jacob's sisters did not, or why a wolf imprints on a particular mate. Leah could be right in hypothesizing that imprinting occurs to enhance the fertility and long-term survival of the tribe. In particular, a wolf may be attracted to a mate based on the likelihood of passing on the wolf gene.

Ugh! I just realized that if fertility plays a role in imprinting, then Renesmee is likely to be fertile with Jacob! Ugh, ugh, ugh!

I'm starting to have a little more sympathy for Charlie than I ever expected to. It was hard for him to accept my courting of Bella. Still, he had seventeen years to prepare himself and I shall have only seven or eight.

Perhaps I should prohibit Renesmee from going out with Jacob until she has lived sixteen human years. On second thought, that is unlikely to be effective. If Charlie had forbidden Bella to date me, then I would have found some way around his strictures. If he had insisted that Bella not marry until she was in her twenties, I would have used every asset at my disposal to convince her to elope with me. Oh, how the worm turns! It serves me right, I suppose.

You'd think that having courted Bella by lying with her every night in her bed might have softened my attitude toward Renesmee's suitor (or possibly, suitors, given Nahuel's interest), but it hasn't. If I discovered that Jacob was sleeping with my teenage daughter, chastely or not, I'd blow a gasket. God certainly has a sense of humor.

Lord, I wish I could sleep! It would be such a welcome escape from these troubled thoughts of a compulsive father. I wonder if Bella feels like making love right about now....

*Edward*

RELATED? You decide.

## MY BABY GIRL

Renesmee has existed for four-and-a-half years, which for her is the human equivalent of an eleven-year-old. Almost a teenager. We've had so little time to get used to having a child and she's almost not a child anymore.

I was thinking recently about her brief toddler-hood and her close attachment to me then. I'd read once that children who spend their earliest days in an incubator can have trouble bonding with others later in life. In former times, parents weren't allowed in the hospital intensive care units and those unfortunates who had a sickly or premature infant were forced to look at their babies through glass. They were allowed to meet and hold their infant only after it was well enough to be taken home. If the child expired in the hospital, the parents met it upon its demise. Of course, because newborns require physical contact when small, prohibiting that early closeness increased the probability that the baby would die. A vicious Catch-22.

With the latter part of the 20th century came a more humane approach to infant care. Not only are parents allowed, but are actively encouraged, to spend time with their incubator babies in order to promote healthy bonding from both sides.

I sometimes wonder whether Renesmee's first days had some influence on her relationship with her mother and me. Though Renesmee saw and touched her mother in her first three days of life, Bella was completely unresponsive as she suffered through her change. Renesmee was cared for by Rosalie and Jacob mostly, though everyone pitched in, unable to resist our baby's charms.

One of Renesmee's earliest memories is from the day of her birth when she reached out from Bella's womb and grabbed what she could reach, which happened to be my nose. When she was young, she liked to remind me frequently of that day. It seemed to be her way of reaffirming that I am her Daddy, her first caretaker on her first day. There must be something about that initial connection of trust that sticks with a child (or at least with our child). Renesmee and I were extraordinarily close in her first couple of years.

Bella has told me that she and Renesmee were connected while Nessie was inside of her. Bella began speaking to her and comforting her from the first day she was aware that Renesmee was there. And she always felt that Nessie heard and understood her. She certainly recognized Bella's voice.

I remember with great joy the day that Nessie made herself known to me from inside Bella's body, when presumably her brain had developed enough for me to read her mind. She didn't yet have coherent thoughts, but she had perceivable expressions of emotion. The first thing I read was her sense of delight at the sound of Bella's voice. What a thrill that was! She responded similarly when I spoke. It was clear that she knew her parents before she was born.

Renesmee heard Bella speak briefly right after her birth, and then had to wait for three days to hear her again. Renesmee had an adjustment to make when she was re-introduced to her mother,

because Bella's voice sounded so different. Nessie and I didn't have that difficulty. She recognized me and my voice from the instant she was born and that remained constant for her.

Bella confided in me that when she awoke from her change and saw Renesmee for the first time, she didn't immediately recognize the child who had been living in her womb. She had to reestablish the emotional bond that had developed between them during Nessie's gestation. No doubt that was partly because three days after her birth, our daughter already was well on her way to becoming a toddler.

I've wondered whether that brief estrangement from Bella in the beginning explains why, of her two parents, Renesmee relied more on me to take care of the day-to-day minutia of her early life. For example, if I was anywhere about, she would ask me to prepare her food and feed her. (That was best, because Bella was entirely unable to handle the donated human blood that Renesmee preferred.) She always came looking for me when it was time for her bath, too. She enjoyed having me drag out her fleet of miniature plastic boats...two sailboats, a little cruising yacht, a canoe, and a fishing boat... and play "boat races" and other bathtub games with her.

Of course, others of the family did these things for her too...Bella or Rosalie, Jacob or Esme. Often, she had two or three of us at a time attending to her needs. She might be the only child in history who had nine adults always at her beck and call. But whenever Renesmee had an "Ow-ie," which wasn't often given that her skin is nearly as indestructible as her parents', she'd run to her Daddy for a "fix-it" kiss.

One thing we rarely noticed was the length or sharpness of her fingernails and toenails. They never scratched any of us except Jacob, and he healed immediately from such minor injuries. None of the rest of us ever had to trim our nails or cut our hair, so we had to make an effort to remember to do it for Renesmee. With nails as proportionately tough as her skin, sometimes she'd scratch herself in her sleep or when playing. One afternoon, she toddled up to me to show me a minor scratch across her cheek.

"What happened to you, little one?" I asked her, picking her up and holding her against my chest. She placed her palm on my cheek and showed me how while playing "paints" with Jacob, she swiped her ragged thumbnail across her cheek and dug a little gouge. She had allowed Jacob to clean the blue paint off her face, but when she saw the scratch she wanted me to "fix." I swiped a little venom across the mark when kissing it and it healed instantly. She didn't consider this magical, since she'd never known any different, but she liked it all the same.

(At the time, I wondered how difficult it was going to be to integrate our daughter into a human classroom when the time came. Not only did her world have an entirely different reality than that of her peers, but she grew so fast that we would have to move her from one school to another at least once a year, and probably every six months. We dodged the problem by remaining in Forks and enrolling Renesmee in the Quileute reservation school. Though she wasn't Native American, she was allowed into the school by special circumstance as the object of Jacob's imprinting. She is always welcome on the reservation and is understood and accepted there for what she is. It was made easier for the wolves

when Carlisle let it be known through Billy Black that Renesmee has the same genetics as the wolves themselves, one more set of chromosomes than humans have. We all anxiously await her puberty to see if she will exhibit the traits of a shapeshifter.)

After healing Renesmee's scratch, I said, "Let's get the clippers and take care of those nails." (For Nessie, "clippers" means a pair of small wire cutters for jewelry-making, and "nail file" means the matching miniature file for metal.)

I tossed my daughter onto my shoulders and hauled her lickety-split to the upstairs bathroom in "the big house," as she calls the Cullen residence, not to be confused with our private cottage in the woods. I addressed each of Renesmee's fingernails, first clipping and then filing them, to remove the sharp edges. When all ten were short and smooth, she raised one foot for my inspection from her perch on the bathroom counter. Yes, unattractively long toenails too. I took the clippers to her feet, and then gave each foot a little rubdown.

Alice had introduced Renesmee to the wonders of fingernail polish. With her hand to my neck, she asked me to paint her nails red and black, one hand and one foot of each color. She giggled like a maniac when I tickled the bottom of her feet and played "little piggy" with her toes. Even with my speed of movement, the nail-painting job took a long time, between her kicking her feet to mock-avoid my tickling and me trying to keep the nail polish on her nails.

It was one of those memorable moments that I spent with our baby who was not a baby for long. Sometimes Renesmee reminds me of that day, which was special to us both. Of course, once I'd done the job one time, I became the nail tender. Whenever her polish began to chip off, here she'd come, showing me her "boo-boos" and asking me to redo them. I didn't mind. It was just one of our "things," something that we did together during that preciously short period. By the time Renesmee was the human equivalent of nine years old, she had wisely turned to Auntie Alice for all advice and assistance of a beauty and fashion nature.

As a pre-teen, Renesmee has gone all private and secretive about her personal business. She knows I can read her mind, but it doesn't keep her from hiding things from me. We are working to redefine our relationship now that she is a young woman.

I often lament that Renesmee grows so much more quickly than a human child. I would love to have prolonged those months of babyhood when we were so close and Daddy was her hero. She's still wonderful, of course, in all new ways, and she still loves her Daddy, just differently. If it were possible, I would love to have another child or two with Bella. Being a father is one of the most delightful things I've ever done.

When Bella was human, she said she'd never had any particular interest in being a mother and wasn't worried about missing that experience when she became a vampire. There's something that changes inside you when you become a parent, though. The potential experience transforms into an actual one, complete with all the emotions that make parenthood a thrilling, engaging, and wonderful

adventure. We are extremely blessed, given the improbability of Renesmee's existence. I'm much closer to understanding Rosalie's psyche than ever before.

*Edward*

## MY MYSTERIOUS BROTHER

My brother, Jasper, is a bit of a mystery to most people he meets. Exceptionally quiet until he gets to know you (and he never gets to know you, or rather, you never get to know him), you'd think he was a simmering volcano of deep thoughts. I can tell you from seeing inside his head that that is only partially true.

Much of Jasper's brain activity is spent devising new ways to win at various games. He's difficult for anyone (but Alice and me) to beat at chess, backgammon, or mahjong, and is a talented card player and gambler. He loves to visit Las Vegas, Reno, Atlantic City, and especially Monte Carlo in the Principality of Monaco. (The country where Grace Kelly, the American actress, married Prince Rainier and bore three children before driving her car off one of its steep cliff roads and killing herself.)

Casinos have a particular attraction for Jasper, not only for their gambling opportunities, but also because they remain open all night as well as all day. He can come and go freely without worrying about being caught out in the sunshine...ever. Perhaps you've noticed that casinos don't have windows, which is very handy for individuals who sparkle in sunlight. In Las Vegas, one can stay inside a hotel during the day, gambling or seeing shows or just sitting at the bar and watching the crowds. At night, he can wander the strip, and have all kinds of illicit fun. Jasper always returns from his gambling trips a richer man than when he left.

Emmett enjoys Vegas too and sometimes accompanies Jasper there. Emmett loves to gamble, especially on sports... football, soccer, horseracing, and boxing. Emmett *loves* to bet on boxing matches. Alice enjoys Vegas too, but mostly for the high-quality shopping and the lure of the lights. The only problem any of us have when going to Las Vegas (which is best, because it's the biggest gambling mecca and the easiest place to fade into the crowds...) is in proving our legal age. We all look young, Alice and I especially, but Jasper keeps us equipped with the proper papers to prove that we are at least twenty-one years of age.

As you can imagine, there are some real inconveniences with never growing older, and especially with never *appearing* to grow older. It necessitates our moving at least every ten years, though six is better, and updating our passports, driver's licenses, and social security cards regularly.

Before the computer age, it was not difficult to "borrow" the social security numbers of deceased citizens and thereby acquire needed documents legally. Records of births, deaths, marriages, and so on, were written by hand or typewriter and stored in a particular vault in a particular city, and rarely transferred to other vaults in other cities. Phones made sharing this kind of information easier. (Actually, telegraphs came first—and yes, I do remember them.) The U.S. Postal Service also allowed sharing of such information between employers, say, and the Internal Revenue Service, or between police departments in different towns or even in different countries.

As methods of document duplication and sharing became more sophisticated (the Xerox machine being the biggest leap forward before computers), the Cullens' legal status as citizens of the United States became harder to reestablish as often as we needed to. That task fell to Jasper, who has always been good at creating relationships with the appropriate people—whether on the right side or the left side of the law—when necessity dictates.

Jasper has found that if you want to procure illegal items, such as false papers, you would do well to have 1) a lot of money, 2) a lot of muscle, and 3) the ability to use that muscle to “encourage” procurers to keep their mouths shut and their questions to a minimum. Jasper has a man in Seattle who has prepared Cullen documents for twenty years and whose business partner did so for fifteen years before that.

Mr. J. Jenks has learned never to ask why “Mr. Jasper” doesn’t seem to age, or why he repeatedly requests that years be subtracted from his and his family’s ages on their passports and driver’s licenses, or why when he invites Mr. Jasper to dine with him, Mr. Jasper doesn’t eat. He has learned not to mention the Cullen name anywhere, to anyone, at any time.

According to Bella, Mr. J. Jenks is so frightened of “Mr. Jasper” that he practically lost control of his bladder when she first introduced herself as his sister-in-law. When Bella requested papers for Renesmee, listing “Jacob Wolfe” as Nessie’s legal guardian in case Jacob needed to help her escape from the Volturi, Mr. J. Jenks was clever enough—or frightened enough of Jasper—to ask her whether she was trying to deprive Mr. Jasper’s brother (me) of his legal rights to his child. The lawyer probably believed that Jasper would kill him if Mr. Edward’s “estranged” wife were to kidnap his brother’s child with papers he sold her.

Bella doesn’t know this—nor does anyone else—but Mr. J. Jenks has good reason to be scared of Jasper. You see, twenty years ago, Jenks had an older partner (“Mr. P”) with whom Jasper had done business for the prior fifteen years. J. Jenks took over the business after Mr. P. lost control of his car on the Evergreen Point Floating Bridge and plunged into the deep, cold waters of Lake Washington just outside of Seattle. Because the lake is 70 yards deep at that point and averages 55-degrees year around, neither Mr. P.’s body nor his vehicle was ever recovered.

One witness came forward claiming that he was driving behind the Cadillac just before it veered out of control, and saw a tall, blonde-haired passenger bent over with “her” head on the driver’s shoulder. No such passenger was ever found and no one ever came forward to report a missing person who fit the description. Since Jasper has always kept the illicit side of the family’s business to himself, no one else in the family has any idea that something happened to Mr. P. I’m sure that such news would make Carlisle exceedingly unhappy if he knew.

Evergreen Point Floating Bridge, Seattle, WA, circa 1963

Though Mr. J. Jenks has no proof that Mr. Jasper was involved in the car crash, he suspects so, because Jasper was the last client his partner saw before his demise. My brother believes in the value of fear in certain business relationships, so he allows—if not encourages—Jenks' suspicions.

Mr. J. Jenks isn't the only person who is afraid of Jasper. Humans are frightened of us in general if they have any sense, but Jasper carries with him an extra aura of mystery which some interpret as covert violence. That comes partly from the fact that he has drained the blood from thousands of humans...yes, thousands (not to mention the many thousands of vampires he has dispatched). Jasper is an old vampire by our family's standards, and he did not attempt to curb his appetite for blood for at least 60 years. So, though the people he meets don't know that he is a long-established serial murderer, they often sense it somehow in their bones.

In addition to that, Jasper is scarred...vastly scarred...so scarred that his scars have scars. Though humans can't readily see the scars that riddle his arms, throat, and face, I think their minds register them on a subconscious level as evidence of danger. Vampires certainly do.

His ability to alter the emotions of people he meets also puts some on edge. When his calming influence wears off, they realize that he did "something" to them and it makes them wary. They become puzzled and disturbed when they do things they don't want to do merely because he asks.

If the humans he encountered only knew how sensitive he is to their feelings, they'd be very surprised. He suffers when those around him suffer and that's why, though he does not enjoy being a vegetarian and it's particularly difficult for him, he sticks with it. When he slips up, the pain he feels for his victims threatens to drive him mad. He was very nearly insane when Alice found him. He'd been driven to a depression so deep that, like me, he had made plans to do away with himself when he couldn't take it anymore. He thought he could provoke Maria, his creator, into killing him.

Jasper doesn't think about that anymore, not since Alice came into his life. It's the first time in his vampire existence that he has known the meaning of the word "love." He thought that the hideous relationship he had with Maria was love of a certain kind, because he never knew anything different in our world. Jasper has suffered a great deal in his existence, though to be balanced, he has also caused a great deal of suffering...a very great deal of suffering.

With his brilliant strategic mind, Jasper is by far the wealthiest individual in our family other than Carlisle. He's come by it honestly too—by that I mean that he can't predict the stock market and take advantage of that, and he doesn't use his influence over humans to steal or con people out of their money. He's won most of what he's made. He does use his vampire mathematical skills and swift hand movements to get the best of a croupier at times, though since casinos are havens of such behavior (mostly on the part of management), I don't count that as cheating. But how we all make our money is another story altogether.

*Edward*

P.S. Yikes! I just had a disturbing thought...was Jasper anywhere near Monaco on Sept. 14, 1982, the day Princess Grace drove her car off the Devil's Curse embankment? Would Princess Stephanie (her daughter, who was also in the car) recognize him in a lineup? Could the car crash be a cover for some other kind of death? What would have been the motive? Not just thirst...surely.

Devil's Curse, Principality of Monaco, 1980s

## MY GENERATION

I read in the paper a few weeks ago that the last World War I veteran in the United States has died. Frank Woodruff Buckles was 110 years old...my age. He was only sixteen when he lied about his age to join the army in 1917. The second-oldest known WWI veteran died in 2008 in Austria. As far as anyone on earth knows, I am the only man of my generation left.

I know I'm not a man and that I'm just one of many vampires, some of whom are eons older than me, but having married a human brings things closer to home, I suppose. Possibly my last human contemporary in the U.S. has passed. It's like the opposite of one's birthday—one's last possible "death" day. I'm not particularly nostalgic about the days of my youth, since I was changed so young. I went to school, which had just become compulsory; read the first book series written for children (my favorite being *Tom Swift*); joined the Boy Scouts of America when it was a new organization; dreamed of becoming a soldier; and that was the extent of my human life, really.

It was Esme who introduced me to the popular culture of my generation. She was born only six years before me, so we are of the same era. Before her first marriage, she had cultivated an interest in music, but had never roamed far from her home town in Ohio. After she joined our family, Esme took steps to get us involved in art and culture...and to get us out of the house for fun more often.

Carlisle had been working long hours at the local hospital in Ashland, Wisconsin, and I'd enrolled in the city's high school. We spent much of our free time together talking about medicine. I was becoming interested in his profession by constant exposure to it. I also had bought a piano with which to amuse myself when alone.

My human mother had made sure I took piano lessons as a boy, and I played a fair bit as entertainment for my parents and their guests in our front parlor in Chicago. As a vampire, I explored the expanded possibilities for musical artistry enabled by my change. My hands and brain worked so much faster that I could make the one instrument sound like four or five. Composing became a passion of mine, as I explored the limits of my new capabilities. Esme adored my piano playing, and encouraged me to expand my classical repertoire with the latest jazz and ragtime music.

Esme also bought a Gramophone and some records, and ordered Arthur Murray's new mail-order dancing lessons. The package contained footprints drawn on paper, denoting the steps of the popular dances of the day. We attached the papers to the floor, and then learned to dance step-by-step following the numbered footprints. She, Carlisle, and I quickly mastered the waltz, the foxtrot; and the Charleston.

The three of us attended town-hall dances in the 1920s, and after we moved to the east coast, Esme signed us up for lessons at one of the new Arthur Murray ballroom-dancing schools. She got so good that she was offered, and accepted, a teaching post. She became known for always wearing gloves, a practice she adopted to prevent the students from noticing the chilly temperature of her hands. She had to stop teaching because too many male students became enamored of her and a number of them tried

following her home after classes. Her beauty, grace, and sweet vampire's scent attracted them to her like flies. For a time, Carlisle or I had to escort her whenever she left the house.

We took in the latest technological rage, the moving picture show. Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, and Charlie Chaplin were popular stars of the era and when the latter made *The Gold Rush* in 1925, we were delighted with the Little Tramp. In 1927, we rushed to the theater along with everyone else to see the first "talkie," called *The Jazz Singer*.

There were vaudeville shows, occasional visits to speakeasies (where we, of course, did not drink the illegal alcohol, but rather danced), and at home, we listened to the vaudeville stars who had adapted their stage shows to the radio wireless. Jack Benny, George Burns and Gracie Allen, as well as Abbott and Costello, and Milton Berle entertained us with their creative wit. Sports events like the World Series also were broadcast on the radio wireless, as was the news and politics of the day.

Automobiles had been around for a while, but became popular only after Henry Ford started mass producing them in Michigan. Carlisle bought a Model T, which we often took out for joy rides, followed by its modernized version, the Model A. When the faster and sleeker Chevrolets became available, Carlisle traded up. Though we could run faster than the automobiles of the time, the novelty and thrill of the "driving machine" turned us into auto fanatics.

I saw the first scheduled television programs in 1928 and the birth of Mickey Mouse in the same year. When the Great Depression hit in 1929, Carlisle's fortune diminished along with everyone else's. Though we were not speculators in the market, the value of our family's holdings took a dive. Unlike other Americans, though, we had no trouble recouping our losses. In the early 1930s, after returning from my independent sojourn away from Carlisle and Esme, I became a medical doctor on paper and, though I did not enjoy philanthropic contact with humans, I helped Carlisle from time to time with his house calls and non-invasive procedures, and saw first-hand the miracle of sulfa drugs and penicillin. If either had been available in 1918, the Spanish Influenza pandemic could have been abridged, or perhaps thwarted altogether.

Now that the last American of my generation has died, I feel an obligation to record some of what we experienced outside of the war and the epidemic that overshadowed our youths. There were many innovations of that era that remain favorite pastimes of the Cullen family to this day...music, dancing, broadcast entertainment, sports, and fast cars. Carlisle and I have Esme to thank for lifting us from the isolation of our studious natures and bringing some joy and light into our lives.

*Edward*

## YOUNG TALENT

When Bella's nemesis, Victoria, brought her newborn army to wipe out our coven, we very nearly added another member to our family. Her name was Bree Tanner, a runaway child who had been recruited to the vampire army for the price of a cheeseburger. She seemed a good sort, just a hungry kid living on the streets due to a bad home situation—Seattle streets are full of them. Bree didn't tell me these details, but they were in her mind shortly before her sad demise.

From what I saw of the vampire army through the wolf pack's eyes, Bree seemed to be Riley's favored type of recruit—young and hopeless with nowhere to go. Most of them were wild, aggressive, not too smart, and undisciplined—at least as vampires, they were far from disciplined.

But Bree was a gentle, intelligent child. She wouldn't have come to the battle except Riley had told her that her love was already there ahead of her. In fact, Riley had lied outright to get her to come to the battlefield. He and Victoria had murdered Diego several days earlier.

Bree and Diego weren't officially betrothed, but from what I read in Bree's mind, the bond had already been established. That kind of attachment rarely changes with vampires.

Realizing that Diego was dead was terribly sad for Bree, but already she was thinking of ways that she might go on living if she survived the Volturi's visit. At first, she thought she'd make a life out of tracking Riley and killing him in revenge for Diego's death. Later, she thought she would go looking for her friend, Fred. She trusted him, and he trusted her, not something that is easy to come by in the vampire world. That's why every vampire who's ever met Carlisle is shocked even more by his integrity than by his diet. Bree was so impressed by him and Esme that she even considered joining our family.

When Bree found out that I had already destroyed both Riley and Victoria, she was deeply grateful. In exchange, she told me secrets she knew about Jane and the Volturi guard—in particular, that they had conspired with Victoria to allow the newborn's attack on my family. We learned the full extent of the conspiracy later that year, when the entire Volturi coven arrived in Forks for a visit. But that's another story.

As far as my family knew, Bree was the lone survivor of Victoria's army. As it turns out, though, she was not. In her last moment before the Volturi tore her apart, her thoughts centered on Fred's escape from the coven just before it reached the battleground. Bree believed Fred had survived and was waiting for her in Vancouver. When she knew that her death was imminent, she hoped that he would meet our family someday.

Fred sounds like an interesting character. When Bree thought about him, she considered his special talent, something that Riley had mentioned to the newborn army. I'd read this thought in her mind: "How could the 'dark-cloaks' find him if they couldn't see him?" I inferred that Fred can make himself invisible. I wonder how he does it.... Does he issue a vapor of some kind to hide behind, for example, or does he just make others believe they can't see him?

That's how special talents work, in one of two ways: either they act directly on the physical world, or they simply create an illusion. For example, Jasper's talent to alter others' emotions is grounded in an actual force. He sends out vibrations or waves of some kind that operate on the subject's brain, actually changing its chemistry. Similarly, Alice has the physical or spiritual ability to see events in the future.

In contrast, Jane's skill of torturing someone by staring is merely an illusion—she triggers the subject's memory of their burning time. You don't really burn, as you did when you were changed, you just remember being burned...remember it in excruciating detail...in your very cells. It feels exactly like the real thing. It is a horrible torture for a vampire. No doubt it is equally torturous to a human, though it must be felt somewhat differently.

Bella has always been immune to Jane's kind of talent, the mind-based illusion. Jane cannot torture Bella because she cannot gain access to Bella's mind, something that infuriates Jane, but delights the de facto leader of the Volturi, Aro. When Bella became a vampire, her protective skill intensified, as often happens. Not only can she protect her own mind from being acted upon from the outside, but she can spread that protection into space and shield those around her. She saved us when the Volturi arrived to destroy our coven for creating a vampire child, an act that is illegal and punishable by death.

We'd had to convince the Volturi that Renesmee is not a vampire child, but rather a hybrid vampire/human child. Though she is as beautiful and as naturally endearing as a vampire child, she is of an entirely different species, which has none of the negative qualities that the Volturi object to in vampire children. In fact, Renesmee has a special talent for communication, something Aro, at least, values highly.

I call hybrids like Renesmee "dhampirs" in my *Vampire's Guide to the Care and Maintenance of a Human Being*, which is what the Albanians have called them for centuries, according to Carlisle's acquaintance, Vladimir. That implies, of course, that dhampirs have been around for that long. Perhaps Bella and I weren't the only vampire couple in existence to birth a natural-born child.

Despite all the research that Carlisle, Jasper, and Emmett did during Bella's pregnancy, though, we never found any records of such. Alice and Jasper did find Nahuel, a dhampir from Brazil who also has several dhampir half-sisters. However, Nahuel's father merely impregnates

human women and abandons them to their deaths during pregnancy or childbirth. He's never treated a human woman as a true mate.

I wish we'd known Fred when the Volturi came to destroy the Cullen coven on very little excuse. If Fred had made us invisible to the Volturi, then "What could they have done?" as Bree put it.

I wonder if Fred has settled in Vancouver. Perhaps one day I will look for him, if for no other reason than to tell him of Bree's death and to warn him about Aro's penchant for collecting unique specimens like himself...and me.

*Edward*

## BELLA'S MALADY

Recently, Carlisle and I have had some long conversations about Bella's state of health when she was human. There were signs of trouble that Carlisle, with his millennia of experience in human physical dysfunction, couldn't miss...and didn't. He never mentioned them to me, or thought about them in my presence such that I noticed. He kept his suspicions to himself, though when Bella was pregnant and he finally got a chance to run some tests without being obvious about what he was looking for, he did investigate.

From all reports, my wife was an unusually awkward child. I remember when Bella got X-rays after Tyler almost hit her with his parents' van. When Carlisle saw the films of her skull, he'd exclaimed, "Look at all the healed contusions! How many times did her mother drop her?"

Carlisle was only joking, but the evidence of Bella's mishaps was written right there in her bones. I was just getting to know her at the time, but had replied, "I'm beginning to think the girl just has really bad luck. Always in the wrong place at the wrong time."

She had a remarkable ability to find or attract individuals with the motivation and power to harm her. Of all the places she could have ended up, she moved to a tiny town with a high percentage of vampires in residence. And because of our presence there, the native population had developed a genetic mutation that turned them into vampire-hunting werewolves. Furthermore, she fell in love with both a vampire and a werewolf, both of us immensely dangerous to her health and welfare.

Supernatural beings aside, she attracted car accidents, roving killers and rapists, random patches of ice, and magically moving doorframes. Bella was a walking calamity. It was difficult for her to navigate a flat surface without finding something to trip over—often her own feet.

Every time Bella played sports in physical education class, someone got hurt. Usually it was her, but often others suffered too. She once hit Mike Newton in the shoulder with a badminton racket hard enough to give him a big, purple bruise (not that I minded that). All the kids on her team in volleyball games jostled for the positions farthest away from her to avoid getting knocked down or whacked in the head by her arms, or the ball, or both.

She would never say how many accidents she'd had as a kid, but she had a large number of scars, both large and small, all over her body. She commented once when Carlisle was sewing her up that he was the best "stitcher" she'd ever had. How many humans do you know who have been hurt enough times to compare and contrast the skills of the surgeons who sewed them up? None, right?

If anyone ever asked Bella how she was doing after an accident or injury, she always replied "Fine." It was years before I discovered that she wasn't just answering in that way to deflect attention from herself, though that was the main reason for it. To Bella, the word "fine" translated to "I've had worse," which she almost always had!

So what caused all of Bella's accidents as a child? Social workers might conclude that she had physically abusive parents, but I am certain they were not to blame for Bella's misadventures. One had to know Bella only a short time to notice how clumsy she was.

As a doctor, Carlisle saw Bella a little differently than most people did. When he found out that I was interested in her, he observed her even more carefully than he might have otherwise. I saw most of what he noticed, but he put this and that detail together and identified a pattern, though he didn't tell me at the time.

One thing that attracted me to Bella's bedroom was her habit of talking in her sleep. Because I couldn't read her mind, it was one of the few ways I could glimpse what was going on in her head. Those first weeks that I visited her bedroom each night, it became obvious that she was a rough sleeper, especially when it was raining. She often kicked the covers up and away, and from time to time, she'd smack her foot into the wall. So there was one puzzle piece.

Here's another one...Bella's hands shook, especially when she was stressed. For example, the first time Bella invited me into her house, Charlie came home unexpectedly and the milk in the glass she was holding started sloshing around so violently that it spilled over the edge. Another example...on Bella's eighteenth birthday, her parents gave her a camera, but her unsteady hands could not manipulate the thing without dropping it. When I was there, I caught it for her, but when we reunited after six months apart, I never saw the camera again. I'd bet twenty dollars that her shaking hands caused her to drop and break it.

Everyone knew that the old walking-while-chewing-gum test was completely beyond Bella's abilities, as was dancing, and all sports activities. (Inexplicably, the one physical activity Bella was good at was making love and she was exceptionally good at that! She was also a good driver, I must admit.) Her problem was a difficulty in coordinating her various movements to make them work together. For example, she could swing a badminton racket just fine, but her perception of where her hand was in relation to the racket and the birdie was so far off that she was just as likely to hit her own head as the ball. Another piece of the puzzle.

And another...she had trouble keeping her body weight centered above her feet. It was as if she didn't know where her feet were. Even when standing still, she could lose her balance and fall.

Then there was the obvious issue of her getting nauseated when she rode on my back, and sometimes when I drove her in the car. Motion sickness is a common problem, but the inner ear dysfunction that causes it can be benign or not.

And a final puzzle piece...where most humans pull away instantly if they happen to touch our skin, Bella had done that only once. The very first time our hands touched in Biology class, she'd jerked her hand away quickly. I thought she was responding to my chilly skin, but she told me later that she was reacting to the snap of electricity that jumped between us. She never pulled away again, even when

I surprised her with a touch. She also could spend all night touching me and never seem to be bothered by it. I inferred that she was not particularly sensitive to cold surfaces.

Carlisle noticed something else...each time he stitched her up, it always surprised him how little reaction she had to the procedure. Needles frightened her, and the smell of blood made her ill, but the actual needle pricks, the stitching, the bruises and bumps she always had didn't bother her as much as he expected them to. To put it another way, her pain threshold was quite high, especially when she hurt her limbs.

Now each of these things seems like nothing to be concerned about, but when you put them all together with special knowledge, they look quite different. Carlisle saw the connections long before I did...the stumbling, the shaking, the restless legs at night, the balance problems, the high pain threshold, the hands that couldn't sense cold surfaces.

There are medical words for all these things: *ataxia*, *proprioception deficit*, *intention tremor*, *vestibular ataxia*, *vertigo*, *dystonia*, and *dysdiadochokinesia*. These are just some of the names for the variety of symptoms that Bella had both as a child and (even more so) during her teens. Put them all together and what do you get? *Multiple sclerosis*, commonly called MS.

MS is an auto-immune disorder that attacks the central nervous system, causing scars to form on the white matter of the brain...the part that delivers messages throughout the brain and spinal cord. MS is a serious, often progressive, illness that gradually cripples the victim. Some people live a normal life for many years, while others end up on crutches or in a wheelchair, or bed-ridden. Some victims die from the degeneration of the muscles that control swallowing and breathing.

In Bella's case, Carlisle believes that her disease likely would have progressed and crippled her at a relatively young human age because of her early onset of symptoms—from childhood—and because of her frequency of symptoms. Also, MS usually occurs in a relapse/remission cycle where symptoms worsen and then get better. Bella's symptoms never really got better once she started having them, but remained constant or worsened over time. That is a bad sign.

How can Carlisle justify his prognosis? MS is not straightforward to diagnose, but one way to nail it down is by eliminating all other reasons for the symptoms, and that can be done through blood tests. Until Bella became pregnant with Renesmee, Carlisle's speculation was just that...speculation. However, he eventually confided to me that during Bella's pregnancy, when Rosalie let him take a sample of Bella's blood for testing, he excluded the other diseases most likely to cause Bella's symptoms. He tested for Lyme disease, collagen-vascular diseases, hereditary disorders, and AIDS, none of which Bella had.

By process of elimination, Carlisle determined the likelihood of Bella's having multiple sclerosis to be very high. In order to confirm the diagnosis, he needed to do additional tests that he could not do casually, including an MRI, a spinal tap, and an evoked-potential test (which measures brain waves to track how fast different nerves respond to stimulation).

By the time Carlisle started testing Bella's blood, whether or not she had the disease was a moot point, since none of us believed that Bella would survive Renesmee's birth as a human. Since changing her would heal the disease and mend any of its effects, Carlisle didn't tell me his suspicions.

When Bella asked Carlisle to change her after we returned from Italy, he had several reasons for agreeing to it, even though changing a healthy human violated his principles. First, Carlisle knew that I would kill myself if Bella were to die, and he didn't want to lose me. Second, Bella and I were in love and the only way he thought she could survive over the long term with me was by making her one of us. Third, he suspected Bella had a crippling and potentially fatal disease. He hid the last reason from both of us because he didn't want to influence our decisions unnecessarily.

I can write about this now with relative equanimity because Carlisle protected me from the knowledge until it was no longer relevant to Bella's future. He's told me that if she had survived Renesmee's birth as a human, the disease probably would have escalated due to the stress pregnancy—and especially her pregnancy—puts on a woman's body. If I hadn't changed her when I did, I might have had to face doing so shortly afterwards because of her disease.

When I think of Bella's change in this light, I realize that insisting she stay human as I did when we first met was disingenuous. Leaving Bella human meant that she would have died during Renesmee's birth. While I had any hope of saving her, I never would have let her die that day. And if she'd survived and her MS progressed suddenly afterwards, I would not have let her die a month later, or three months later, or even a year later. And what if her MS never progressed? If she developed heart disease at age fifty-five, would I have let her die of a heart attack right in front of my eyes? I'd be lying if I answered "yes." So when it comes right down to it, would I ever have been able to let her go, even if she lived to be eighty-nine? I doubt it.

I sometimes wonder how it would have affected me to know that Bella had multiple sclerosis back then. Would I have been willing to change her as she wished me to? How does the presence of such a disease and the knowledge of the suffering it will cause weigh against the possibility of destroying someone's soul? If one lives forever, does it matter whether he or she has a soul?

*Edward*

## AGE & THE AGES

Not many people realize that Esme is older than Carlisle. She is the matriarch of our family at 26 years old. Carlisle is 23. Continuing down the line, Jasper and Emmett are 20; Alice is 19; Rosalie is 18; I am 17; Bella is three days shy of 19, or as she prefers to say...18. She quakes when Emmett teases her about robbing the cradle or calls her a “cougar.” I don’t understand her discomfort. I was born in 1901; she was born in 1987. I could be her great-grandfather. Similarly, Esme is a “cougar” by Emmett’s (joke) standard, but Carlisle is still 252 years her elder.

If you look at us in terms of how many years we’ve each been a vampire, the lineup looks different:

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	<i>Born</i>	<i>Changed</i>	<i>Human Years</i>	<i>Vampire Years</i>	<i>Total Age</i>
<i>Carlisle</i>	1640	1663	23	348	371
<i>Jasper</i>	1844	1863	19	148	167
<i>Edward</i>	1901	1918	17	93	110
<i>Alice</i>	1901	1920	19	91	110
<i>Esme</i>	1895	1921	26	90	116
<i>Rosalie</i>	1915	1933	18	78	96
<i>Emmett</i>	1915	1935	20	76	96
<i>Bella</i>	1987	2005	18	6	24

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It just goes to show you that age is a state of mind. I’m three years older than my mother and 55 years younger than my 19-year-old brother, Jasper. Emmett and Rosalie were born in the same year, but Rosalie is two years older. Eventually, Bella’s age won’t matter so much to her since it all depends on how you look at it.

Tanya's family is much older than ours. Her mother (maker) and the matriarch of the coven was destroyed by the Volturi before Carlisle was born. That makes Tanya and her sisters older than my father. They are true creatures of the millennia.

Because we can exist for so long, it is imperative that we update ourselves...our language, our clothing, our manners, mores, pretty much everything about ourselves, on a regular basis. The problem is that after a thousand years, if not sooner, one learns that all change is transitory and it can become difficult to care.

Take the Volturi...they have not modernized their style of dress or language in at least 300 years. To them, 300 years is not a significant amount of time, so the constant pressure to "change, change, change" that humans or younger vampires often feel doesn't exist for them. It's a wonder that they've remained undetected for so long, living their petrified lives. I suppose it helps that if a human gets too curious about them, they simply invite him to dinner.

If a vampire wants to live among humans (and as the earth becomes more crowded, not doing so is more difficult), he must continually evolve to mimic their brief and fast-paced existence. It becomes imperative to remain engaged with the world, to find interests that keep one moving forward. Otherwise, ennui or despair sets in.

In Anne Rice's wonderful (but wholly imaginary) vampire sagas, long-lived beings can become "tired" and choose to bury themselves in the earth for decades or even centuries. Though Ms. Rice has accurately captured the desolation that can overtake an immortal, we real-life immortals can only daydream of dropping into sweet unconsciousness whenever we wish to escape our lives.

That is the predicament of our kind—the relentlessness of existence. I suppose that most of us will still be here when Mother Earth shrugs off her over-productive population of humans by ice or fire. Or perhaps humans will make themselves extinct sooner by depleting the earth of resources or poisoning the ecosystem. Or maybe some crazed dictator will acquire atomic weapons and wipe the planet clean. The latter case has the advantage of setting us all afire and releasing us back to the place from whence we came. What a catastrophe it would be for us vampires if all possible prey was wiped out and we were to live on.

Now that I have Bella and we both have Renesmee, I don't look forward so much to the end times. The miracle of procreation changes one's perspective by irrevocably altering and indefinitely extending one's future. Boredom does not set in so easily. And believe me, boredom can kill.

*Edward*

## ON MY OWN

Back in 1928, I left my family and stayed away for nearly three years. Carlisle, Esme, and I had been living as a family for seven years by that time and I'd developed the classic seven-year-itch. As an immortal, the timespan changes, but the soul's natural cycle of contentment, followed by increasing restlessness, and finally, a demand for change doesn't.

Carlisle is old enough to get the seventy-year itch. I suppose that Aro gets the seven-hundred-year itch. It would be easy to test that theory by reviewing the dates of the crises he's instigated and the amount of time between them...the battles with the Romanian coven, the slaughter of the vampire children, annihilation of the Mexican newborn armies. Perhaps the destruction of the Cullen coven will occur on the next 700-year anniversary. I hope not.

Carlisle has been a true father to me, unlike Edward Masen, who was more of a provider than a father. Not only had Carlisle saved my life and made me his family, he taught me how to make a life for myself. Nobody had taught him...he learned everything on his own over the millennia of his vampire existence. I got the more comfortable, abridged version from him.

When Carlisle met me, I was young and immature for my age. I'd been sheltered, living in an upper-middle-class neighborhood and attending private school. My mother and I were close because my father was married to his job and my parents never had a second child.

Therefore, at seventeen, I was not a fully grown man. If I'd had my way and joined the army at eighteen to fight the good fight in Europe, I'd have matured rapidly...or perhaps merely died along with eight or nine million other men from a dozen countries. Neither of those things happened, though. When the Spanish flu hit Chicago, my life was forever stalled at the age of seventeen.

Once I became a vampire, the maturation process slowed, as is typical of our kind, but it didn't stop entirely. I continued to develop in response to Carlisle's mentoring, and later, in rebellion to it, like any teenager.

My rebellious phase arrived in my twenty-eighth year of existence, after I'd been a vampire for eleven years. Perhaps it would have happened sooner if Carlisle had been a tyrant, or a hypocrite, or a complete bastard, but why would one rebel against an authority figure who is genuinely principled and admirable? His thoughts and his actions were always congruent. One could find no fault with him, not even an overgrown teenager who needed to rebel against something if only to define himself.

Except for the fact that we were not human, our family life wasn't so different from the human one that I had lived. Because Carlisle's beliefs were so well considered, I had never explored my nature as a vampire. I watched Esme as a newborn and I saw how she struggled to live up to Carlisle's ideals with respect to her eating habits. She slipped up more than once and followed her instincts. I never had...Carlisle was my only role model for how to be what I was, so even though I must have suffered as

much as anyone else who is thrust into our world, I took it for granted that I wouldn't succumb to my natural urges. Until Esme came along, that is.

I'd seen Esme come home after a night away with dried blood on her clothing and with her eyes burning scarlet red. I'd smelled the change in her scent after she'd satisfied her desire for human blood. The experience of watching Esme stumble had stuck with me...not so much for the fact that she'd drunk human blood, but more because in her thoughts, she was not sorry. No, that's not wholly true. She *was* sorry that she'd disappointed Carlisle and she was *very* sorry that she had provided a bad example for me. Even though I was her vampire elder, she was still my mom.

What I took from those experiences was that drinking human blood was a desirable thing, a pleasurable thing, and something that took a great deal of personal fortitude to refrain from doing. It never seemed to trouble Carlisle, not even when he performed surgeries on humans. Their blood might as well have been RC Cola for all the cravings he ever demonstrated for it.

It was obvious—to me, at least—that I was no Carlisle. Though I practiced self-control in mimicry of him, it was not something I particularly desired to do as he always had. Carlisle is a righteous man. I've never met anyone with his moral sensibilities who also lives up to them, which is obviously the most important part.

So, it took me eleven years to rebel against my peerless father and begin to see fault with him. The "fault" was primarily that he had defined our lifestyle and I was expected to conform to it as long as I lived in his house.

Carlisle had kept such a careful eye on me in my first three years that I'd never had a chance to take a human life. I didn't decide to leave home because I wanted to kill people, though. I only wanted to know why we lived as we did and I felt I couldn't truly know the answer to that unless I had lived otherwise.

Carlisle listened to my explanation of why I wanted to leave and made his disapproval clear, but he did not try to stop me. I think he understood that I needed to go my own way to discover who I was apart from him. Esme, on the other hand, was desperate that I stay. She tried cajoling, arguing, pleading, and getting emotional. In the end, I departed when she and Carlisle were hunting to avoid the scene I knew would unfold if I said a proper goodbye. I did leave a note, of course.

*Mom, Dad—*

*Gone hunting.*

*Love, Edward*

...something like that.

It felt good to be “free” —to do whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted, though it hadn’t occurred to me in advance that I still had rules to live by if I wanted to continue to live. I had to stay out of the sunshine; I had to hide the evidence of my hunting; and I had to not make a spectacle of myself. In short, I had to do everything required to satisfy the one rule the Volturi enforce , which is to *keep our existence a secret*.

I’d told Carlisle of my plan to hunt only evildoers. Using my mind-reading capability, I could locate criminals and target them for my meals. I would show Carlisle that I could yield to my nature and yet be something of a hero. It seemed like a reasonable moral code.

To prove the theory to myself, I first traveled to Ohio to find Charles Evenson, Esme’s human husband. In her thoughts, I’d seen the cruelty he’d inflicted upon her. Her memories of the marriage were dim, but several events were so traumatic that the images of them were branded into Esme’s brain. When Rosalie joined our family, I saw that the man who had assaulted her resembled Esme’s husband in such a way that it put doubts in my mind about the quality of America’s privileged young bachelors. Were their lives so easy, so pampered, that they became bored enough to torture the weak and vulnerable for their own pleasure?

Esme’s husband was a secret abuser, the type who terrified his victim into silence, so Esme’s plight went undetected. Moreover, it was a time in our country when social mores valued a family’s sovereignty more than protecting its weakest members. People might feel badly about domestic violence, but even the victims often preferred that nobody else know. Esme’s family, unforgivably, told her to be a good wife and keep quiet about it.

It was my pleasure to track down Charles Evenson to his favorite watering hole one December evening. Then it was a simple matter to follow him to his Ford Model A when he stumbled through the tavern’s door at closing time. Before drinking his blood, I told him exactly who I was and why I had come. Before I killed him, I wanted to see the terror in his eyes that I had seen so often in my mother’s mind.

Though I’d wanted to make the process slow and painful in revenge for Esme’s suffering, I found that I had no control whatsoever over the act of drinking blood. Evenson had consumed a great deal of alcohol, which made his blood smell and taste antiseptic, but even so, it was an unimaginable ecstasy to pierce his skin and gulp down the hot, sweet fluid.

I’d opened the wound on the evil man’s wrist, but his blood wasn’t pumping fast enough for my satisfaction, so I gripped his skull and sank my teeth into his carotid artery. He’d started to scream from the pain of the venom, but it wasn’t long before he passed out from lack of oxygen and then died from lack of blood. Evenson was a big man, so I was surprised by how fast I had emptied him.

In eleven years of abstention, my craving to drink human blood had not lessened, but neither had I fully appreciated the extreme pleasure it would be to partake. Immediately, I wanted more.

It had been easy to decide to murder Evenson, because I had a personal stake in the harm he had caused my guiltless mother. But once he was gone, who should I choose next? Knowing that I *must* drink human blood again, I had decisions to make. If I'd known Rosalie then, probably I would have gone after Royce King and all of his friends. That, too, would have been an obvious choice. For lack of any other ideas, I returned to the tavern that Evenson had frequented with the logic that birds-of-a-feather flock together.

The tavern was full of unsavory characters, from run-of-the-mill, belligerent drunks to the thieves and thugs who preyed upon them. But it wasn't as easy to choose my next meal as I thought it would be. Though there were plenty of individuals who'd committed crimes of some sort (and who'd thought about them while I was listening—an important consideration), none of the criminals I identified seemed evil enough to warrant sacrificing their lives.

I wasn't particularly sentimental about humans after a decade as a nonhuman, but I'd expected to find victims who were undeniably deserving of death. And yet, it wasn't that simple. There were complications and nuances I hadn't considered. For example, what if my potential victim had harmed, or even killed, someone else out of retaliation for crimes committed against himself? Was I still justified in taking his life? And if so, how could I know that my prey's thoughts represented the truth? Humans are fully capable of fabricating and even believing excuses that justify their behavior.

I found the questions to be endless and confusing. At first, I simply fell back on an easy solution. Stronger individuals who harmed or killed weaker ones—such as occurred in domestic abuse—would be fair game.

One problem was that not many abusers saw themselves as guilty of any wrongdoing. In order to find evildoers, I had to read their minds, but *they* had to recognize their own guilt before I could identify them by their thoughts. But weren't people who felt culpable for their actions (and thus had guilty thoughts) slightly better than those who consistently denied their guilt even to themselves? Then there was the problem of differentiating between those who merely *felt* guilty and those who actually *were* guilty. To top it off, I had to separate those who only had evil thoughts from those who committed evil deeds.

The easiest solution to these dilemmas would be to listen to the thoughts of convicted criminals to locate my prey, but they were largely corralled into prisons which were inaccessible except by calling attention to myself. Street gangs were a reliable source of criminals, but many of the perpetrators were children, or nearly so. That brought up the issue of whether a child truly could be evil and whether I could justify murdering a child, even an evil one.

Abusers of the vulnerable—women and children, or the elderly or sick, for example—were easy targets to justify. However, even those persons often had mitigating circumstances, such as having been abused themselves or otherwise been rendered helpless victims before becoming victimizers.

Every solution I considered seemed rife with problems. It seemed there was no good way either to find criminals or to decide how bad a criminal must be in order to deserve my death sentence. It all became too complicated, and I found that I didn't feed on as many humans as I wanted to.

As time went on, my scruples eroded and my criteria for "deserving prey" became less stringent. But as the number of my victims rose, I felt more and more compromised myself. If I killed killers, wasn't I still a killer?

After three years, these nagging moral questions and the heavy burden of extinguishing so many lives weighed heavily on my soul. Depression set in and I became unwilling to hunt. I had tested the boundaries of my personal morality and found out who I was, but at a tremendous cost.

When I came crawling home to Carlisle and Esme, no longer able to tolerate my own nature, they welcomed me back with open arms. They never chastised me about my prodigal sojourn, even though my red eyes gave everything away. As I told Bella later, their steadfast love and kindness were so much more than I deserved.

*Edward*

## DREAM

Recently, I had an unusual experience. Vampires don't sleep, so we don't dream. Whatever mechanism allows or requires the human brain to create dreams is something that goes away when we relinquish our humanity. In the absence of dreaming, dreams have taken on the quality of a magical myth to me, a Holy Grail of experience. It's one of the things that I miss most about being human, though I doubt that I truly remember the experience.

Most likely, my "memory" of dreaming is something I've fabricated from what I observed while watching Bella sleep when she was human. She talked in her sleep nearly every night, speaking from her dreams of whatever was on her mind.

The first time I heard Bella talk in her sleep, I had already developed a misguided interest in the human girl. I was struggling with myself, trying to decide what to do about it. Already, I'd begun to feel helpless against the new and unrecognizable emotions bombarding me. I was at her window, desolate and unsure, preparing to abandon the crazy notion that she might ever love a monster like me, when Bella said, "Edward."

Something fundamental changed in me that night, a slippage occurring along some fault line in my soul. It is a mystery how vampires change, what causes the major shifts of personality or character that happen in our kind from time to time. Carlisle has told me that any extreme emotional event can alter us permanently. Whatever the biology of it, when Bella said my name in her dreams, a transformation began in me.

I could feel the change happening and it's hard to describe. It moved through my body in a rush akin to the coloring of Bella's neck and face when she blushes. I felt everything I knew myself to be begin to turn upside down. When it was over, I knew that I was no longer the man that I had been, but something more. Realizing that my feelings for Bella might be returned in some small part had unleashed that mysterious force that alters us forever.

Renesmee dreams. Bella told me the first time she held Nessie as she slept, that she'd put a hand to the baby's cheek. Renesmee was "showing" Bella her dreams even when unconscious. The images Bella saw in our newborn child's mind were a fusion of beautiful moving colors and forms. I'd seen them too in her first few days, though I could see the images without touching her skin. Sometimes at night I still watch Renesmee's dreams when I am longing for the comfort of sleep and dreaming. I imagine that I remember dreaming myself.

One night recently, I ran into the Olympic National Forest on my own, Bella having taken Renesmee hunting only a few days earlier. I'd wandered a bit farther afield than I had intended,

almost all the way to Oregon. Perhaps the run itself was what I'd come for more than the animal blood. Running gave me time to think.

My life had transformed so completely in just a few short years. I'd found, fallen in love with, and married Bella; we'd unknowingly created Renesmee; I'd nearly lost both mother and child during her birth; I'd changed Bella; and my family had stared down the Volturi. As I sat down on an old stump to ponder the remarkable changes in my life since I met Bella, inexplicably, a story of a far different life began playing itself out in my mind.

It was very much like a dream. The narrative seemed to come from outside of me, taking its own direction, but I was living in the action, both watching and feeling it. In this dream, which couldn't have been a dream, I found that I had an extraordinary friend...an elephant. Strange, right?

She was an Asian elephant, a female whose name I never learned. She responded to me when I spoke to her and placed her enormous trunk against my chest in greeting. I could feel her rough, pachydermal skin and smell the earthy scent of her. She exhaled air through her trunk into my face as I stroked her mottled, gray-brown trunk, blowing my hair off of my forehead. Then she carefully wrapped her muscular appendage around my arm and guided me further into the forest.

I cannot remember a time when animals did not run from me in terror. Indeed, no animal has been a part of my life for 110 years. Whether dream or veracity, this was a most extraordinary experience, for this enormous mammal was not afraid. More than that, I felt the presence of a special bond between us, almost as if we were family. I followed her solemnly through the trees until we reached a quiet, green meadow, where much to my surprise a menagerie of creatures was gathered.

As we entered the clearing, a young giraffe began ambling toward us. Likewise, a tufted lion stepped out of the forest and padded softly in our direction. A tigress followed. Two striped zebras and four white horses stood grazing nearby and raised their heads at the sound of our arrival. When they spied us, all six pirouetted in perfect synchronization—though one of the horses seemed hampered by a painful limp in his left rear leg—and trailed the other creatures across the clearing. Additional species followed suit...two single-humped camels, four spotted dogs, a tame black bear, six housecats in various colors, two lop-eared bunnies, four sheep, two goats, and a female mountain lion, the latter of which showed no greater fear than any of the rest, though her species was my favorite prey.

When all of the animals had gathered in a large circle around us, my elephant friend nudged me gently with her trunk and we strolled slowly together around the circle, each animal stepping

forward in turn as if to greet me. The giraffe bent her sinuous neck to me and tasted my arm with a lap of her long tongue. The mountain lion lay down and rolled onto her back, her huge paws dangling in midair. The horses raised their right front legs as if to shake hands or salute. The four dogs leaped continuously over one another's backs as if they were being juggled by unseen hands. After we completed this miraculous circuit of greetings, the elephant lowered herself onto her front knees in a bow.

When she rose, she wrapped her trunk around my waist and lifted me off the ground. I was strong enough to compel her to put me down, but I didn't because I felt no fear. Somehow, I knew that she meant me no harm. With a fluid motion, she turned my body upside down, opened her mouth and took my legs gently between her great jaws. Then she bobbed her head two or three times and began to poke about in the pockets of my shirt and trousers. Finding them empty, the elephant reversed the procedure, wrapping her trunk around my waist, releasing my legs, and then turning me upright before setting me carefully on my feet. She had no words, but I felt something akin to disappointment in her mind. Suddenly, I knew that she'd been looking for sweets! I began to chuckle and she raised her head and blasted a loud honk, as if laughing with me.

With my friend, the pachyderm, and I leading the way, the animals fell in behind us, single-file, and followed us through the forest until we came upon some ancient-looking, overgrown railroad tracks. I counted fifteen, faded-red boxcars parked on the tracks, many of which were open and had heavy wooden ramps propped against them. An old-fashioned steam engine at the front of the line and a quaint, antique caboose at the back sandwiched the boxcars together.

I stopped to gape, but the animal menagerie continued toward the train, swerving around me in two columns. As if moving to silent music, they ambled to their assigned carriages and loaded themselves up the ramps. The elephant nudged me to follow her into an oversized boxcar with gold letters on the faded red paint. In my heart, I knew that I could not board that train. This was not my life.

Sadly, I turned to retrace my steps toward my home and family. After walking thirty yards, I pivoted around for one last look. The ramps were gone and the boxcar doors were closed. On the side of the elephant's carriage were stenciled some letters in deteriorated gold paint:

THE GR AT ST SH W ON EAR H!

I blinked rapidly, not believing my eyes, and suddenly I found myself back where I'd started, sitting on the mossy stump. I smiled broadly and felt an intense joy sweep through me. Though I knew the fantasy had not been real, I was grateful to have experienced it.

As I stood to prepare for the run home, I heard the sound of an elephant's trumpet call and the tinkling of organ grinder music fading away into the distance.

*Edward*

## HARRY'S SECRET

Harry Clearwater, father to Seth and Leah and close friend to Charlie, did not die of natural causes—a heart attack—as the coroner said. Well, no, that's not entirely true. He did die of a heart attack, but there was nothing natural about it.

It began the day when Bella ran into Laurent in our meadow. That was during our six months of mutual misery, when I almost killed us both while trying to “save Bella's soul.” But as she said to Aro about me when we were in Italy...I knew nothing about her soul. Not really.

Bella had gone to the meadow trying to find some way to reconnect with her memories of me. She'd intended to go there with Jacob, but Jacob had abandoned her too when he was conscripted into Sam's wolf pack. So Bella was wandering around in the woods, lost, when she happened upon the meadow, and then happened upon Laurent—the Vampire Laurent, friend of Victoria, former member of James' coven.

It was just another ho-hum day when Bella almost lost her life because I was not there to protect her, one of many, apparently. As it turned out, Jacob was there to save the day...again. Never mind that Bella didn't know it was him inside the heavy, red-brown fur and behind the piercing brown eyes. Though that part of the forest was not strictly within their territory, with the Cullens gone, the wolves had expanded their patrols to neighboring land. Therefore, they were nearby, and when Bella became in imminent danger of death-by-bloodsucker, the cavalry appeared. As Bella ran for her life, not entirely sure what she was running from, the wolves dispatched the Vampire Laurent...much to his surprise...and then disappeared into the woods from whence they came.

Bella hurried through the woods toward her truck as fast as she could go, which was quite slow, to be honest, as she got flustered and turned around several times and tripped over her feet several more times. But when Bella finally got back to her father's house, Harry Clearwater was there visiting with Charlie in the kitchen.

Bella had run into the house distraught and terrified, not just by Laurent, but also by the sudden appearance of five, horse-sized wolves in the woods. These must be the “bears” that outdoorsmen at Newton's sporting goods store had been talking about, the ones whom everybody believed were killing hikers. Of course, Charlie had commanded Bella to stay out of the woods, but in her pain of losing Jacob and myself at the same time, she couldn't help herself.

With Bella's eye-witness report, Chief of Police Charlie Swan began to deputize local citizens to begin tracking and eliminating the killer wolves (nee bears). Harry was in an exceedingly awkward position, though. As an elder of the Quileute tribe, he knew what was going on in the

woods, and it wasn't the wolves who were attacking humans. The wolves were there to kill the vampires who were attacking the hikers.

Under pressure to participate in the community effort, Harry joined the expeditions, but served mostly as an informant for the werewolves, so they could be elsewhere on those days the posse was hunting in the forest.

Harry wasn't an old man by any means, somewhere in his 50s, but he had had some trouble with his heart. He was another casualty of "assimilation fever," caught by Native Americans who switch from their hereditary diet (mostly salmon in his case—ironically, the fish that's good for the heart) to the more mainstream American diet of burgers, fries, and Coca-Cola.

Though Harry carried the werewolf gene, it never "kicked in" for him or Billy Black or Joshua Uley, nor for their fathers, because the Cullens had left the area and relocated elsewhere for three generations. Only now were we back in the land of the Quileute tribe, reactivating the gene...though we didn't know that until Bella told us.

Several months later after someone reported another wolf sighting, Harry played his usual role among the posse—leading the group in the wrong direction and covering up any wolf tracks he came across. Unfortunately, he could not communicate through the pack mind as the current generation did. He was limited to informing the wheelchair-bound Billy Black what was going on so that Billy could warn the pack to get out of the area where the hunters would be. Which they did...get out, I mean.

That strategy became a big problem, though, when Victoria made a foray into the territory, possibly looking for Laurent who hadn't returned from his trip to Forks. When she arrived, she was surprised to find no impediments to tracking my love, Bella. The Cullens were no longer protecting their human "pet." She didn't know that we had abandoned Forks and left no forwarding address.

So as Victoria trailed the posse, wondering what they were hunting for (could they be chasing Laurent?), she was spotted high in the trees by an overweight native man huffing and puffing his way through the woods. Allowing humans to see us when we're not behaving as humans is strictly forbidden. Even Victoria, the nomad, knew that. Usually, it was simple for her to dart away quickly and leave the human wondering whether she had been something real flitting about in the trees, or just the product of an overactive imagination. When they didn't see her again, humans always assumed they had imagined her supernatural, red-haired self.

But not Harry. Victoria was surprised that Harry seemed to know immediately that she was real and perhaps even what she was. Not only did his eyes find her repeatedly after she made a few

swift movements, but he scanned upward for her—into the trees—rather than on the ground like other humans.

No doubt Victoria targeted Harry for her supper then, since he was surprisingly cognizant of her presence, and because...well...why not? Harry would have known what was coming and perhaps even tried to get away, since he knew the wolf pack would not be in the area to protect him.

Knowing Victoria, she probably hid as best she could and attacked Harry when he lost sight of her. She was unable to get her teeth fully into his neck, though, before being interrupted by more hunters coming along the path. Instead of carrying Harry off or staying to feast and making her presence obvious, she chose to run away, as was her habit.

When Mike Samson and Del Mayfield came upon him, Harry was barely conscious, holding his chest and gasping for breath. I saw it in the pack mind later...much later...that his last words were reportedly "Get away!" The two hunters thought he was delirious, telling them to get away when he clearly needed emergency care. They didn't realize that Harry was afraid for *their* lives. They stayed, though, got on their cell phones and called everybody they could think of. By the time the local ambulance found the logging road where they'd parked and four or five men had carried Harry out of the woods, he was already gone.

Harry's autopsy showed that his coronary artery was 75% blocked, but the tribal elders took the autopsy results of "heart attack, natural causes" with a grain of salt because of another small detail on the report. Harry had been found with two recent scratch marks on the side of his neck. He had other scratches on his body, as one commonly gets when walking through dense woods, so the coroner made no comment about those two in particular.

Sam guessed what had happened. The red-haired vampire had been hanging around lately looking for something and making forays onto the reservation and in the general area. They'd tried to catch her, but she was a genius at getting away at the very last second. Victoria's visits became more frequent after Harry died, so Sam put two-and-two together and realized that Harry had died of fright at a real vampire sighting. If Del and Mike had come along just a few minutes later, Harry would be a vampire now. Or maybe not...there seems to be some belief in the tribe that vampire venom is deadly poison to Quileutes with the wolf gene. We have not tested that theory, of course.

Victoria—I'm so glad she's dead. And I'm proud to be the one to say I killed her (with help from Seth). Come to think of it, I'll bet Bella doesn't even know how Harry really died. Right after that, Bella ran off to Italy to find the wayward me.

*Edward*

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### Harry Clearwater's Fish Fry

3 1/2 cups corn meal  
1/2 cup flour  
2 1/2 tablespoons paprika  
2 tablespoons salt  
2 tablespoons garlic powder  
1 tablespoon black pepper  
1 tablespoon onion powder  
1 tablespoon cayenne pepper  
1 tablespoon dried leaf oregano  
1 tablespoon dried thyme

Combine all ingredients thoroughly and store in an airtight jar or container.

To use: Soak 2 pounds of fish of your choice in 2 cups buttermilk. Remove the fish from the buttermilk, removing any excess. Dredge each fish in the cornmeal mixture, coating each side completely. Lay the fish in the hot oil and fry until golden brown, about 7 minutes. Remove from the oil and drain on a paper-lined plate.

## SCHIZOPHRENIA

There were many things about Bella's pregnancy that were not what one might consider normal for a human. First of all, she went from zero to full-term in four weeks, rather than the normal thirty-six weeks. Second, her diet was undoubtedly unlike any other pregnant woman's diet in history. Third, from almost the moment of conception, the baby began to make herself known.

Bella conceived the first night of our honeymoon. We know this because we recognize now that she'd already begun to change in our first week on Isle Esme. Due to the disastrous bruising I'd inflicted upon her during our initial attempt, we did not make love again until our second week there.

From the first day that Bella was pregnant, she became the conduit for expressing the needs, feelings, and motivations of two souls at once—herself and Renesmee. She didn't always realize it, but those of us around her saw a certain schizophrenia in her behavior at times. It first manifested in physical ways that are familiar to many a pregnant woman. For example, Bella began eating for two, literally, and unlike other pregnant women...immediately. The morning after Bella conceived, I fixed her a double-sized breakfast just to make sure that she got as much as she needed and she ate every bite. The quantity of food she ate did not wane after that either. All during the trip, she ate at least twice as much as she had before our honeymoon.

The second noticeable change was in her food choices. For Bella's first breakfast, I cooked an omelet and that meal marked the beginning of her new diet...eggs, eggs, and more eggs. Never before had Bella shown a particular preference for eggs, but within a few days, she was eating eggs almost exclusively. She consumed six dozen eggs that week. She started out eating them fully cooked, usually scrambled, then switched to sunny-side-up, and later, ate about half of them undercooked or raw (in eggnog). When I brought her new eating habits to her attention, she was mildly surprised, but offered no explanation. She just shrugged her shoulders as if eating six dozen eggs and little else for a week was only to be expected. I was pretty sure it wasn't, though I'm no authority on human nutrition.

When you think about it, eggs are the most elemental food for birds and other species in their first stages of development. Apparently, it was also true for Renesmee, and she needed a lot of fuel to support her rapid growth. Having food cravings is not unusual for pregnant women, but the degree to which Bella experienced it might have indicated something was going on inside of her.

In addition to her diet, Bella's sleep changed right away. After making love our first night, she slept like a stone, deviating from her habitual pattern of thrashing about and talking in her sleep. She was utterly still and silent. That might not have been unusual considering the extremely long day she had had and all of the excitement surrounding our wedding and honeymoon, but this alteration in her sleeping habits remained for the duration of her pregnancy.

Despite her apparent exhaustion and stone-like unconsciousness, Bella was having vivid dreams and frightening nightmares. Flowing, moving colors, garish in their intensity, invaded her dreams and were both disturbing and exhausting. She took them to be reflections of the bright sun which she was

unused to, and the saturated colors of the tropics. The Olympic Peninsula where we live is almost entirely gray 90% of the year.

There were other dreams she didn't tell me about until much later. They featured a green-eyed, bronze-haired baby boy whom she felt compelled to save from destruction by the Volturi. She had fallen irrevocably in love with the baby, so the repeating nightmare of imminent danger terrified her. The dream was fortuitous in a number of ways, particularly because she did not know she was pregnant until nearly two weeks later.

I believe that the source of both sets of dreams was actually Renesmee's developing mind. It is said that humans require sleep so that their brains can process the information and experiences of their waking hours. Colors without form were Renesmee's first impressions of the world, and she replayed them in her mind at night. We know this because after she was born, Bella and I both watched Renesmee dream—Bella by placing Nessie's hand against her face, and me by reading her thoughts—and the images were still there. Seeing the world through Bella's eyes in whatever manner she was able to absorb at that early phase of her development, she was storing what she saw, trying to make sense of the information, and learning.

While the colorful dreams were indicators of Renesmee's growing brain, I believe the nightmares were something else. Carlisle has told us that the ancient vampire children which the Volturi outlawed manifested a particular trait—they were almost magical in their ability to attract the love and protection of the adults around them. From 500 to 1000 A.D. and beyond, entire covens were destroyed in their attempts to save a single vampire child from the Volturi.

Though not the same as a vampire child of that era, as half vampire, Renesmee seems to carry this special trait. Every adult she meets is immediately entranced by her. Indeed, our entire family is at her beck and call at all times of the day or night. We joke that she is the most spoiled vampire/human child in existence *and* the least spoiled. (Although now that we've met Nahuel and also know of his sisters, we can no longer claim either to be true with confidence.)

Within a week of conception, Bella was sleeping twelve hours each night and had begun to take naps during the day too. This could be attributed to the enormous energy it took Bella's body to produce a fetus at such an accelerated speed, but that doesn't account for the dreams and nightmares that filled Bella's sleeping hours. Developing brains require the benefits of sleep, though they never rest.

By the time Bella was couch-bound, Renesmee's desires and preferences were muddying her own. For example, we always left the television remote control on a side table where Bella could reach it. Having the TV on, even if she wasn't really watching it, seemed to take her mind off of her pain and distress and also gave her a reason to smile or laugh once in a while. One afternoon, when she was flipping through the channels, she found a BBC-produced program meant for pre-verbal children called "Teletubbies." The characters are four brightly colored plush toys played by actors in full-body costumes and headgear. They dance and play while making baby sounds and doing activities that generate a lot of

colors and shapes. It's the silliest thing I ever saw, but apparently, the colors and the sounds fascinate babies.

When the show caught Bella's eye, she left it on and became completely mesmerized by it. She smiled and sometimes even giggled to watch the plush toys roll down a hill, for instance, or dance a baby jig. It became her habit to watch it every time it came on television. The next day, she became fascinated with Sesame Street, the program that teaches young children things like colors and letters. Cartoons also became fascinating to her. One might not think anything about that except that she never viewed the programs before or again after our baby was born.

Renesmee did, though. When Rosalie turned on the Teletubbies one day for background noise while she was feeding Renesmee, the baby became spellbound by it and afterwards, she showed all of us the Teletubbies with her hand. We made a habit of recording both that show and Sesame Street so that she could watch them whenever she wanted. She outgrew both of those programs quickly and her new obsession became the cartoon program "The Simpsons." I won't even talk about that.

The presence of Renesmee's spirit inside of Bella's body became even more evident later. When Jacob came for his first visit, Bella was happy to see him. My family and I left the two of them alone to talk. After a time, we were surprised to hear her giggling, even though Bella was nearing death at that point. The next time Jacob came, Bella's face lit up like the sun. She greeted him so enthusiastically that both he and I were a bit dismayed at how she was responding to him. After Leah told Bella off for hurting Jacob, she greeted him in the same overexcited manner when he next visited, but then her face collapsed in remorse over the pain she was causing him and she began to cry. Even Bella seemed confused by her behavior, which only made sense after we discovered that Jacob had imprinted on Renesmee and that the feelings were mutual.

Another manifestation of Renesmee occurred when Jacob and I finally got the idea to feed the fetus first...that is, to give the half-vampire blood to drink. Bella was disturbed by the prospect...deeply so. She was willing to try anything for Renesmee's sake, but the expression on her face when she took her first sip was distraught and guilty. She even seemed to be a little disgusted with herself. When I offered to take it away, though, she said apologetically, "No, it tastes good!" Part of her was horrified at drinking the blood, while another part of her was being nourished by it. After taking a drink or two, Bella forgot that she was "supposed" to be repulsed by it and just started gulping it down. Renesmee's need for the blood had rendered it completely palatable to Bella, though such an act would seem an abomination to most humans.

Renesmee is unique in many ways, but perhaps the most miraculous of all is how early and how forcefully she made herself and her needs known. In a sense, she was already taking care of herself through Bella before we even knew she was there. And once Bella realized that she was there, she fell in love with her immediately. Similarly, once Renesmee made herself known to me through her developing mind, I fell in love with her too. Just as everyone does.

*Edward*

## JACOB'S FANTASY #1

Setting: Bella's porch

Time: Spring

Age: 15

*There she is. Ah damn, there's a guy driving her truck. Kinda wish I had it back now! Is it that Cullen? Must be. My dad is freaking out. Superstitious old fart. So is Cullen leavin' or what? Hope so. Hey! Crap. She must like him. Looks like he's gonna smooch her right here in front of us. Hmm...that looked more like necking than kissing. What's that mean? Cool, here she comes. Well, I guess he's gonna stand there in the rain and look at us. Why the hell doesn't he leave? He's sure giving me the hairy eyeball! I hope that means something like, say, he's worried about the competition! Damn, she's pretty. Nice figure, too. I think she really liked me that day at the beach. Seemed like it. She's not that much older, two years, max. She thought I was a year older, anyway. It's 'cuz I'm so tall and good-looking and Indian. Ha! Palefaces can never tell how old we are. Convenient. I wonder if she'd go out with me. Damn, I got no car! I don't even have my license. It's kinda hard to impress a girl when you roll up on your tricked-out bicycle. That would be a helluva long bike ride up from the rez, anyway.... We're leaving already? Crap, Dad! I need time to work my game!*

These things drive me crazy! There are times when one might wish that one didn't have perfect recall. They've become especially bothersome now that he's so taken with my daughter. I may have won that first battle, but I'm afraid he's going to win the war. Or have the last laugh or something. Well, that's why I started this diary, so I might as well just put them down. Then maybe they won't jump into my head every time I see him with Nessie...

*Edward*

## JACOB'S FANTASY #2

Setting: Prom, a public gathering

Time: Spring

Age: 15

*This sucks so bad. I can't even believe I'm doing it, but I guess if her boyfriend doesn't kill me, at least I'll get to talk to her. Damn! He might kill me. He looks pretty pissed. He seems like he knows why I'm here, but that ain't possible. I hope Bella doesn't tell him either. Well...here goes nothin'...*

*At least Bella wasn't ticked at me for being my dad's little messenger boy. Yikes! That Cullen is one scary dude, though! He gives me the heebie-jeebies sneaking up behind me like that. Probably just trying to intimidate me. It worked too. But man, that dress she had on was way awesome. Off the shoulders and everything! If I gave it a yank maybe it would just fall right off. Mm hmmm. Though I'm not too sure what would happen then. Probably get beat up. Ha! She likes me too, I'm pretty sure. She seemed happy to put her arms around me anyway. Maybe I should learn to dance something besides the Wolf Dance, then I could ask her out...if we ever had prom-type dances on the rez. I could put my arms around her and we'd slow dance and I'd kiss her and she'd kiss me back and we could hold hands and hang out on the beach in our fancy clothes and skip rocks or...heh, heh...wrestle in the sand....*

*I wonder when I'll get to see her again?*

No Comment.

*Edward*

## HOW RENESMEE SAVED HER LIFE

In our searches all over the world, we have found only a handful of vampire/human hybrids (*dhampirs*), and all but Renesmee were fathered by the same vampire called Joham. We expected to find others or at least oral or written evidence that they existed, but so far, we have not.

The women of the Denali coven have adopted a lifestyle of seducing human men, so it would seem likely that male vampires also have indulged themselves in greater numbers than what we know of. Indeed, legends exist of both the succubus (female demons who couple with human men) and the incubus (male demons who impregnate human women). Obviously, we know that human women can conceive with a vampire. Throughout history, though, there must have been only a very few successful births or surely we would have found them in our research.

That has lead me to consider why dhampirs are so rare. First and foremost, legend and logic tell us that very few humans, male or female, survive sexual congress with a vampire. There is no greater prophylactic measure than swift death.

Second, a serious flaw exists in the reproductive biology of the dhampir. It is in the best interests of any species (parasitic, if you will) not to kill its host before it has a chance to reproduce. The dhampir violates this tenet by prematurely destroying its pregnant carrier. We know that all of the mothers of existing dhampirs died during birth. Given that so few creatures exist, and given our experience with Bella's gestation of Renesmee, we can assume that of those women who were spared by their impregnators, most of them died before the fetus was mature enough to survive on its own.

Third, it would seem natural that a human being who conceives the baby of a monster—even a beautiful, seductive monster—would try to abort the fetus. Besides that, based on what we know of Joham and what legends tell us, rape is the vampire's preferred method for impregnating a human. Women traumatized in that way often choose to abort their fetus if they have a choice. Abortion would help explain why we have found dhampirs to exist only in a marginal tribal culture. One might suppose that medical techniques of termination are more successful in modern hospitals than in the remote jungle.

There's no way to know for sure if other dhampir children developed in the same way as ours—Renesmee's mother being the only one left to ask—but our daughter, at least, came with unusual mechanisms of self-preservation. I conjecture that these may be common to all dhampirs.

As we've discovered, the dhampir fetus has a physical barrier against destruction—a granite-hard shell surrounding itself, which is indestructible by human hands. To the best of my imagination, the only way to abort a fetus inside that shell is to remove the shell and the fetus together through surgery. That might work, if blood loss can be controlled. Otherwise, the fetus will grow to maturity at an extraordinary pace for as long as the pregnant mother survives. (Perhaps the mother's tendency to die is what accounts for the highly accelerated developmental rate.)

In addition to the physical barrier, Renesmee has a special gift that has protected her almost from the day of conception. This gift was her ability to communicate with her mother (her biological host) in impossible and profound ways.

First, Bella began to dream of a baby whom she felt compelled to protect but feared she could not. It didn't matter that the irresistible child was a wanton killer who left piles of bodies in his wake. So...first came the dreams.

Next came the communication from the womb, which initially manifested in what Bella calls "nudging." Her "little nudger" would move inside Bella almost as if in response to events outside the womb. For example, when Bella was regretting having to leave Isle Esme so abruptly, the baby nudged her and Bella started talking to it. "I know. I don't want to leave either" were her first words. Bella says she would have found it impossible to give up her pregnancy from that moment on. She became instantly and powerfully attached to the fetus. Bella described her connection to it as an "absolute necessity," as "necessary as breathing."

Third, Renesmee carries a unique and powerful charisma—like the immortal children did—that causes humans and vampires alike to fall in love with her. The instant anyone met the child, whether inside the womb or out, they were irrevocably drawn to her. Like the ancient vampires, we would have done anything, including sacrificed our own lives, to protect hers. This might be true of human infants to a degree, though we know by the number of infanticides worldwide that it is not at all certain. For dhampirs, though, it would seem to be.

I believe I could have overridden Bella's wishes to bear her child by sheer strength if nothing else, something I would have done to save her life. But Bella was clever enough to ensure her own virtual suicide by enlisting one as strong as her husband to prevent me. However, it is also clear that after I made contact with Renesmee's mind, I could no more have harmed her than I could have stopped loving Bella. While still in the womb, she became an absolute necessity to me as well.

One by one, each of us in the family fell to Renesmee's overwhelming charisma. This is a gift that was common to the immortal children, and I speculate that it may be inherent to the dhampir child as well. This gift, along with her other natural defenses, ensured that not only would Renesmee not be aborted, but that nobody could destroy her after her birth. As a scientist, I see these as survival-of-the-species protections.

My theory was to be tested when we drew attention from the Volturi, the Italian coven which destroys vampires who dare to exist outside their rules. They've destroyed many an immortal child in their time, so it is not impossible to bypass the children's remarkable gift. However, the Volturi made it their practice to dispatch them immediately upon discovery, which is one reason why we were so afraid for Renesmee. I believe they did this to prevent the children from getting their "hooks" into a prominent member of the Volturi guard and, thus, save themselves. (I would argue, in private only, that Jane and Alec are Aro's immortal children—with their hooks deeply embedded.)

In our case, it was fully due to Renesmee that so many of our friends and acquaintances chose to bear witness to her legitimacy. In truth, Renesmee saved herself from the Volturi by charming a large number of immortals enough to risk their lives for her. And thank heaven she did, for she is our necessity.

*Edward*

## JACOB'S MEMORY #1

Setting: Forks High School property, a public place

Time: Spring morning before school

Age: 16

*Where's the damn bloodsucker? I don't have all day. Ah, I think I smell him now. Yup, never fails. There's the showoff-mobile. Gawd, that car must reek! How can she even stand to be in there with him? I'll never get it. Why would she want him when she could have someone warm (actually, pretty damn hot...heh, heh, heh) and HUMAN. I can't let her throw her life away on something that's already dead! At least if one of 'em comes on our land again I've got the go-ahead to take them all out! Send them back to the pit of hell where they came from. No, no, no! Not too close, leech. I can't stand the burn in my nose. If Bella ever smells like that—which she won't—I won't have any trouble taking her out too. Look how he guards her with his arm. Like I'm gonna do something to her. If I did anything, I'd do it to him! Parasite...*

*I cannot believe it! He took her all the way across the country and didn't even tell her what was going on! What does he think she is? A china doll? Ha, ha, ha...his face was hilarious when I remembered Bella in the woods. He shrank up like a slug in salt. I wish I could have seen into his head for a change. The ol' mindreading thing ain't so great sometimes, I guess. And the other one...how Bella used to curl into a ball when the radio played a particular song. That one really got him! Good weapon. Wiped that arrogant look right off his face. Why the hell did he have to come back? We were doing so great together until he showed up again. Damn, I miss her. Will I ever get to see her again?*

As long as I live, I will never forgive myself for leaving Bella. Seeing her pain through Jacob's eyes was even worse torture than he knew...still is, whenever I think of it. I don't know why she ever took me back. But I thank God every day that she did...

*Edward*

## TEACHING ROSALIE

Teaching Bella to hunt was a joy. Every moment of her first day was delightful—watching her discover her new skills, seeing her run, jump the river, and leap from branch to branch through the trees. Not only was she incredibly beautiful, but also graceful, jubilant, and inspiring. She took to her new life like she was made for it.

Not Rosalie. From the moment her burning stopped, she was angry...angry at her former fiancé, Royce, and his misogynistic friends, angry at Carlisle, angry at me, angry at losing her life and her dreams. It was not at all clear whether Carlisle should have changed her. She had not wanted to live. Furthermore, when she found out what she had become, she fell into deep despair. When her change was complete and she arose unbearably thirsty, she recoiled at what she was and what she would have to do to sustain her new life.

Esme did her best to welcome Rose. We all did, though a comment I made about her—I said, “What were you thinking Carlisle? Rosalie Hale? What are we going to do with her?”—during her change rubbed her the wrong way and has stuck with her ever since. Not that I feel any particular need to defend myself, but all I meant was that she was so well-known and so utterly entrenched in her(dare I say trivial?) lifestyle that I thought she never would adjust to ours.

Rosalie was even more beautiful as a vampire than as a human and she still would be admired by everyone she met, but everything that truly mattered to her relied upon her humanity. She wanted to be an object of envy, but she also wanted to be a wife, a mother, and a member of the social elite in her community.

None of those things could ever be once she became immortal. Sure, she found Emmett purely by chance, and sure, they have a wedding every dozen years or so, but there will be no children. Sure, she would have as much money as she wanted, but she would never have the status she craved. She and Emmett couldn't be social pillars of any community—we were never in one place long enough, and we would never have a multi-generational family name with a local history. (Although...since Renesmee has come along, perhaps...)

So, my family could not give Rose most of what would make her happy. Nevertheless, Carlisle had made her and she was our responsibility. When he gave her the opportunity to move to the Denali coven, she chose to stay with us. We would care for her as best we could.

It fell to Carlisle to teach Rosalie how to hunt. He was never concerned that she would attack humans and drink their blood. The idea repelled her, though she had the intense thirst that we all had as newborns. She wasn't interested in hunting game, either, though. She wasn't interested in hunting anything at all, except for Royce and his friends and she was obsessed by that. However, she would have to drink sooner or later. Even Carlisle succumbed to his thirst eventually.

Carlisle's first outing to teach Rosalie to hunt was a wash. Esme went along to help keep an eye on the newborn Rose and to soften the experience for her as much as possible. Still, Rosalie could not be persuaded to chase an animal, much less to bite its throat and drink its blood. The trio came home without accomplishing their goal. Rosalie's eyes darkened to ebony and she became drawn and weak—after twenty days, almost too weak to hunt. Rosalie's distress was nothing like Carlisle's attempt to starve himself—that went on much longer—but it was bad enough. There was no question that she longed to die.

Though Rosalie did not like me, partly for my disdainful (to her) comments early on, and partly because I did not desire her as she expected, I felt that I might have better luck teaching her to hunt than Carlisle had had. First, I knew that Rosalie wanted something from me (my admiration), and second, I was willing to goad her, harass her, insult her, or whatever else might be necessary to convince her to accept what she was, while Carlisle and Esme were not.

We were living in New York at the time and I took Rosalie to the nearest state park. The state was full of wildlife in the 1930s, much more so than now. There were large numbers of deer and black bear, wild boar, and even moose. I was looking for deer. Though I knew they wouldn't smell particularly good to her, they would be easy for her to catch and overcome in her weakened state.

As a newborn, Rosalie was as powerful as any newborn despite being weakened from thirst. Therefore, she could not be forced to do anything she didn't want to do and hunting was no exception. A herd of deer passed fifty yards away, but I couldn't convince her even to take chase. When I asked her why not, she said, "They stink."

True. Perhaps something else, then. I had a feeling that the appearance of wild boar would disgust her, though their blood tastes surprisingly like human blood. For me, that was a good reason to avoid them, but I thought the scent of their blood might entice her to drink even against her will. We didn't find any that day, though.

As we continued to make our way through the forest, I caught a whiff of bear. It occurred to me that attacking an angry bear might help her release some of the anger she carried with her. I led her in the direction of the beast, but did not tell her what it was. When we were within thirty yards of it, her head snapped up and her nostrils flared. She reflexively took a hunting crouch and I knew we were home free. She would not be able to help herself beyond that point. I remained silent, knowing that my words were much less powerful an incentive to her than her own instincts.

She ran forward in spurts until she tracked the bear to its den and found that it recently had left in search of food. When Rosalie caught sight of the black momma bear, she did not hesitate, but leaped onto its back and went for its neck. It took a swipe at her and knocked her to the ground. Enraged, she pulled back her fist and punched it in the face. It tumbled away from her, but quickly recovered, and then rose on its hind legs and roared, equally enraged. Rosalie charged, aiming directly for its neck, and held the bear's jaws closed with one hand while she drank it dry. When the bear was drained, she threw

its carcass to the ground and— without looking in my direction—took off running. I followed closely behind until I saw what she was stalking...two bear cubs.

“Rosalie, no!” I yelled, but she paid me no heed. She leaped at the cubs and took one in each hand, drinking the blood from one while holding the other in the air by the neck. She drained them both in quick succession. We tried never to take mothers with young or the young themselves if we could help it, but since she’d already killed the mother, it was probably better that she did drink from the cubs. They would be unlikely to survive on their own. I didn’t say anything further about it, but was just glad that she had finally slaked her thirst. Her strength had already returned and her eyes blazed amber-red. I doubted that she would hesitate to hunt next time now that she had done it once. We had learned that she had a preference for bear.

When she finally looked at me, I used just one word, “More?” Rosalie shook her head and leaped at me. Taken by surprise, I did not react. She grabbed the back of my head and shoved her tongue into my mouth and pressed her crotch against mine, holding me to her with a hand on my buttocks. Naturally, I froze into stillness, not moving, not resisting, not responding in any way at all, until finally she gave up, slapped me across the face, and started running toward home. I let her go. I hadn’t fed yet and she didn’t need my help to get back, since it would be trivial for her to follow our scent trail. After her rudeness, I frankly didn’t care whether I ever saw her again. Back then, nobody talked about men being assaulted by women and even if they did, it was more likely that a male vampire would fight rather than prosecute such behavior. I kept it to myself, though I was disgusted and slightly humiliated.

Instead, I took off on my own for a couple of weeks, living in the forest, not telling anyone where I’d gone or why. I’d only recently come back after almost three years away feeding on humans, and I’d become lonely and ready to be reunited with my family. But with Rosalie there, that prospect had become less inviting.

When I returned, I found that Carlisle and Esme had been extremely worried about me, but I refused to talk about why I’d left. They had recognized that there was a connection between my hunting trip with Rosalie and my swift departure thereafter, but didn’t know what it was exactly.

Fortunately, during my absence, my sister had resolved to live, to hunt, and to accept what she was. I kept my distance to the degree that it was possible and simply waited for her newborn strength to wane. Once it did, she would have no power over me. Though I would not hit a woman, I would be able to defend myself from her by virtue of my mind-reading skills and my much greater fighting experience.

There were many reasons why we were all much happier after Emmett nearly died on a cold spring day in the Appalachian forest two years later.

*Edward*

## JACOB'S MEMORY #2

Setting: Quileute reservation boundary

Time: Spring morning, one week before graduation

Age: 16

*She loves me. I know she does. If the bloodsucker hadn't come back, she would know it by now. I have to make her see it. I HAVE to. If she lets him turn her into a filthy, stinking leech like him, I'll never forgive myself. She has to know that she has options. Damn! I'm nervous. Why should I be nervous? She's Bella. She's the same Bella that she's always been since we hung around in diapers together. The parasite is gonna hate me for this, especially when she finally comes to her senses and chooses me, but tough titties! I'm SO much better for her. She has to see that. I have to MAKE her see it. Ack! My hands are sweating. It's just tiredness. All that patrolling and patrolling, but that doesn't matter. It's for Bella...to keep Bella safe...so she can marry me. I wonder if Charlie would think I'm too young to marry his girl. Ah, hell, I think I'm too young to marry. But if I could get her to go along with it, then the leech could never come back and steal her away again. She'd be mine forever! I hate him for coming back to Forks! He was gone and Bella and me were doing so well together. We love each other. It's not fair! And now she's going to be one of them in a week! A WEEK! I can't stand it. I can't! I have to make her see that she has another choice. A better choice! If she chooses me, she can keep Charlie and Renee and stay in Forks and be Bella, for crissakes, not some bloodless statue that might as well be in a museum. How can she even be attracted to that cold rock? Imagining him with her makes me want to throw up.*

*I have to be bold! (And brave, strong, and true.) There's no time left. It's my last chance. I LOVE HER. She loves me too! She does! She's just blinded by the bloodsucker. Once she recognizes it, everything will fall together. Today's the day. Now's the time. Why am I so nervous? He'll try to kill me, I suppose. That's not a bad reason to be nervous. Even if he does, it will be worth it, though.*

*If this goes the right way, Bella will be so blown over by my fearless declaration of love that she'll melt into my arms and I'll bend down...way down...and kiss her. My lips on hers, my hands in her long, dark hair, her hands on my chest, kissing so hard we can't stop. Tongue to tongue, her hands wandering around, mine wandering around. Oh...great. Now I've got a hard-on and here she comes. I'll stand behind my car. Down boy! Down!*

*The bloodsucker sure looks pissed. Hope they had a fight. Heh, heh. Okay, look big and beautiful now, Jake. No! Not you! You stay down!*

There he was, half naked and ridiculously muscled with a very human erection in his shorts, scheming about how to steal the love of my existence. All I could think about was him kissing

her—or worse!—and her letting him. If I weren't so civilized, I'd have leaped out of my car and pounded him into the ground. But that would have separated Bella and me, and then he would have won.

*Edward*

## 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*

### JACOB'S MEMORY #3

Setting: Charlie's yard after Jacob kissed Bella against her will

Time: Spring

Age: 16

*I thought that went very well. I could tell by the look on her face that she wanted it. Why wouldn't she? She loves me—I know that, she knows that, he knows that. It was a good one too. All that practice with the pillow paid off. 'Course, she had to act like she didn't like it after all the denials she's been making. There ain't no way she didn't like that smacker I gave her. Well, maybe not the Frenchie part so much—have to work on that—but that so-called punch was just for show. She put her hands on my chest just like I imagined she would. I wish she would have moved them around a little more, but I'll take it. Next time...*

*She'll be thinking about me and our passion when she's by herself in her bed—I know it. Too bad he can't read her mind! That would drive him crazy! Heh, heh.*

*Oh crap! He's here. Now he's gonna piss all over my parade—if he even pisses, which I doubt. I'm not leaving. If he wants to fight, I'm ready! Charlie's definitely on my side. He's not even concerned about Bella's hand, though I am sorry about that. If I'd known she was going to throw a measly little punch, I would have held her hands behind her back. Ooh, that would be fun, come to think of it. She's sexy when she's mad.*

*Great, he's here. Oh, blah, blah, blah...like Bella's never broken a bone before. This one is nothing.*

*Oh, big whoop! Could he possibly think I'm scared that he's calling me outside? I'd gladly fight him any day, though I don't think Charlie's gonna let him throw a punch. I don't know why Charlie's afraid that Edward would hurt me, I'm bigger and way more muscled. He can't use his so-called superpowers with Charlie watching anyway, so it would be a fair match.*

*Cool! He threatened to rip my leg off! Like that's even possible. Oh...look at the big showoff, touching her face like that. I did it too...ha ha...even if she did punch me. And he said he'd break my jaw if I kissed her again...unless she wants me too. That's the key! She's gonna want it as soon as I make her see that she loves me. "She is mine," he says. I say we'll see about that!*

*Sigh. There they go...together. Oh...Bella... I am sorry I pushed you too far. I really thought you'd respond when I kissed you. I thought it would make you SEE. Please...can't you love me instead of him?? I want you. I want you...bad.*

I was happy when Bella called me to come get her, and relieved when she told me what happened (though sorry she was hurt). I knew Jacob was going to tell her he loved her and that he wanted her to choose him rather than me. To be honest, I couldn't be absolutely sure how she would react.

There are many ways in which Jacob would have been better for Bella than me...I knew that...but I was too selfish to give her up. I told him I was going to fight for her. His challenge only made me want to fight harder...and dirtier. I knew that I had at least one advantage over Jacob and that was Bella's tremendous physical desire for me. She might have felt that for Jacob too—he was physically impressive running around half naked, but I've always believed in the value of mystery and anticipation.

It was then that I decided I would ease my physical restrictions as much as I could to entice Bella and encourage her to marry me sooner than later. It was an uphill battle, but I was determined to use everything I had. Fortunately, it worked!

*Edward*

## JACOB'S MEMORY #4

Setting: Bella's graduation

Time: Summer

Age: 16

*Not a great time for us to be off the rez with that redheaded leech hanging around. What the hell does she want here anyway? We'll get her, though. I can't wait. I get to kill a vampire for a change instead of mollycoddling them and making nice.*

*There she is! "Way ta go, Bells!" Gosh, they really messed up the whole promenade bit...all the graduates are bunched up into a lump. Finally, they get to the S's! "Hey, Charlie, she looks pretty good up there, eh? Whoo hoo!"*

*I wonder if I should go to that party at the Leech Farm and take my posse. As much as I hate those bloodsuckers, it is Bella's party. Yeah, yeah, she's still mad at me for that kiss. I don't care...it was worth it!*

*Yeah, I'm goin' to that party. I've got my present to give her and when else can I do it? Besides, how much longer do I have before she turns into one of them? After that, I don't know if we'll even be friends. I don't see how...I can't stand their stench. Would I even want her after that? If she lets him do that to her, I don't think I could touch her again. So I gotta up my game. I gotta give it everything I have right now.*

*But damn! The redheaded leech keeps coming around. I can't get enough sleep to be charming. Running all night, catching a few winks here and there. It's hard to be my big, beautiful self.*

*Okay, cool, this thing is over. Ack...there go the bloodsucker and his fortune-teller sister. Wonder how many times they've graduated? That must get old.*

*"Yeah, yeah, Dad, we gotta get outta here. I'll roll you. Charlie, we've gotta be somewhere. Congratulations on having an adult kid. You feel old?"*

*"Not too old to take you down, Jacob! Better watch yourself. See you Saturday, Billy. Thanks for coming. I'll tell Bella you were here."*

*I've gotta go home and patrol before we head over to the bloodsucker's house. Then I'll get Bella to forgive me and take my gift. Heh, heh... she'll be wearing me on her wrist. And she'll do it too because she loves me. That'll blow his mind. I'll put my mark on her first! I'm so good! How can she resist me?*

There was Jacob, scheming and plotting to steal Bella from me. I didn't know what the present was that he wanted to give her, but it sounded like a "marking" of some kind. Probably jewelry of some kind, but maybe he was giving her a tattoo—a wolf or, worse, his name—but I didn't think she'd go for a tattoo.

I had a few plans of my own and was pretty sure I could compete. I had my eye on a wrought-iron bedframe with a bower of iron roses... no thorns. We finally inaugurated that bed for real several months after we were married. The rest of the family had gone hunting together on a hint from me to Carlisle. But before we were married, it was also part of my seduction plan for convincing Bella to marry me. That night...that night was a watershed. It was also one of the most difficult ever in terms of my self-control. While trying to entice her into marriage, I drove myself crazy too.

It was the night before Victoria was to bring her newborns to wipe us out. The wolves had decided to join the battle, though, so I was no longer particularly worried that my time with Bella was soon to end. Still, emotions were running mighty high—Jacob was out there fighting for her too. I knew that on the morrow, he would be spending several hours with her pressed against his nearly naked body while he carried her up the mountain to our campsite. I knew that Bella loved me, of course. But I wasn't at all sure that she didn't love him too and agreeing to let him be so close to her was one of the hardest things I've ever done. I wanted to take my best shot the night before if at all possible.

Turns out, it was possible. She did agree to marry me, though she refused to wear her engagement ring in front of Jacob. I would have to tell him myself. Maybe then he would back off.

I wanted Bella so badly that night...so badly. And she wanted me too. She almost had her clothes off before I realized how serious she was about it. The fear that I would hurt her was the only thing that kept me from giving in to her demand, though I honestly did want to wait until after we were married—it's how I was raised. Fortunately, fear cemented my resolve when nothing else could have.

*Edward*

## CHARLIE'S SECOND CHANCE

Bella's father and I have always had a tenuous relationship. To begin with, I was the first "boy" that his daughter dated and that—as I now am finding for myself—is a relationship rife with difficulties for a father. Despite that, Charlie gave me a chance in the beginning. He was perfectly pleasant to me when I introduced myself to him before taking Bella to our family baseball game. However, that good will was sadly short-lived when I returned his agitated daughter later that evening and she immediately ran away from home. He didn't see her again for weeks and when he finally got her back, she came home to him wearing a leg cast and very nearly having lost her life. It still pains us both.

He blamed me. Of course he did. It *was* my fault. I should have seen the nomads coming. I should never have taken Bella out in the woods. I should never have fallen in love with her in the first place. So I did not begrudge him his ill-will and tolerated it with the polite condescension of the immortal. Human emotions are mostly irrelevant to us when we take the long view of things. After all, in-the-not-too-distant future, that human will be dead. Problem over. (Not that I wish Charlie dead. Of course not.)

Charlie tolerated my continuing relationship with his daughter at her insistence, though he never missed a chance to take verbal potshots at me. It didn't matter. He was Bella's father and, as such, deserved my respect and good manners, which I offered him to the best of my ability.

After Bella's "accident" in Phoenix, it took Charlie months to get beyond his distrust of me...just in time for me to re-earn it by abandoning his daughter in the woods and leaving her to suffer and waste away for the next six months. He truly hated me then. I drove his hatred to even higher heights by inadvertently luring Bella to Italy, leaving him with no idea where she'd gone. Meanwhile his best friend, Harry, had just died and he was already suffering greatly over that.

When I showed up three days later carrying Bella to his front door, only the restraint of many years as an officer of the law kept him from taking a swing at me. Or arresting me. Or committing acts of police brutality against me. He was utterly justified. And I was sorry for him, but Charlie was never my primary concern.

It was easy to forgive Charlie every cold shoulder and every verbal slight and all the blatant bias he held for my competition, because everything he ever did or said came from his great love for his daughter and his father's mandate to protect her from the likes of me. Understood.

Things have changed now that his daughter and I are happily married—deliriously happy—and have given him his first and only grandchild. He's in love with her, as is everyone, but with the added boost of the grandfather's special position. (Not to mention the obvious physical features they share due to their biological relationship, which nobody ever admits to. He knows. He can feel it.)

And now, God bless him, he has adjusted to the insanity implicit in a human man having a daughter and a son-in-law who are vampires and a grandchild who is half-and-half. He has more-or-less

accepted his new in-laws too, all of whom are creatures from his species' nightmares. It's a lot to take in. So, as I said, God bless Charlie.

But all of that is just a preface to explain why I am having fun in my role of silent spectator as Charlie is given a new lease on life. He has lost his daughter to another man, just as he lost his wife to another man two decades hence, and the former has finally cured him of the latter. It has set him free to perhaps try again. And who better to try *with* than the widow of your best friend, someone you've known your whole life, just never before in *that* way.

Now she looks entirely different when she invites you to sit down at that kitchen table where you've spent countless hours hanging around, swapping fishing tales with your best buddy. Now her attention is focused entirely on you and your constantly growling stomach. Boxed macaroni and canned tuna don't really cut it anymore after your loving daughter has been serving you home-cooked meals for two years.

So now, you hang out in *her* kitchen because she feels sorry for you eating your pathetic bachelor's fare every night. And as you visit more frequently, she begins to pull out a few of the stops, like lighting up the grill to cook a traditional whole salmon and spending three hours picking wild huckleberries and baking a cobbler instead of frying a hamburger. Maybe she even breaks out the cookbooks and spreads her wings a little, since she can now cook for someone who is overwhelmingly grateful and for whom she doesn't have to skimp on the butter and cream because he's fit and has a healthy heart.

As she looks at you sitting there at her table, a comfortable presence who's been there for as long as she's been married, your attention is now on her only, not divided between her and her husband, and with her widow's eyes, she also sees that yes, it's lonely lying by herself in her bed every night. She's not used to it and she longs to feel the roughened skin of a man's body against her own. She finds that you carry an intoxicating smell with you that she never noticed before...an indefinable blend of aftershave, soap, sweat, and sex...a scent that speaks to her on an unconscious level, urging her to remember how long it has been since she's stroked a man's chest, felt his lips against hers, or especially, since her lower regions sang with the excitement of new possibilities.

And what man, divorced nearly twenty years and newly freed from the bonds of first love, could ignore the draw of sizzling bacon fat, yeasty baking bread, and her sweet, but light perfume? What man wouldn't notice the heart-stirring, black tresses (slightly streaked with silver) that are the glory of the Northwest coastal native? Who wouldn't see the warmth in the cinnamon shade of her still-soft skin, or notice that—in spite of birthing two children—she retains the narrow waist and taut behind of the twenty-something single girl she used to be?

It's the second act of an adult life, the flush of new love that, though mature, still carries the excitement of those first knowing glances, that first accidental brush of the hands, that pregnant pause before you say goodnight. You wonder if she feels the same draw that you do, the pull that makes you want to bury your fingers in her hair, caress the curve between her lower ribs and gracefully rounded

hips. You lay your hand in the small of her back as you direct her toward the living room sofa, where she offers you that unnecessary cup of coffee that you don't really want, but accept anyway to prolong your time in her solitary presence. And as you settle next to one another there, feeling the discomfort of uncertainty, but wanting to indulge your impulses, you feel her hand softly cover yours and when you look up, you see her staring into your eyes. At that moment, you know that you are not alone. She wants you too.

Emboldened, you lean forward, hoping that the onion slice you ate at lunch is fully defused by the spearmint gum you've been slyly stashing in your front shirt pocket. You see her lips slightly separate and, moved by that subtle signal, you take your chance. Luckily (or perhaps fatefully), she leans toward you at the same moment and your lips touch a tad before you expected, but no matter, that great canyon has been crossed. Perhaps you missed your mark and landed just above her top lip and you adjust your face downward at the same time that she adjusts upward so that once again you both overshoot.

If all goes well, though, that awkward moment dissolves as you both shiver with the realization that yes, this IS what you wanted and that you would like more of it, please. Close now, it's easy to try again and get it right this time, your lips moving in synchrony, and it feels natural to wrap your arm around her back and to feel hers on your waist as you scoot even closer and dare a third kiss, this one cracking open the concrete door that shields you from the physical need you've been denying for too, too long.

In one ear, a whisper, "Take a chance, do it now! She's pretty and kind and she wants you, too." In the other ear, a shout, "Stop right there! Do you even remember how? It won't go up! You'll never last! And oh, by the way, what would Harry say?"

You shift away uneasily, gazing at your lap. She understands your meaning and pulls away in turn. Your face begins to color and you need to get away, so you say, "I've got an early morning," and she says, "Oh yes, me too." You notice on the table the cup you haven't touched and pick it up and take a gulp so her effort's not for naught. You stand and raise your hand to shake, but see *tout suite* how dumb that looks and gracelessly let it fall. She holds the door as you step outside where, safe behind the summer screen, you think your second thoughts, but say, "I had a nice time. Let's get together again." She, a mite less timid, invites you 'round for roast tomorrow.

*Edward*

## JACOB'S MEMORY #5

Setting: Forest clearing; training to fight the newborns

Time: Bella's graduation night

Form: Wolf

*There she is, sitting over there with the bloodsucker. Wait, when there's a whole pack of bloodsuckers—a gaggle? a flock? a herd? No, no, I got it...a MURDER of bloodsuckers! Ha!*

*So as I was thinking before I so rudely interrupted myself... in a Murder of Bloodsuckers, I'll have to give him a special name. Maybe "Eddie the Leech."  
Yeah, Eddie the Leech. He'd hate that.*

*I did hate that. Fortunately for him, he never said it out loud.*

*I wonder if she liked the bracelet I gave her. It seemed like she did. Took a helluva long time to carve, that's for sure. She was still pretty mad at me at the party for giving her that kiss the other day, but I broke her down. Pouting always works with Bella. She can't stand it when I give her my sad face.*

*The military one seems to know what he's doing. These newborn things can't be that tough, though, not against us. It sure surprised them when all ten of us showed up. Yeah, our numbers are growing, bloodsuckers! Ha, ha! Yeah, the military one IS good, taking out the big one so fast. Ooh ooh, the big one's mad! Remind me not to piss him off. He looks pretty dangerous.*

*Oh, look, here comes Eddie the Leech. Let's see what he can do. How could Bella be in love with someone who walks like a cat? A cat! We're so much cooler.*

*Wait! What the hell was that? Oh, he's reading the military one's mind, I bet. Major Leech isn't doing anything predictable, but Eddie gets out of the way just in time...every time. But ha, ha, he can't get in any shots either. Major Leech is really fast. I'd like to get my paws on him, any of 'em really. I hate being all buddy, buddy.*

*"Shut up, Jacob! We're trying to concentrate over here, already!"*

*"Yes, Jacob, head in the game!"*

*Okay, okay, Paul, Sam...get off my back. Humph.*

*Wow! The little fortune teller one has her eyes closed and Major Leech still can't get anywhere near her. That is super creepy! I'll be stayin' away from her, too!*

*Really? Seriously? We have to SNIFF them? Gross! What do we care if one of us goofs and knocks off a bloodsucker's head? It'll probably grow back ...heh, heh,*

*heh. I'm gonna go talk to Bella. I've already smelled that bloodsucker clan too many times! Good...Eddie's busy over there with Sam.*

*Hey, Bella! She looks a little scared, actually. It's me in here! You know, Jacob! Ol' pal, ol' buddy, Jake?! Here, let me do the old downward dog thing, get smaller. There. Is that better? Doesn't she recognize my lady-killer eyes? Hey, she does!*

*Cool, she's gonna PET me. I could NEVER get her to do that when I was in my human form! Heh, heh. Ah, that's so nice. Right there, no behind the ear more, yeah, there! Makes me wanna purr like a cat. Purr, purr. I see she's a lot friendlier to me when I'm a wolf. That kinda sucks. Oh, wait! I can get my kiss! Ha, ha. Here goes...*

*Slurp!*

*Ha, ha, that was funny. Hey! She tried to slap me! Ah, don't be mad. See me grinning? See my tongue hanging out like a big Bozo? There she goes! Got her laughing! Now maybe she'll chill.*

*Oh, crap! Here comes Eddie the Leech. He always has to interfere just when things are going good! He looks pissed. Guess he REALLY doesn't like me kissing his girl.*

*I think I'll go now. No, not because you came over here, Leech, in case you're reading my mind. My boys are waiting.*

*Bye, Bells. See ya soon!*

What an overconfident, foolhardy mutt he was. Still is, actually, but slightly more tolerable now. He's good to Renesmee at least. Though now that she's almost five and a stunning young woman, no doubt he and I will be butting heads again very soon. I'm not too sure that he's mature enough for my daughter for one thing. She's more grown-up than he is—smarter too. She'll probably get bored with him sooner or later. I'm waiting, tapping my foot...

*Edward*

My parents must have had sex once—I am here, after all, and I resemble both of them enough to convince me that I’m not the milkman’s son. Still, I don’t remember seeing a touch between them during my entire childhood. I think it was a business marriage, as much as anything. My father was becoming a high-powered lawyer in Chicago and remaining a bachelor into one’s forties was considered suspect in such circles. Not only that, but a professional such as my father needed a cook, maid, hostess, and someone to bring to the occasional “wives’ event.”

So my father married later in life than most men of his era. I was never sure why. He wasn’t a homosexual—at least I’m pretty sure he wasn’t. One of the reasons my parents fought was that my father spent so much time and money on mistresses and at the local brothels. It was a different time then. As far as I could tell from a child’s perspective of a father’s world, all wealthy lawyers, judges, politicians, and other important men hired or kept women for activities that are better reserved for the marriage bed.

It was the old double standard at work—men chose one kind of woman to marry and another kind of woman to satisfy their sexual desires. It was a prevalent belief that if a woman enjoyed sex, her virtue was suspect. Indeed, it was considered virtuous for a woman to “put up with” sex to produce children and otherwise merely to endure it as one of her wifely obligations to her husband. I was allowed to observe my father and his cronies after dinners at our house when they indulged in cigars and bourbon in the smoking room while their wives retired to the sitting room to drink tea. I learned a lot about men and sex during those evenings, neither of which impressed me much.

Growing up at home with my mother, I served as her primary confidante. From time to time, she would complain bitterly about my father’s “carousing,” which was code for visiting prostitutes. My parents slept in separate rooms when my father was home, but frequently, he stayed nights at “his club.” These prestigious, men-only clubs dotted Chicago and it took a great deal of money and the support of at least two existing members to be allowed to join. It’s where Chicago business was done in the old days and where rich men went to escape from their families.

The kind of separation that existed between upper-class men and their wives made family life—including anything to do with children—the woman’s responsibility. In our final years together, my father began to take more of an interest in me and began inducting me into the masculine brotherhood. Once, I went with him to a house of prostitution and was frankly shocked and rather disgusted by the buying and selling of women. Neither party to such transactions seemed to be damaged by it particularly, but that wasn’t what troubled me. I was alienated by the division between the animal acts of sex and the love between two people that I thought should be the cornerstone of a marriage. It didn’t work that way in my father’s circles. My mother implied that once he had impregnated her with me, he seemed to think his duties at home were finished.

I respected my father, but I didn't like him much. There wasn't much *to* like, actually. I only saw him infrequently and when he talked to me, I wasn't expected to answer unless he specifically asked me a question. He believed in the old tenet that children should be seen and not heard, which was not uncommon at that time. I think he expected me to train as a lawyer when I became a man, but my goal was to leave home as early as possible. The army was to be my means of escape. Soldiers were revered in those days of war.

It was my father's treatment of my mother that made me want to be a different kind of man. If I ever married, which I hadn't thought much about, I knew that I would only marry someone I loved and I would be faithful to her. I saw how it hurt my mother to find lip rouge on my father's collars or to be told he was going to the club when she knew full well that he was going out with his mistress. He didn't try to hide it, especially. Once I even saw one of his mistresses get into his carriage when I was on a late-night errand for my mother. From my perspective, it seemed like the mistresses had all the fun and the wives had all the drudgery and that it all stemmed from a Puritanical view of women as either maidens or whores.

I never wanted a marriage like my parents' and perhaps that is one reason I never responded to the advances of Tanya or Rosalie or Jessica. The idea of sex without love was utterly unappealing. It reminded me of the Chicago brothels where women lounged about in scanty clothing designed to appeal to the baser instincts of men. Perhaps I had base instincts back then too, but I was so determined never to be like my father in that regard that they were well-buried.

I am glad to say that I did not turn out like my father. My wife is everything to me both emotionally and physically, and I feel wonderfully free with her. We love each other to the degree that whatever pleases her in the bedroom pleases me and vice versa. I do find that the longer we are together, the more "baser instincts" we discover in ourselves. We don't have a policy of "anything goes," but we do have a policy of anything is open for discussion. We talk about a lot of things we don't actually want to do too. Talking is fun.

When I think about the joyful, exciting, and utterly satisfying sex life I have with Bella, I rather feel sorry for my father and for other men who lived like he did. They got an inferior sort of sexual experience and their wives got their only fulfillment from their children.

*Edward*

## SEX & THE MODERN MAN

Yikes! Today I had one of those unfortunate experiences that happens to those of us who read other people's minds. As I've said before, Emmett's mind is a clear lake, transparent all the way to the bottom—and I do mean "bottom." Today, I was accosted by an image of Emmett holding Rosalie upside down by her waist with her legs wrapped around his neck. His mouth was strategically located, as was hers. They were enjoying some private time together sans clothing.

Emmett thinks of that particular feat as the "Vertical 69." It's not a position humans could manage...at least not for long. Eventually, the pooling of blood to her head would make the woman pass out and the man's arm muscles would fatigue. Vampires, especially those as strong as Emmett, could maintain it virtually forever if they liked.

Those two have been together for close to eighty years and they still act like crazy teenagers in the bedroom. They strayed long ago from the four or five most common sexual positions into the "fun and the fabulous"—as Emmett thinks of it—or the "weird and the wild" in Rosalie's words.

One of Emmett's favorites is to lift Rose onto his shoulders facing him...or more accurately, with her nether regions in his face. He thinks it's convenient to shoulder press her to get at all her nooks and crannies (an image I refuse to see through his eyes). Of course, Emmett is also fond of holding his wife in his arms with her legs around his waist, lifting and lowering her with his frighteningly powerful forearms. Rose is impressively strong too and could hold Emmett around *her* waist, but what would be the point?

Emmett also gets a charge from the "wheelbarrow" position, which he saw in the Kama Sutra, the ancient Indian book of love. Rosalie balances on her hands and Emmett stands between her thighs, lifting them off the floor at whatever height is required. Sometimes he drives her around the room like a wheelbarrow. (That one I don't understand, though I'm starting to see a theme here. He likes to get a workout with sex!) I suppose Bella and I could try the wheelbarrow sometime when we feel like having a laugh. Who knows? Maybe there's something to it.

The other day my brother asked me how "things" were working out after five years with Bella. I knew what he meant. He used to ask me this question when Bella and I were newlyweds, mostly to offer advice due to my admitted lack of sexual experience. Now he asks entirely out of prurience, as I haven't been a virgin for a long time. He has seen enough of Bella and I in public and heard enough of us in private to know that we are doing exceptionally well. He wants details, though, and when I don't supply them, he asks me questions that begin, "Have you tried...?" Sometimes he gets his answer in an unguarded curve of my lips or a sparkle in my eye. He badgers me. I can't be perfectly contained at all times.

Emmett once showed me the box of sex toys that he and Rosalie have collected over the years. It reminded me of when I went to medical school and discovered what "facial massagers" were used for. They were advertised in newspapers when I was young, but I thought they were for giving facial massages. Why someone would need one, I didn't know, but I was a kid.

Vibrators were invented to treat “female hysteria,” a category that included symptoms as diverse as “overexcitement,” headaches, or “nerves.” A woman made a doctor’s appointment for a “pelvic massage,” which consisted of clitoral stimulation by hand to orgasm. Mechanical vibrators were first used by doctors to make the job easier on their fingers and wrists.

Women often showed great improvement in their symptoms after being given an orgasm. They reported feeling more relaxed, better able to sleep, and free from bodily aches and pains. In those days, inducing “hysterical paroxysms” in a patient was not considered sexual because the woman’s vagina was not penetrated. In the 1920s, discussing the “pelvic massage treatment” in polite society became taboo, but the technique was still taught in medical school in the 1940s. I never worked directly with patients, so I never got any practical experience at it. As Emmett likes to say: “Edward learned about sex the hard way—from books.”

Times have changed. Women are aware of their own sexual needs in this century and, if Bella is any indication, are willing to share their needs with their husbands. Doctors probably still counsel patients on female anatomy and sexuality and hand out literature, but I doubt if they provide masturbation services anymore (not legally, anyway). The term “female hysteria” was retired a long time ago and everyone assumes now that women want and are entitled to sexual satisfaction.

Emmett’s toy collection was interesting in an ethnological sort of way. It consisted of a variety of vibrators, phalluses (dildos) of various lengths and girths, though I wasn’t sure why they would need those. There were vibrating “cock rings”—which I assume were not used for their original purpose, maintaining an erection—and a selection of funny-looking “French ticklers.” He had strings of beads he called “back-door balls,” which I tried not to think about, but couldn’t avoid the picture in my head. My brother had gadgets that rotated, “double-pronged” phalluses and one huge, double-ended phallus with straps on one end. When I pointed at it, Emmett hooted raucously.

“Rosalie picked that one out, but I think it was more as a threat than anything.” He laughed again. I didn’t get it. What I could imagine didn’t seem like it would be a lot of fun.

“How would you use something like that?” I asked, puzzled.

“Oh...well...see, the woman puts it on, or rather ‘in,’ and hooks the straps on like a thong, right? Then she’s fully ‘equipped,’ so to speak.” He snorted.

I looked at him with raised eyebrows and he smiled a wicked grin. “I think they’re made more for girl couples,” he said, “but Rose gets it out sometimes when she’s mad and wants to scare me. It works too!”

I dropped my forehead onto my fingers. Emmett’s transparent mind had its downside—he didn’t even try to block his memory of my sister wearing that...uh...device. Though oddly appropriate, it was an image I did not need to see, especially since we never forget *anything*. God knows I love my brother, but it was sometimes hazardous being in his head.

That's one thing I love about Alice and Jasper. I can read their minds too, but they are better at not thinking about such personal things when I'm around. I only rarely get surprised by images of Alice and Jasper in their private moments, but even when I do, the way they think of each other makes it okay. Jasper often has intimate thoughts of Alice, especially when she's not with him, but the images in his mind are usually of Alice looking into his eyes. Alice thinks of Jasper frequently in various states of undress, but I've taken too many high school gym classes with him in the last fifty years for that to bother me.

Carlisle and Esme are similar to Alice and Jasper. Even as newlyweds, the pictures in their minds were tender and beautiful and not unexpectedly explicit. They are still absolutely in love with one another, but they've learned to restrain their thoughts around me, more for my sake than theirs, I'm sure. Early in their marriage, I left their home for ten years, not only because I wanted to try a different kind of life, but also to give them the time alone that they needed. In those days, reading minds was new to me and I was not yet used to the intimate knowledge that it sometimes forces upon me.

Right from the beginning, Bella was different. Though I was insanely frustrated sometimes at not being able to read her mind, it was intriguing too. I had to make an effort to know her, which was not something I'd had to do with anyone before. She was a challenge to me and honestly, challenge isn't something I got much of before I met her.

*Edward*

### JACOB'S FANTASY #3

Setting: Top of the mountain

Time: The night before the battle with the newborns

Form: Human (damn!)

*Yeah, he's mad. I don't care. I'm not gonna let Bella lose her toes just because HE doesn't want me to sleep with her. Well, I got news for him. I won't be doing a lot of sleeping! Not lying here with Bella as close to me as my underwear (which I'm not wearing, BTW), rubbing against me a little every time she breathes.*

"Please! Do you *mind*?" I hissed at Jacob.

"What?"

"Do you think you could *attempt* to control your thoughts?" Damn, he gets under my skin!

"No one said you had to listen. Get out of my head."

"I wish I *could*. You have no idea how loud your little fantasies are. It's like you're shouting them at me."

"I'll try to keep it down."

[30 minutes and lots of chit-chat later]

"Sleep well, Jacob. Enjoy the moment." *I am tired, but I hate to waste this first night of sleeping with Bella, actually sleeping. Anyway, before I can sleep, I'm gonna have to figure out how to get my special friend to go to sleep too. He's WIDE awake!*

"I didn't mean that quite so literally," I groaned. It was going to be a long night if Jacob kept this up.

"Sorry. You could leave, you know—give us a little privacy."

"Would you like me to *help* you sleep, Jacob?"

"You could try. It would be interesting to see who walked away, wouldn't it?"

"Don't tempt me too far, wolf. My patience isn't *that* perfect."

Jacob laughed. "I'd rather not move just now, if you don't mind."

*Okay, don't think about sex, don't think about sex, don't think about sex. Here I am not thinking about sex. Gosh, what a waste. Of all the times I've had to fantasize about Bella when I was in bed with my...ahem!..."self," now I don't even have to fantasize 'cause she's right here and I can't even enjoy it. If I can't do anything about it, I should at least be able to think about doing it. But now, here she is, with her breasts poking against my chest and I can't do anything OR think anything! Ain't that the pits.*

*Oh good. The lee...Edward is humming. Maybe he won't be able to hear me so well now. It's darn tough not to think about the thing that someone has just asked you not to think about, especially if the thing they don't want you to think about is all you can think about because Mr. Happy is real happy. Oops. Sorry, Edward, if you're listening.*

*Anyway, it's a good thing...Bella feels warm now, even her frozen toes are starting to thaw out and that was supposed to be the point of my being here in this really tight sleeping bag with the only woman I'll probably ever love, who won't even let me kiss her, but she's kidding herself if she thinks she's not attracted to me. Too bad that girls don't get hard-ons so you could tell for sure when they're all "happy." But I know Bella's attracted to me. How could she not be! I'm all hunky and warm and stuff. She definitely likes me as a wolf. She even petted me last night and leaned against me out there in the field. If he hadn't come back to Forks, we'd have made it into the sack months ago probably. Not that that's all I want, of course, but it'd sure be a good start! Heh, heh, heh.*

*Oops, sorry again there, Edward, ol' pal. This not-thinking-your-thoughts thing is harder than it looks, I can tell you that. But I am sleepy, I guess. Let me get this leg arranged a little better. Bella's cutting off my circulation.*

*WELL, hey, alrighty then!! Guess we won't be readjusting ourselves under the covers anymore. That one about got away from me. Being a teenage virgin is not the easiest thing in the world! I'll tell you!*

(Oh yeah, Jacob? Try being a 108-year-old virgin! It doesn't get any better.)

*Doodly doodly doo! Doodly doodly dee! Here I am not thinking about this and not thinking about that and... Oh, I know! I'll count dead bloodsuckers as I chomp off their heads. Good practice for the fight tomorrow. Chomp! One. Chomp! Two. Chomp! Three. Chomp! Four...okay I'm bored now. I'd rather count the freckles on Bella's back, or the hairs on her head, or on her... Oops! If I can't stop thinking like that, I will never fall asleep and I'll probably get chomped myself tomorrow.*

*Okay, one banana, two banana, three banana, four; five banana, six banana, seven banana more. Thirty thousand pounds...of bananas. Yes, there were thirty thousand pounds...of mashed bananas. Thirty thousand pounds of bananas...of*

*bananas...thirty thousand pounds of bananas. Not no driver now, just  
bananas...bananas...banan—*

Oh, thank the good Lord, he's finally gone to sleep. Well, maybe not all of him is asleep, but I guess he can't help that...or what he dreams about. Ack!! His dreams are worse than his thoughts!

I do appreciate it that Jacob tried to keep his thoughts under control even if it was only out of sheer embarrassment and even if he wasn't too successful. Humming doesn't really drown out Jacob's thoughts. At least I could hum Bella's lullaby and revel in the victory of her "Yes" the previous night.

Bella was going to marry me! In spite of Jacob, it was still the best night of my life.

*Edward*

## ROSALIE'S DREAM

My sister, Rosalie, has a dream she's been toying with for a long time, maybe as far back as Renesmee's first birthday. It was obvious to everyone in our family that Rosalie changed after Renesmee was born. She was a bit softer, a bit kinder, and in general, seemed happier.

Renesmee has grown so quickly that she was past the infant stage in a few short weeks and past the toddler stage in a few short months. I know Rosalie was a little sad when Renesmee began to walk and started spending more and more of her time with Jacob and the wolves.

Renesmee chose Rosalie as her godmother and that meant a lot to Rose. After we scared off the Volturi, though, none of us really believed Nessie would need a second mother in the fewer than seven years it would take for her to be fully grown. Now, being Renesmee's godmother is more honorary than anything.

Rosalie wanted a child from the time she was a young girl. When she was nearly killed and became a vampire, that dream died a bitter death. It made her hard and angry to lose everything she had ever wanted through no fault of her own. When Nessie came along, Rosalie began to reconsider the issue of having her own child. Maybe it *was* possible. We already had one child in the household, why not another?

As she saw it, there were two ways that it might be done. The first possibility was that Emmett could impregnate a surrogate mother, artificially or otherwise. I didn't take this option seriously for lots of reasons. First, I had grave doubts that Emmett could ever get that close to a human woman without killing her. Second, no human woman who understood what she was getting into would agree to be impregnated with a vampire's child. Third, even if neither of those things was a concern, Carlisle would never sanction risking a human life for that purpose. Fourth, if all those problems were removed, I still thought it was unlikely a woman would continue to carry the fetus after it began to starve her, break her bones, and otherwise destroy her. I could be wrong, though. Renesmee had a magical ability to make everyone love and want to protect her, especially her mother, almost from the moment of conception.

The second way for Rosalie to be a mother would be for her and Emmett to adopt a human child. She has researched every "conceivable" route for accomplishing it. She and Emmett could apply for a domestic adoption as a married couple. If they were willing to adopt a child of color, or an older child, or one with mental or physical disabilities, they might be able to get a child legally within a year. On paper, Em and Rose would be highly qualified adoptive parents—well-to-do, well-educated, and supported by a large and well-to-do extended family, including a highly regarded physician.

When I first heard Rosalie's thoughts about adopting a human child, I immediately dismissed them as wishful thinking. But when I considered it further, I didn't see as many difficulties as I'd expected. The main problem would be preventing Jasper—or even Emmett—from drinking the child's blood. Raising a human child would undoubtedly result in exposure to blood often over the years. Carlisle could handle any emergencies, but Jasper and Rose's near-accidents with Bella's blood have convinced us that only Carlisle is one hundred percent safe for humans.

Another problem with adopting a human child is the obvious one of explaining to the child why he doesn't look like Mommy and Daddy, and why they never take him to the beach, and all the other questions vampires are not allowed to answer truthfully. The questions would grow in number over the years when the child eventually figures out that Mommy and Daddy, Grandma and Grandpa, and the aunts and uncles go away every couple of weeks to someplace the child is not allowed to go. He would discover that his family never eats food and doesn't sleep, and so on, and so forth, which begs the question: Could a vampire family keep its secrets in such an intimate living arrangement?

That question leads to another: Would raising a human child be considered a violation of secrecy by the Volturi? If so, would one adopt the child with the intention of changing him when he's grown? How ethical is that?

There were many questions, but when I considered the possibility carefully, it didn't seem quite as crazy as it had at first glance. Carlisle might disapprove, but Esme probably wouldn't. With her history, she might even consider adopting a child of her own. Carlisle and Esme already are known for taking in "orphaned" kids and two human children in the family might be safer than one.

There is a third way that Rosalie and Emmett could become parents, though I haven't suggested it. Rosalie is sure to think of it herself soon if she hasn't already. If Rose wants a baby, she could easily steal one...make an orphan disappear. In fact, Rose and Em might be better off avoiding adoption agencies and going through official channels. Keeping ourselves out of human databases as much as possible is usually advantageous.

I wonder what Carlisle would do if one day Rose came home with a child. If she chose one who was severely disadvantaged or one who was being mistreated so that her crime improved the child's life, would he agree to let her to keep it? I have no answer for that. Carlisle might argue that subjecting a helpless child to a life such as ours is cruel in itself. Rose would be taking the risk of getting ejected from our family.

I'll bet that these days, orphaned or abandoned children who end up in the custody of the state have their DNA and fingerprints recorded. If Rose stole a child and that child was

reported missing, she would be risking discovery, perhaps when the child entered school, or maybe later if the child got in trouble with the law, or joined the military, or applied for a job that requires a background check. With the increasing computerization of such records in the twenty-first century, I'd wager that it's not as easy to steal children as it once might have been. The world is becoming a smaller place.

There's another crucial question: Would having and raising a child actually make Rosalie happy? Would it end her yearning or is her unhappiness already a permanent part of her makeup? What happens when the child leaves home, or worse, dies? There's no way to know.

How does Emmett feel about the idea? I know that he would do just about anything to make Rosalie happy and I don't see him having any objection to being a father. He certainly enjoyed Renesmee's babyhood and there is no question that any child would love Emmett. Being a father has been a tremendous experience for me. I'd be happy if Emmett got to have that chance and I would love being an uncle too.

Here I go getting carried away by Rosalie's pipe dream. Noting my reaction to the idea, I think about how Emmett will take to it and how Esme will be supportive and it seems conceivable that Rosalie could get her way and bring this new possibility into our lives. Time will tell.

*Edward*

## OUR NEW FRIEND

For Renesmee's first birthday, Alice threw another of her legendary fetes. She finally decided that it was too much agony to try to give Bella a birthday party, but unlike her mother, Nessie isn't resistant. She loves parties and being the center of attention. So Alice went with the flow and made the party for Renesmee—whose birthday is only three days before Bella's—and secondarily for Bella. The attention was focused on Renesmee, but everybody gave Bella gifts too. Though Bella was no longer aging, it was her first vampire birthday (or her twentieth human, though nobody with any sense mentioned that, meaning everyone except Alice).

Alice designed and sewed another special costume for Renesmee on the occasion. I don't know how she did it—it was remarkable in its detail. Alice orchestrated Renesmee's entrance to the well-known symphony from "Little Red Riding Hood." Renesmee padded into the living room on all fours—her rear end raised slightly in the air—as a beautiful, reddish-colored (bronze) wolf. The outfit was made from some kind of fake fur, though it was surprisingly realistic and quite hair-like in its color variations. The wolf costume had striking details such as a white, star-shaped patch on Nessie's chest, white paws, and another white patch on the end of her tail.

The wolf's head, which almost rivaled taxidermy in its realism, had been pulled on like a furry hood over Nessie's own head. Her face was partially visible through the wolf's open jaws, though Alice had painted Renesmee's face to match the fur so that her skin was well-camouflaged. On all fours, she looked remarkably similar to Jacob's pack members, except that she was tiny in comparison. Nessie was thrilled with the costume and was looking forward to running around in the woods pretending to be one of the pack.

Alice had invited Sam's pack too, so the house was swarming with wolves, most of whom remained in human form during the party, except for Leah and a few others who preferred to patrol the woods and keep watch.

Somehow, he got past all of them. I don't even know how long he'd been watching us before I realized he was there. His thoughts had been jumbled in with everyone else's for quite a while before I picked them out and concluded that there was a mind in the crowd that I didn't know. Trying not to alarm anyone, I took Carlisle and my brothers aside to inform them that we had an uninvited guest. As far as I could tell, he was unaccompanied and he seemed more curious than dangerous, but given the threats we'd had from the Volturi eight months before, it wasn't worth taking any chances.

Jasper and Emmett approached Sam who quietly took his leave from the party and joined them outside to search for the uninvited guest. They came up with absolutely nothing, no scent at all. With the help of the wolves outside, they ran patrols around the property, working their way inward in circles to be sure that the intruder couldn't escape their search. After half an hour, Sam came back to report to Carlisle and me that they hadn't found a thing.

Jasper was deeply concerned. The situation had never arisen where I could hear someone's mind nearby, but nobody could see, hear, or smell him. As I listened to his thoughts, I determined that he was

a vampire because he was particularly focused on Charlie, Sue, Emily, Billy, and Lily. The other humans present didn't smell like food to him, but those five did. My sense was that he was more distracted by the humans than he was intending to harm them, though. He seemed to be watching and listening carefully to the group as a whole and puzzling over its odd composition.

Then I had an idea. I discreetly pulled Bella from the party to tell her what was going on. She had noticed certain people sneaking out of the party while Alice distracted the others with loud music and silly party games such as "pin the tail on the wolf" (or "pin the nose on the human") and "hot potato." When Alice hung up the wolf-shaped piñata, Nessie got very excited and was distracted by the prospect of whacking cookies out of the beast. She didn't notice that both her mother and father had wandered outside.

Bella projected her shield around us both and together we walked the property until we found him—a vampire peeping Tom with a talent for making himself invisible. With Bella's shield to block his illusion, we saw him easily, looking into the house through the kitchen window. He was rather tall and large, blonde-haired, and young, probably late teens when he was changed, and a relatively new vampire as well. We motioned to Emmett, Jasper, and Carlisle who were waiting nearby and Bella shielded all of us while we approached him. He was so caught up in watching the fun inside the house that he didn't realize we were behind him until I spoke directly to him. Apparently, he was so used to being invisible that he had tuned out our presence, knowing that we couldn't see or smell him.

Suddenly, it occurred to me who this fellow might be. Jasper, Emmett, Carlisle, and Bella were crouched and ready to grab him at my signal, but I smiled and waved them off. They ignored that and remained crouched.

"Hello there," I ventured and got no reply. He didn't turn around to look at us because he knew we couldn't be communicating with an invisible vampire. So I tried again. "Are you Fred, by any chance?" I asked. He answered my question by whipping around to face us and then cowering in fear.

*They can see me?* he thought, terrified. *Surely not!* He started creeping sideways to try to sneak away from the house. We moved as a group to block his path and form a semi-circle around him, trapping him against the house's exterior.

"There's no need to be afraid, Son," Carlisle said to him. "We have no desire to hurt you. But if I may ask, why are you spying on my family?"

"You can s...see me?" the tall vampire finally asked.

"As clear as day," I replied.

"I'm Carlisle Cullen and this is my son Edward, his wife Bella, and my sons Jasper and Emmett," Carlisle went on in introduction.

"B...b...but I don't understand," Fred replied. "Usually nobody can see me."

"We know that you have a special talent," I explained. "We met your friend, Bree Tanner, and we learned a little bit about you from her. You are curious about us, am I right?" Fred didn't reply so I went on. "Please know that you are safe. You can drop your shield now, since it does you no good here." Fred was astonished out of his fear and took my advice. "Bella, you can drop your shield as well," I said to my wife and she did.

"Would you like to come in and meet the rest of our family?" Carlisle offered. "You are welcome."

"Um...yes, I guess so. Where is Bree?" he asked, finally processing that I'd said her name.

"Come on in and we'll tell you all about it," Carlisle said to Fred.

The six of us escorted the peeper through the kitchen door into the living room, all of us ready to grab him if he should make for one of the humans present. He seemed rather well-controlled, though. I looked meaningfully at Alice, rolled my eyes toward Fred, and raised my eyebrows. She and I are good at silent conversation.

*Yes, he's safe,* Alice replied in her mind. Then she called out cheerfully from behind the stereo equipment, relocated from my bedroom for the party. "Hi Fred! Come pin a tail or a nose on somebody." Fred looked bewildered.

"Everyone," Carlisle called out. "This is our new friend, Fred."

"Hi Fred." "Hello Fred." "Nice to meet you, Fred." The room filled with casual greetings. Fred raised his hand slightly from where it hung at his side to respond to this startling and most unexpected welcome.

"Would you like to come to my office for a talk?" Carlisle asked and Fred nodded. They turned and headed for the stairway and I followed. Bella made as if to come along.

"I think it would be better if one of us remained present at our daughter's party," I whispered, careful not to say, "your party." Bella nodded in agreement. Jasper and Emmett also began to follow us, but I gave them a quick shake of my head. There was no reason to take attention away from Renesmee, who was being blindfolded by Rosalie while Jacob handed her half a broomstick.

"Everybody move away!" Jacob called before aiming Nessie at the wolf piñata, stick in hand.

*You sure?* Jasper asked me silently. I nodded and hurried to Carlisle's office.

"You are the Yellow-Eyes?" Fred inquired cautiously.

"Yes, you could call us that, I suppose. Actually, our family name is Cullen," I repeated.

"Where's Bree? Did you do something to Bree?" he asked, his eyes narrowed in suspicion.

"We would never hurt your friend, just as we will not hurt you, if you do not behave aggressively," Carlisle assured him. "We wish to be your friends. But we do have some difficult news. When Riley brought your coven to attack us, Bree did not fight and so we offered her a chance to surrender without

violence. Unfortunately, we were overruled when the Volturi arrived. They destroyed her,” Carlisle told him in his capable manner. Reporting deaths to friends and relatives was something he’d had much experience with.

“She...she’s dead?”

“I’m afraid so. I am very sorry,” Carlisle said. Fred looked at the floor.

“I asked her to leave the battle and come to Vancouver. I thought she would come.”

“Riley—or rather, Victoria, with Riley’s help—killed Diego days before the battle,” I said cutting to the chase. I had heard the fury and disappointment in Bree’s mind when she realized the truth. “Riley tricked her.”

“Damn it!” Fred exclaimed, still looking down. “But Riley didn’t kill her?”

“No, it was the Volturi,” I repeated.

“Who are the Volturi? Are they the ones who wipe out covens?”

“They destroy covens that do not keep our secrets,” Carlisle said. “They were coming to destroy Victoria’s coven...your coven...but Riley attacked us first and we were forced to fight.”

“I don’t understand. Riley told us that you were going to attack us, that you wanted our hunting ground. You were supposed to be vicious and... Ah, hell, Riley was such a liar. Is he dead?” he asked, finally looking up at us.

“Yes,” I responded. “They are all dead. Victoria too.”

“Good.”

“What are you doing here at our home, Fred?” Carlisle asked gently.

“I was curious. I was passing through the area and recognized the scent of vampires, and followed it to this house. I’ve never known vampires to have such a nice home. Do you live here all the time?”

“Yes.”

“Wow. How do you—”

“I’m sure you have many questions for us, Fred. But I have one for you too,” I said. “How is it that we couldn’t see you standing at our window?”

“I was going to ask you how you *could* see me. I was trying to make that difficult.”

“Like you, some of our family members have special talents,” was my simple reply.

"I used to keep Riley and the other vampires away from me when we were crammed into a house or basement. They were always wild and violent and sometimes they would hurt or kill each other. Bree used to hide near me to keep them away from her too. She was a nice girl," Fred said sadly.

"Do you mind telling us a little more about your talent?" I asked after a few moments.

"Well, I was always kind of a loner, but after I became 'this,'" Fred looked down and gestured at his body, "I discovered I could make a stinky cloud around me by concentrating. When anyone got close enough to smell it, they couldn't get away from me fast enough.

"When I figured out that Riley was lying to us and it seemed like he was dragging us into a fight that didn't make sense, I decided to try to run away. Some others disappeared over the weeks and Riley told us that they burned up in the sun by coming back too late, but Bree thought that they had run away. Riley only let us out at night and only a few of us at a time. We were always thirsty. Then one day Riley told us there were certain times of the year that were safe to go outside in the daylight and he dragged us out. It was all a crock. He was just trying to keep us under his thumb." Carlisle and I looked at each other. I was no longer sorry that I had been forced to kill him.

"Anyway," Fred went on, "Riley figured out that I could make people avoid me and he seemed to think that was worth something. The more I practiced, the less I needed the bad smell. I could make people feel uncomfortable when they looked at me and then they would look away. Eventually, I learned to make people forget they had seen me. They would forget that I was there, essentially making me invisible for a period of time."

"In the world of vampires, you are what is called a 'shield,'" I told him. "You have a talent for protecting yourself and others. My wife, Bella, is also a shield and she can block talents like yours. That's how we were able to find you. I could hear your thoughts, but I couldn't see you until Bella shielded me from your gift."

"You must be the mind reader Riley told us about. That's cool. He said that the 'Yellow-Eyes'—that's what he called you—had special skills and that's why you were so dangerous. If you don't mind me asking, why aren't your eyes red like other vampires?"

"Riley was correct that we have some talented members among us, but we are not aggressive. We don't attack others unless we are attacked first. We try to live a nonviolent existence," Carlisle told Fred. "That is why our eyes are yellow. We do not drink the blood of humans. We hunt animals instead."

Fred's red eyes grew wide. "I didn't know that was an option! There's a lot Riley didn't tell us, though. I still don't understand what he was trying to do. He kept showing us this red shirt that we were supposed to smell. It was a human's scent—a very potent scent—and he said that whomever got to the prey first could have her."

I growled involuntarily, though I more or less knew what Riley had been up to at the time. Fred glanced at me, but Carlisle encouraged him to continue.

"It was confusing because he said you all would protect her, but that you were also going to attack us and not let us feed. When he sent us to kill you, the last thing he did was pass that shirt around again. I couldn't figure out what the real goal was...to get to the human or to kill you all."

I answered this time. "Victoria—your creator—wanted my wife, Bella, dead as revenge for my killing her mate. She also would have been happy to see our whole family destroyed, but she didn't want to get her hands dirty. That's why she created all of you...to attack us and kill Bella."

"Wait! Your wife is human?" Fred asked, incredulously.

"She was at that time," I answered simply.

"I'm sorry I was ever a part of that. I didn't want to be there. I knew Riley was lying to us and you seem like good people...vampires, I mean." It was the first time Fred had smiled.

"Well, Fred, you don't have to hide from us. You are welcome in our home. Would you like to join us today? We are having a birthday party for Edward's daughter, my granddaughter."

*Daughter? Fred thought. Human wife? That can't be right. I must have misheard.*

I didn't bother to explain. If he became a friend to us, he would learn about Renesmee soon enough.

"Um, well, I can smell humans here. I don't understand," he said. "You aren't drinking them?"

"No, they are friends of ours. Can you resist if you are in the same room with them?"

"I think so, but it would hurt."

"Perhaps we should wait until there are no humans here before we invite you over, then. You're not used to being around them."

"No, I had no idea that a vampire could choose *not* to drink humans. Riley always acted like they were animals there for the taking."

"It sounds like there were a lot of things that Riley and Victoria didn't teach you, probably because they didn't expect you to live very long. That is not the normal way for a creator to behave. It is his duty to teach you how we must live in the world in order to escape detection. If you like, we would be happy to teach you everything you would like to know."

"Yes," I added. "There are some things you *should* know for your own safety. Vampires who are talented like you can be targets for the Volturi. Would you like to visit tomorrow so we can talk further?"

"I would really appreciate that. I roam around alone most of the time, but it would be nice to meet some other vampires who aren't...well, you know."

*Assholes*, was the word he was thinking. I would have to agree that Victoria and Riley were true assholes. James too. And even Laurent, as it turned out.

We led Fred downstairs and through the living room quickly. I motioned Jasper and Emmett to follow us out, just in case. Fred was no longer a newborn, but Charlie and Sue, Emily, Billy and Lily would be causing him pain that he was not accustomed to ignoring as we were.

When we got outside, Carlisle said, "Fred, we would appreciate it if you would not hunt around here. At least three hundred miles away would be our preference if you can manage it. We have to keep a low profile, since we live here year 'round."

"I can do that," Fred agreed.

"Tomorrow, then," Carlisle said.

"Tomorrow," he repeated. And then he was gone.

*Edward*

## JACOB'S FANTASY #4

Setting: Top of the mountain

Time: The night before the battle with the newborns

Form: Human, still in the sleeping bag with my girl (damn!)

*"Yes... Edward...of course...I do..."*

*What the hell? Oh, Bella's just talking. Her dad said she talks a lot in her sleep. That could get annoying.*

*"Jacob ..."*

*Then again... Cool! Bella said my name, Bella said my name... I must really be getting to her! She's dreaming about me now! Probably doesn't hurt that I'm lying here keeping her all warm and cozy, unlike certain other boyfriends one might mention. Mmmm... I wish she had her clothes off, though. I'd like to put my hands on her bare back and slide them down to the round part while I give her a big, juicy kiss. And she'd kiss me back with her hands on my chest. She's gotta be lovin' this great chest of mine. Bet I'd like hers too, heh, heh... Ah...it feels so good to lie here with her, even if he is right over there. Oh, there he goes again, humming that weird tune, probably trying to drown me out of his head. Damn, it kind of ruins the fun of fantasizing when it isn't private.*

*"Edward... "*

*Or when she says his name instead of mine. Ugh!*

*"Jacob...my Jacob..."*

*That's better...much, much better. It must drive him crazy that Bella says my name in her sleep too. She's really struggling to choose, I bet. My plan is working! Heck, it must be working if I'm lying here in this sleeping bag crammed up against her and he's sitting over there in the corner humming. After tonight, she's really gonna be saying my name. She won't be able to forget this, ever! I sure won't!*

*"Jacob...don't be ..."*

*Don't be what? Hey, over there if you're listening, I'm not doing anything to her. Don't get pissed, okay? She's just talking. Doodley, doodley, doo, it's sure hard to sleep when you're hard.*

*No, no, no bloodsucker...no need to growl, I didn't mean nothin' by it. I can't help it, you know...or maybe you don't know, ha, ha. No! I don't want to know! La, la, la, la,... Don't ever talk to me about this! Ever!*

*"Yes...my Jacob's back..."*

*You know it, Baby. I'll always be your Jacob...all yours, nobody else's. But I didn't go anywhere. I'm right here. I wanna stay awake all night and just enjoy this cuddle with you. It's the closest you've ever let me get. Now, if you would just let me kiss you...that would be awesome. I was sure you liked it last time. I could tell. You gotta ask me to do it again, though. Then he won't have any excuse to hit me. Not that I'd care if he hit me. It'd be worth it!*

*Damn, I wish you weren't wearing so many clothes. I'd sure like to peel them off of you, one by one, the coat, the sweaters, the t-shirt, unhook that bra...I bet you have the prettiest little breasts, all pert, with pink nipples against your white skin. I can almost see them, all soft and round. Bet they'd fit just perfect in the palms of my hands...nipples all hard and I could kiss them and....*

*Well, sorrrrry! No need to get all nasty over there. I'm not doing anything. There's no law against thinking is there? I can growl too, you know.*

*Darn, I better try to get some sleep. Tomorrow's a big day, saving Bella's life and all that. It's really exhaust—*

Thank God! Finally, he went back to sleep. I hope Bella doesn't speak and wake him up again. Actually, I hope she doesn't speak anymore at all if she's going to say his name. How can she say "my Jacob" in her sleep when she just agreed to marry me? What does it mean? Will I never be rid of him? Arggh!

She made it a little better the next day when she explained about "my Jacob" being Dr. Jekyll and plain "Jacob" being Mr. Hyde. That's how she differentiated the two sides of Jacob Black. She wasn't especially fond of Mr. Hyde.

That was a tough night and a tough day afterwards and an even tougher night the following night. Giving up Jacob broke her heart and that broke mine.

*Edward*

## TEACHING FRED

Our new friend, Fred, came to visit the day after Renesmee's birthday as we'd agreed. I heard him outside thinking about how to announce his presence. He was still using his shield, though I wasn't sure why. Perhaps it was just a habit.

"Fred's here!" I announced to Carlisle, who quickly came down the stairs and joined Bella and me in the living room. "Back yard," I added, when Carlisle looked at me questioningly.

Carlisle opened the kitchen door and called out, "Fred?" Through the window I saw Fred suddenly appear about ten feet away from the door. Amazing. "Welcome! Please come in. You must have come through the forest?"

"Yes. I jumped over the Sol Duc." Fred stepped into the kitchen and followed Carlisle to the living room, where Esme, Alice and Jasper had joined us.

"You've already met Edward and Jasper. Esme is my wife, Alice is Jasper's mate, and Bella is Edward's.

"Nice to meet you," Esme answered. "Welcome to our home." Fred nodded and looked at the floor shyly.

"Are you from this area?" Carlisle asked. "Strangers rarely know the name of the river, or if they do, they don't know how to pronounce it."

"I grew up on Camano Island and was going to the UW before Riley found me on University Avenue."

"Is that the business district near the Seattle campus?" Carlisle inquired. He knew Seattle well, having visited many times, most recently to acquire donated blood for his grandchild.

"Yeah. I used to hang out over there when I wasn't studying or in the computer lab. There are some good movie houses and a couple of video arcades. That was before this happened." Fred gestured toward himself.

"It must have been quite a shock," Esme said gently.

Fred nodded. "It hasn't been so bad since I escaped from Riley's coven. It's been pretty great, actually. I've been sneaking into the Paul Allen Center for Computer Engineering at the University. It has *awesome* computer labs. I can use unlimited computer resources and nobody bothers me. I can program so much better now," Fred said in a rush of excitement.

I inferred that Fred was a stereotypical computer nerd, judging by his enthusiasm for this particular topic. Until that point, he had given me the impression of being rather laconic and sluggish. Jasper—a gifted scholar himself—chuckled.

"Won't you come in and have a seat?" Esme offered, gesturing toward the living room. Fred ambled over and plopped in one of the lounge chairs facing the TV.

“Hey! Company!” Emmett exclaimed, coming in the front door towing Rosalie behind him. “You’re Fred, right?” he said, striding to the other lounge chair and pulling Rosalie onto his lap, and then kissing her boisterously. Since the Volturi had threatened our lives, their ardency had returned to that of newlyweds, much to everyone’s chagrin.

“Meet Emmett and Rosalie,” Carlisle said indulgently.

“Oh, sorry,” Emmett said, coming up for air and offering the front side of his fist. Fred, who was obviously not a social creature, didn’t know how to respond to that.

“How many of you are there?” he asked, looking ill-at-ease.

“This is all of us, except for Renesmee and Jacob,” Alice sang out, a secret smile on her face. “If you don’t count the pack. Speaking of which...” The kitchen door opened and in glided Renesmee on all fours wearing her wolf costume. Jacob followed in her wake. “Now we’re all here!” Alice declared.

Fred looked at Renesmee, then at Jacob, and then took another look around the room. He could tell by their heartbeats and the scent of their blood that the newcomers were neither fully human nor vampire, but he didn’t know what to make of them.

When she saw Fred, Nessie hurried to climb into Bella’s lap. At one, Renesmee resembled a five-year-old human, more or less, with an intellectual capacity far beyond that. We treated her like a five-year-old, though she could speak three languages, was almost as good as Jasper at probabilities and statistics, and was reading at an adult level. Bella was adamant that we not push her to be an adult before her time, though she was on an accelerated schedule of development. Bella wanted her to feel secure and protected for as long as possible. Renesmee still preferred to communicate with her hand for the most part, but she spoke more than she had six months previously.

*Who?* she asked Bella with her palm. Though she’d seen Fred the day before, she’d been so busy with her party that she hadn’t bothered to ask about him.

“Fred, this is our daughter, Renesmee, and our friend, Jacob. Renesmee, this is Fred,” said Bella.

“Hi Fred,” Renesmee said shyly. Then she hopped off Bella’s lap and went down on all fours. “I’m a wolf, see?” Fred smiled and then looked at Jacob, but didn’t ask the question that was written on his face.

“You have questions for us,” Carlisle commented. “Let’s go to my office and talk.” *Edward, please join us*, he added silently.

Fred was more than willing to escape the presence of so many. He seemed to become more anxious, the more of us who surrounded him. I assumed it was from his experience with the newborn army. He was remembering a night when he had cleared a crowded basement room of vampires by generating a nausea-inducing odor or haze of some kind. He seemed tempted to repeat the trick now. I hurriedly accompanied him and Carlisle up the stairs.

“How do you all live together so peacefully?” Fred asked on our way to the office. “This is nothing like it was with Riley.”

Carlisle explained. “Newborn vampires, those who are less than one or two years old are strong, highly volatile, and obsessed with blood. Putting a number of newborns together in a small space often leads to violence. Like other predators, we can be quite territorial, at least until we learn to control our impulses. It takes time. It is much easier when you give up drinking human blood. We are better able to establish loving bonds with others.”

I added, “Our family structure is rare. We know of only one other coven like ours and we consider them our extended family. They live in the Denali region of Alaska.”

“So you never drink blood?”

“Carlisle and Rosalie never have. The rest of us are converts to the ‘vegetarian’ way of life,” I said with a grin.

“I think I’d like to try your way. I wasn’t all that crazy about humans when I *was* one and I like them even less now. It grosses me out to be so intimate with them.”

“We actually live among humans as if we were human too. The ‘kids’ usually go to school and I work at a hospital,” Carlisle explained.

“How can you stand it?”

“Practice,” Carlisle said, smiling.

“Well, I don’t know that I’d be interested in doing that, but the game hunting, that part is fascinating.”

“Even our Denali cousins have less contact with human communities than we do,” Carlisle explained, “But it allows me to do the work I love and lets everyone else pursue education and other interests. We can also stay in one place for a number of years before moving on.”

“You had human friends here yesterday. Do you do that often?” Fred seemed truly perplexed.

“I suppose that’s mostly my fault,” I explained. “I was the crazy vampire who fell in love with a human. One thing led to another and we got married and had a child. She has relatives and friends who have gradually become part of our extended family.”

“That’s the other thing. You had a child with a human? A biological child?”

“Yes. We didn’t know it was possible until it happened. It’s not advisable, though. It’s deadly for the human mother.”

“Wow...I had no idea. I haven’t even seen vampires since I left Riley’s coven. I thought I might find some of the other escapees, but I haven’t.”

“You are not atypical, not at all,” Carlisle told Fred. “We invited all of our vampire friends here about six months ago. There were five covens and six nomads. That’s what we call vampires who roam like you do. Of the nomads, four are individuals and two are mates.”

“Are the other covens as big as yours?”

“There are five in the Denali coven; we have nine; the others have three or four. So we are the largest by far among our friends. The Volturi coven has fifteen or twenty if you count the members of their guard and the hangers-on.”

“Who are these Volturi? You said that I might be a target for them?”

Carlisle explained. “The Volturi are a group of very old vampires, the closest thing we have to a ruling family. They hold court in Volterra, Italy, and act as the police force for our kind.”

“What do they police?”

“Any kind of action that risks revealing our existence to humans. Like what your coven was doing in Seattle, killing indiscriminately, and not hiding the bodies, revealing our special abilities, that sort of thing.”

“They destroy whole covens?”

“They have done so a number of times over the centuries.”

“Centuries??”

“They are very old.”

“How old is old exactly?”

“The leaders have existed for more than 4000 years.”

“Wow, that’s unbelievable! How old are you?”

“I am three hundred sixty-five years or thereabouts. Edward is...what?” Carlisle looked at me.

“One hundred ten.”

“Are the others in your family as old as you?”

“Jasper was born in the 1840s,” I said. “The rest of us are twentieth-century vampires. Bella is the youngest at one year old.” I answered that question, knowing that Carlisle would have to do quick calculations to get the numbers right. When you’re centuries old, a difference of decades doesn’t have much significance.

“So am I in danger from the Volturi?”

This question was trickier than any of the others so far. I tried to compress the answer into a version that wouldn't keep us talking all night.

"Not in danger, exactly. The Volturi guard is a collection of some of the most talented vampires among us. Their skills are valuable in helping the Volturi maintain power...or order, if you prefer. If they discover that you exist, Aro, their leader, undoubtedly will want you for the guard. He has a shield named Renata, but I'd venture to say that your talent is more potent. Aro wanted Bella to join the guard because her shield is also powerful.

"Joining the Volturi is not necessarily a bad thing," I continued. "Many members of the guard enjoy the prestige of their positions. The problem is that they have not always acquired their members in the most forthright manner. Sometimes talented vampires are coerced. I would suggest that you visit our cousins, the Denalis, to educate yourself more thoroughly. Eleazar was a member of the guard for several centuries and has tremendous insight that might prove useful to you. Carlisle lived with them for a time, but decided to move to North America and live a different kind of lifestyle."

"So I'm a shield and you're a mind reader. Are there others in your family with talents?"

"Alice sees the future and Jasper can alter moods, calming or exciting a group, for example. You've already seen how Bella can block other talents. Our daughter often communicates by creating pictures in the minds of others."

"Wow! I'd love to experience all of that. Riley's coven didn't have anybody else who was like me, as far as I know."

"Our cousin, Kate, can electrify her skin. That's one talent that is no fun to experience," I told him, laughing. "She can pack a punch." Carlisle gave me a knowing smile, remembering my experience as the guinea pig for Bella's shield practice.

Fred changed the subject again. His mind was full of questions, which spilled out almost uncontrollably. I could appreciate his eagerness for information after living alone and in ignorance for so long. Not teaching your newborns the rules of our existence was a crime punishable by death. Victoria and her coven had already been punished. We wanted to help Fred avoid the same fate.

"Would you show me how to hunt animals?"

"Certainly," Carlisle replied. "Are you and Bella due, Edward?"

"It's about time for Bella, and Renesmee can always use the encouragement. We can go now if you like," I said to Fred.

"That would be great."

"I'll talk to Bella. We'll take our daughter and Jacob probably will want to come with us."

"Is your daughter human?"

“Half-human, half-vampire.”

“Wow! That’s amazing. I noticed that she has a heartbeat, but she doesn’t smell exactly human, either.”

“She’s unique. There have always been legends about the incubus impregnating human women, but it turns out that the incubi are us! You can imagine how rarely it occurs. We’ve found only a handful of other hybrids in the world.”

“That’s cool. It’ll be interesting to hang out with her.”

“Let’s go then.”

Counting the previous day, this conversation comprised Fred’s second session of vampire training. There would be more. Like me, he was an inquisitive fellow.

*Edward*

## NATURISTS FOR A DAY

The northwestern United States and southwestern Canada boast an abundance of mountains. The Pacific coastal range extends almost continuously from the southernmost tip of California to the northernmost corner of British Columbia and around coastal Alaska. These mountains are part of the “Pacific Ring of Fire,” a term which refers to the active geology that exists all the way around the Pacific Ocean, affecting every coast it touches.

The theory of plate tectonics suggests that the Pacific Ocean (or rather, the “plate” of earth’s crust beneath it) floats about on top of the molten core of the earth and bumps up against continents. Where the ocean and the continents meet, the pressure between them forces molten lava to the surface of the earth. After thirty million years of bumping, exploding, and oozing, the hardened lava forms majestic, cone-shaped mountains, many of which still contain fire at their cores.

The volcanoes occasionally spew lava, rocks, gases, ash, and steam, and once in a great while, they blow their tops, as Mount St. Helens did in Washington State in 1980. More often, though, the heat that is generated by the earth’s plates grinding into one another is released more slowly through cracks and fissures in the volcano. Underground reservoirs of water are heated, expand, and are forced to the surface, producing hot springs whose temperatures range anywhere from 90- to 160-degrees Fahrenheit.

These natural pools are loaded with dissolved minerals from the earth that long have been believed to carry healing powers. On the Olympic Peninsula, west of Port Angeles, lies the well-known Sol Duc Hot Springs Resort. Formerly the site of a military barracks, it now has about thirty small cabins and a bathhouse, where thousands visit every year to “take the waters.” Three large public pools collect the sulfurous water that pours from the earth.

While public baths like Sol Duc are popular among tourists, locals in the know often prefer the more primitive hot springs hidden in the mountains. Naturists—people who prefer to conduct their lives in the nude—gather at these hidden sites, guarding their exact locations and keeping the knowledge alive through word of mouth. Once you are privy to this network of information, you can enjoy these hot springs as the naturists do.

Developed resorts like Sol Duc require an entrance fee to enjoy the pools and other amenities, but they also require guests to wear swimming suits. Wherever a hot springs resort exists, though, you can be sure that there are many natural hot springs to be found in the same area. Such is the case with Olympic Hot Springs, a lesser-known, undeveloped pool in the mountains nearby. Like most of the natural springs, it is accessible only by hiking through the woods along a semi-secret trail at the end of a particular dirt road. Hot springs such as this one can be found by those who are looking for them, but rarely does one stumble upon them by accident. That makes these natural baths a hidden, but treasured, resource among those who want to enjoy them in relative privacy.

Renesmee had long expressed curiosity about nude human and vampire bodies, and since visiting hot springs is a Northwest tradition, we thought it was an obvious way to satisfy her curiosity and

also enjoy ourselves. We would be a naturist family for a day and partake of one of the oldest traditions in the world—public bathing.

On a gray, fall afternoon when Renesmee was one human year old—she looked five or six—Bella and I took her to find the Olympic Hotsprings. We warned her in advance that others might be there and that they might not be wearing any clothing. We explained the etiquette of nude bathing, which is, essentially, to pretend that no one is naked. No staring, pointing, or commenting on another's body is allowed, though it is fine to look discretely. It is not polite to “show” someone's nude image to someone else. It is inappropriate to touch another's private areas and if somebody ever tries to do that, it is important to tell your Momma and Daddy right away. If she had any questions, she was to ask us privately.

With these rules in mind and with my bathing suit in tow—in case we did run into humans—the three of us began the two-mile hike to find the spring. We watched for others, but we neither heard nor saw anyone else, and all we could smell as we proceeded was the pungent scent of sulfur. We were hoping to have the pool to ourselves because Bella's and my skin, even in heavy forest shade, was likely to stand out. More significant though, was the obvious anatomical difference between myself and a human male. Fortunately for us, when we reached the pool, it was deserted.

As we disrobed—Renesmee insisting that she needed no assistance from her mother—we hung our clothing on nails that had been pounded into a piece of lumber attached to a tree for that purpose. I held Bella's hand to steady her as she stepped into the pool (though she didn't need it) and I followed her in. I saw Renesmee's eyes grow large as she stared first at her mother's naked form and then at mine before we settled into the water. Her mother looked like the diagrams she had seen of nude women, but I didn't exactly match those of the nude men.

Where human men's penises hang flaccid most of the time, vampire penises never do. Ours do not grow and shrink like a human's, but remain rigid and upright against our bodies. We tend to be somewhat larger in that area than erect human men, and heavier, as well, given the solidity of our flesh. Perhaps those characteristics are meant as another kind of enticement to human prey. For the purposes of public bathing, though, it would be awkward. Should we encounter others, my continuous “erection” might be cause for alarm among humans, especially if they had children in tow.

I am told that seeing an erect penis for the first time can be quite a surprise for a female and our daughter was no exception. We had explained to Renesmee that human and vampire men are different, but until she learned otherwise, most likely I would be what she thought of as normal. It hadn't occurred to me that her vampire father might be setting her up for disappointment later in her life. Once I considered it, though, I realized that her sharp eyes had probably already caught glimpses of the wolves in the nude when they phased. We had briefly considered inviting Jacob to come with us, and though that wouldn't seem inappropriate to true naturists, we felt a little uneasy about it, given that Jacob and Renesmee might become betrothed one day. There are no rules when your child is one of a kind, so as in this case, we find ourselves making them up as we go along.

There is something wonderfully freeing about being outside in the nude. It's hard to explain, but I could see how nudity might become addictive. Communing with nature is especially enjoyable if you are sitting in a warm-to-hot pool with the peaceful, green forest all around. Though as vampires, we function the same regardless of our body temperature, the heated water did lend a feeling of muscle relaxation. Possibly, it was just an illusion.

The temperature of hot springs varies depending on how much rain has fallen recently and due to the fluctuations of the steam beneath the earth's surface. I would have put the pool's temperature on this day at about one hundred two degrees. It began to cool down slightly when a light drizzle set in.

The underground spring beneath us flowed vigorously, causing our soaking pool to continuously overflow and refresh itself with heated water. Over the years, enterprising individuals had dug an actual pool, which would hold eight or ten people in comfort. They also lined the bottom of the pool with flat stones that provided a firm floor and also prevented it from becoming muddy. A shallow trench encircled the deeper hole and the flat shelf thus created, as well as the sides, were set with flat stones to create an underwater bench. One got into the pool by stepping on the bench and then sitting, letting your feet dangle into the deeper water below. The central part of the pool was five feet deep and the bench lay a foot under water.

We thought we might visit hot springs regularly if we enjoyed it and so far, it appeared that Renesmee *really* enjoyed it. I've heard that it is common for human children, even infants, to get very excited when their clothing is removed. Carlisle says babies in hospital nurseries will kick their legs and gurgle while their diapers are being changed and their bottoms are bare. Esme says it's true for toddlers too, that often they love nothing more than to peel off their clothes and run around naked.

Renesmee reacted that way to being naked outside. She didn't join us in the pool at first, turning instead into a virtual pogo stick, springing ten feet into the air over and over. She laughed and giggled and lay down on the ground and kicked her bare legs in the air. Her mother and I were highly amused.

Eventually, she got curious about the bubbling pool and decided she wanted to check it out, or perhaps she simply got chilled. Because the rocks were slippery, Bella stood on the bench and took Renesmee's hand in spite of Nessie's insistence that she could get into the pool by herself. We had a nice long soak in the incessant drizzle with Renesmee getting in and out of the pool as she warmed up and cooled off.

While Nessie was in the pool, Bella taught her how to roll onto her back and float. Bella held her hands beneath Nessie's back, demonstrating the arch she needed to make. Then gradually, Bella removed her hands, surprising Nessie when she discovered she was floating all by herself. Renesmee was amazed at how easy it was. We didn't tell her that her chubby bottom probably had something to do with it, a body's fat content being highly useful in backfloating. Bella told me that saying such a thing to a girl is tantamount to child abuse. Likely our beautiful daughter would be scarred for the rest of her life, believing she had a "fat butt." Little girls were supposed to have chubby bottoms, weren't they? Shows you what I know about it.

After Nessie learned to backfloat, I taught her the next essential skill—the dog paddle. I held my palm beneath her tummy and she naturally moved her hands in the correct way, having seen the wolves swim across the river. I showed her how to cup her hands to create more resistance and then Bella got her to kick her legs. It wasn't long before Renesmee could pull herself around the pool in a rudimentary dog paddle. Floating and paddling are two critical skills for surviving in deep water, so we were very proud of Renesmee's accomplishments. She was a natural.

Like any five-year-old, Renesmee got a huge kick out of pretending that the bubbles in the pool were coming from between her legs. When she ate human food, her body functioned the same as a human's, so she had previously discovered the intrinsic (and infinite) humor of intestinal gas.

We had had to teach Nessie that it was impolite to fart as loudly as possible and then to laugh like she had told a hilarious joke. She later discovered how funny it was when she “blew bubbles” in the bathtub. Carlisle says that this fascination is also common for children of a certain age (and some men at any age), so we were relatively indulgent, assuming it would pass (ha ha). I remembered the first time Nessie passed gas while eating her dinner. She jumped from her chair and whipped around to see what had “tickled” her, startled confusion written on her face.

“Your butt got you, didn't it?” Emmett asked her with his eyes very wide, resisting a smile. Renesmee looked at him and nodded her head gravely. The joke only worked a couple of times before she realized that Emmett was teasing her. So now whenever she farts, she immediately starts laughing like a hyena.

After a couple of hours, Renesmee started showing signs of fatigue, so we reluctantly left the warm waters of the mineral pool, dried off with towels, and pulled on our clothes. There was something about this naturist thing, feeling free and at one with God's creation. Maybe we could talk Alice and Jasper into coming with us next time.

Postscript: The first thing Renesmee did when she got home was find Aunt Rose and tell her how she was getting some red “pubie hairs” like Momma when she got big. Nice.

*Edward*

## ALEC & JANE

The little twits. Twin twits. Aro found them when they were still babies. I gleaned the story from Aro while Jane was torturing me in Volterra (the mind *never* stops) and it is rather dramatic.

Aro found them by reading the thoughts of a nomad who passed through Volterra. Even as infants in Britannia (later called Great Britain) twelve centuries ago, they had noticeable psychic powers. When a parent, sibling, or other adult denied either of them something they wanted, that person had a sudden tendency to stub their toe or trip and bang their head. If it was something one of the babies *really* wanted, like a shiny toy in another child's hand, the person denying them might suffer a seizure and fall down, conveniently relinquishing the object in question.

Once, when Jane was hungry and her mother—who had four other children besides the twins—didn't produce a breast quickly enough, the poor woman took a nasty tumble down a flight of stairs, hit her head on the stone floor, and was blinded in one eye. (Carlisle says she likely suffered a subdural hematoma that pressed on her brain.) After that, the family hired two wet nurses, one for each child, to be available twenty-four hours a day in order to avoid another "accident."

The family's response to the incident was based on superstition mostly, because such tiny, charming creatures could hardly be evil—could they? Regardless, the entire family began catering to their every whim just in case the frequent accidents that occurred when the infants were displeased weren't so accidental.

As the babies grew from toddlerhood to childhood, they were seen more in public and the public did not like what it saw. Children who were allowed to play with Alec and Jane invariably suffered one injury or another if the youngsters had a spat, or when one of the twins grew envious of a toy or other object. Children in their village learned to accommodate whatever demands Alec and Jane might make. Though Alec's nature made him more inclined to cooperate with other children and make friends, Jane's temper generally got the better of her in any conflict, so both of the twins came to be regarded as equally suspect.

Nobody could prove that Alec and Jane were the direct cause of the misfortunes of those around them and because their father was a well-regarded merchant, the other villagers kept their suspicions mostly to themselves. But as years of experience piled up, the whispers of "witches" became a little louder and more frequent. No one dared speak of their suspicions directly for fear of retribution, but over time, the twins' reputations began to precede them wherever they went and they were politely, but firmly, shunned.

The twins learned to trust and rely only on one another and viewed their peers with deep suspicions of their own. Their parents wondered aloud why the children had no friends and why, over the years, friends and relatives gradually distanced themselves from the family. They probably knew, of course, but acknowledging that their children had psychic powers was tantamount to blasphemy. Whole families could be destroyed over allegations of such and there was plenty of evidence that the twins were “unnatural” for the family to fear for their safety at times.

When Aro first encountered the strange stories about the babies, he grew curious and made a trek to Britannia to see them for himself. He found some excuse as a foreign visitor to meet the most prosperous citizens of the village and got himself invited to the twins’ home for a meal. During the evening, he concocted an excuse to hold each of them for a short time—not something high-ranking local men generally did—but Aro was Italian and, as a foreigner, was expected to have strange customs and idiosyncrasies.

Aro found that, though they were still toddlers when he met them, the twins had learned by experience enough about their effects on others to control them to a certain degree. They knew, for example, that if they were denied something they wanted, they would generally be obliged if they threw a tantrum.

Aro grew quite excited at the vague, but real, revelations he gained from reading the babies’ minds and promised himself to keep an eye on them as they grew. As he saw it, they could become powerful vampires someday. I can see Aro rubbing his hands together in evil delight at his discovery.

This was not so long after the Volturi’s great purge of the immortal children and their caretakers, though, and Aro could not blatantly flout his own edict against creating vampire children. He schemed about how he would snatch them when they were older, change them, and bring them into the Volturi guard. Age sixteen was his target, when children of that era were considered grown. Girls, especially, were married off even younger than that.

Alas, Aro’s plans were thwarted by the Briton villagers who had finally seen and experienced enough tragedy at the hands of the young twins. After one gentleman, who had made what Alec considered to be inappropriate advances toward his lovely sister, fell into a pond and drowned, the villagers revolted. A mob formed outside the twins’ home in the middle of the night and then burst in and seized the twelve-year-old children, hauling them off to be locked away in the castle dungeon of the feudal lord who controlled the village.

In their shared cell, the tormented children wished ill will on all of those around them and the slaves who kept them alive were constantly being injured. A burning torch lit one slave’s hair

and he barely survived, while another was badly injured when the cell grate slammed unexpectedly, smashing his hand in the latch and rendering it forever lame.

“Witches!”

“Witchcraft!”

“Satan’s devils!”

Everyone claimed it openly after that and it wasn’t long before another angry mob demanded that the witches be burned at the stake. Aro heard of the verdict from a court visitor just in time to rush to Mercia on the Isle of Britannia and rescue the badly burned children from the fire. In so doing, he had exposed his true nature to an entire village and was forced by the Volturi’s own rules to destroy every witness. The decimation of the village was blamed on plague. Only those unfortunates who were charged with burying the bodies knew that the marks on the bloodless corpses were not caused by plague. They kept their mouths shut for fear of being accused of witchcraft themselves.

In order to save their lives, Aro changed Alec and Jane immediately, though they were only twelve or thirteen. He was undeniably pushing the boundary of the Volturi’s edict against creating vampire children. Alec and Jane could be considered “old enough” by Aro’s estimation, though having won his prizes, he would have done anything to keep them.

After twelve centuries, the entire vampire population is still stuck dealing with these two spoiled children in positions of considerable power. The suffering they endured in the village fire focused their talents, making the two of them deadly dangerous as vampires. Alec, in trying to defend himself against the pain of burning, became able to produce an anesthetic cloud that as a vampire he uses to render others helpless. Jane, who directed her anger at everyone around her as she burned, developed the ability to make others feel as if they are burning like she was.

The twins trust and rely only on one another and, because they were catered to their entire human lives, they expect to get their way as a matter of course. They learned no capacity for empathy or kindness. Childish dispositions living in supernatural bodies...they are an utter nightmare.

There is one way in which I do relate to the twins, though—they were changed before they were fully mature. They were just reaching puberty when their human lives ended and so, like me, were set in stone before they developed certain adult capacities. Unlike myself, who became a man when I found my true love, Alec and Jane are stunted, not only in their ability to love, but in their ability to direct that love outward to anyone besides each other. Jane had

developed nearly to marriageable age for her era and was on the cusp of being initiated into that adult world when she was changed. (Not that anyone would have accepted her as a spouse happily.)

I have never divulged this information to anyone, though I know Aro is fully aware of it...

The twins were nearly to the age of sexual maturity when Aro changed them, but their unusual circumstances caused them to direct those feelings toward each other. To this day, many centuries hence, they maintain an incestuous sexual relationship, which they are virtually certain never to grow beyond. In their day, such a relationship was a criminal offense and would have won them death on the gallows had they not been accused of witchcraft first.

I doubt whether brother/sister incest is illegal in Italy in this modern time, but at the very least it would be regarded as scandalous if publicly known. But Alec and Jane, powerful creatures that they are—and absolutely indispensable to Aro—no doubt will go on forever as they do now.

I find it a little sad, actually, though knowing the tragedy of their lives doesn't make me hate them any less. And that is where I am truly different from my father...I'm sure that he doesn't hate the evil little weasels, even after everything they have helped put us through over the years.

*Edward*

## AMUN & DEMETRI

After Renesmee was born and our family came under threat from the Volturi, the Cullens assembled the largest group of vampires in one place, possibly since the Romanian wars. Aside from the terror of annihilation, the stress of proving to each coven that our daughter's existence did not violate any laws; and being heartbroken over Alice and Jasper's defection, the whole affair did give me a lot of mental fodder. I learned a great deal about our collective history and relationships that I never knew existed before.

One vampire whose mind I found fascinating was Amun. He was among the more difficult of our guests, but he was also one of the most ancient. If Carlisle's assessment is correct, Amun has lived for over four millennia—four thousand, five hundred years! Amun was alive when the Egyptian pyramids were built. It is quite possible that he even ordered some of them built.

Though Amun and Kebi joined us when Carlisle requested it, we were never sure if he would stand with us or not. He stayed, though as far I could tell, he did so because he wished to know the outcome of our dispute and whether the Volturi would be coming after dissenters. He told Carlisle outright that if it came to "blows," he and Kebi would join with the Volturi.

Carlisle wasn't surprised, since Amun and Kebi are the lone survivors of an ancient Egyptian coven that was destroyed by the Volturi. Amun defected to the Volturi in that dispute to save his own life. The Volturi let he and his mate live as an example of their beneficence.

So Amun was showing his true colors in Forks, but none of us held it against him particularly, especially since his coven member, Benjamin, had feelings more aligned with ours and vowed to lend us his considerable talent if he was needed. Having Benjamin's support helped us win the day.

What I didn't realize before then was that Demetri, the famous tracker who can find anyone—except Bella, of course—was created by Amun! I guess Carlisle knew, but he never thought about it around me—why would he?—and so I never read it in his mind. I got it directly from Amun, whose mind is a simmering cauldron of alliances, betrayals, and vengeance. In his scheming to ally with the winning side of any conflict, Amun was always thinking about something interesting. When he found out I could read minds, he and Kebi began putting physical distance between themselves and us at night, but I have a pretty big range once a mind has become familiar to me.

Amun helped Demetri develop his natural abilities after he created him, so from Amun's thoughts I learned that Demetri tracks his targets much as I read minds. Once Demetri has been exposed to a particular vampire or person, he can find him easily by remembering his "essence," just as I can find a mental voice by remembering it from a previous encounter. But

Demetri does something even more surprising. He can identify and track an entirely new target if he meets someone who has met them or if he goes to a place the target has been. In effect, he can absorb the essence of someone by proxy. That makes him nearly impossible for anyone to dodge—except Bella, of course.

Amun found Demetri on the Greek Island of Rodos (Rhodes) nearly a thousand years ago. (In our family, we think of Carlisle as old, but most of the European vampires are at least three times older and some are more than ten times older than Carlisle. It boggles the mind.) Fair Demetri—as Amun refers to him in his thoughts—was born into a family of fishermen that supplied seafood to the Crusaders who passed through Rodos on their way to Constantinople.

A beautiful, slightly delicate boy, Demetri had never taken to the sea or even to the outdoors, which was considered almost sacrilegious in the Greek Isles. He did not enjoy the rough, physical world of the fishermen and preferred to stay home with the women. As the youngest, much-beloved son of a doting Greek mother, he was coddled and allowed to trail after the women and entertain them with songs and dances and little theatrical productions starring himself.

His mother, who had no interested daughters, even taught him the traditional art of Greek needlework and he became an expert at embroidering the gorgeous bed tents that were part of a rich girl's dowry. Because his skills brought in steady money from wealthy patrons, he was not pressed to work on the boats which easily could have ruined his hands for the intricate work.

All of this galled his father, who considered Demetri unmanly, embarrassing in his over-attentiveness to his appearance and hygiene, and possibly even *énas pouístis* (a homosexual). Demetri knew from the thousands of travelers who passed through Rodos that others like himself existed in the larger world, though. So he was not overly concerned about his father's apparent disgust, because plenty of men were not disgusted by him. Quite the contrary.

Demetri set his sights on escaping to Athens as soon as he could pull together enough money to buy a ship's passage. He secretly squirrelled away small amounts of his embroidery money by pretending that patrons paid slightly less than they actually did. When he deemed that his secret stash was growing too slowly, he decided one night to accept the cash that was often offered to him down by the docks when the sailing ships came in. He viewed his new sideline as just another way of servicing the Crusaders—his father and brothers sold to ships' pursers; he sold to the sailors.

This is where Amun found him sometime around the turn of the 11<sup>th</sup> century—late at night, down on the docks. Immediately, Amun was drawn to Demetri, a Greek god as far as the Egyptian was concerned, and young enough to fall into that category of “protégé” that the Egyptians coveted before the Volturi wiped out their coven.

What the Volturi objected to wasn't the Egyptians' mating habits, but their ostentatious lifestyle. For one thing, they had set themselves up as gods to be worshipped. They made golden images of themselves and compelled humans to bow at their feet and pay them tribute. They engaged in grandiose displays of wealth, building temples and monuments to themselves in the desert, and keeping hundreds of human slaves. All in all, the Volturi thought it was a matter of time before that kind of behavior incited the humans to revolt, thus endangering covens everywhere. The Volturi believed in discretion—still do.

The slaves are one thing that Amun has missed over the centuries and he thought about them a lot when he was in Forks. He had especially enjoyed the ready availability of human sexual partners in infinite variety and quantity—of both genders and the in-betweens too—to use as he saw fit. And when he was through with them, he could drain them or not according to his mood. When Amun decided to take a mate, he chose Kebi from among his harem expressly because she had learned to accede to his every whim as a slave girl.

As a vampire, Amun still can command the services of virtually any human he wishes, but he does not enjoy having either to charm them or force them. He misses being worshipped and adored. If Amun could have what he truly wants, he would return at once to his former state of glory. It's something he fantasizes about.

Amun spent a millennium plotting to reverse the changes brought about by the Volturi. In that effort, he always kept his eyes open for talented humans who, if changed, might provide him with some advantage in an eventual standoff against the Volturi.

When Amun found Demetri, beautiful and willing and dying to escape his provincial circumstances, he'd found a match made in heaven. Amun loved him for his effeminacy, his delicacy, and his prolonged clinging to the splendor of his youth. Amun kept Demetri human for a time, but decided to change him when he became worried that Demetri was aging past his peak of sexual desirability.

It was only after Demetri became a vampire that Amun discovered he had always had a talent for finding lost things. As a vampire, the talent was greatly enhanced, so Amun decided to train him as a tracker. Much to his delight, the nature of Demetri's gift was perfectly suited to tracking and it didn't take long to channel it toward finding individuals.

I never caught Amun thinking about how long Demetri was with him, but I'm guessing it was several hundred years before Aro got wind of Amun's acquisition and set about stealing him away. Demetri was happy with Amun and had no desire to join the Volturi guard when Aro first approached him in Egypt. He and Kebi lived like sister-wives, sharing everything, including Amun, and the arrangement suited everyone—or if it didn't suit Kebi, Amun never knew.

Unfortunately, with the Volturi guard's talents at his disposal, Aro succeeded in luring Demetri away by asking Chelsea to break his bond to Amun and re-bind him to the Volturi. To Amun's bitter disappointment, Demetri left to join the Volturi guard shortly after Aro extended the offer.

Once I'd pieced together most of this story, the relationship between Amun and Benjamin began to make a lot more sense to me. Amun chose and changed Benjamin when he was only fifteen. Benjamin is boyish and beautiful, much like Demetri, and I think Amun hoped that Benjamin would become his "protégé" as Demetri had been. But Benjamin is not made that way and after five years, he ran away from Amun in search of his own mate, changing Tia for himself.

Now, though they love each other, Amun and Benjamin maintain a mildly quarrelsome relationship. Benjamin is as a son to Amun, and like a son, has frequently rebelled against Amun's strictures, particularly his tendency to keep Benjamin hidden from others in the vampire community. Why Amun was so obsessed with that finally makes perfect sense to me. Aro is Amun's nemesis.

But back to Demetri...as far as Eleazar knows (I asked him), Demetri's been happy with the Volturi. He's never taken a mate, of course. Eleazar says that Demetri prefers men in both quantity and variety, very much like Tanya, I suppose.

So why did I bother listening to Amun's thoughts about Demetri in the first place, and even go so far as to throw him the odd question or two to prompt particular thoughts? I would say it goes back to my first encounters with Demetri in Volterra, which even in the wretched condition I was in, very much got under my skin (and "not in a good way," as Renesmee would say). I've always wondered whether he was seriously pursuing me or just having a bit of fun at my expense.

I'll never know for sure, I guess, but I've come to the conclusion that he was serious in his admiration and just had a crass way of showing it. A lot like Tanya, actually. Alas, for them both, I am no notch on anyone's bedpost. I am a one-woman man. Full stop.

*Edward*

#### *Demetri's Other Gift: Embroidery*

Bed tents are more properly called marriage beds, because they fully surround the bed of a newly married couple, giving them a private "room" in a multi-generational home that otherwise has none. Silk thread embroidered on cotton.



## FRED GOES HUNTING

The second time that Fred visited us in Forks, Bella and I took him to the Olympic Forest to give him a taste of game hunting, something he was curious about. Renesmee came along to show off her hunting skills to our new friend and Jacob came to keep her company. Renesmee decided that we had to explain about Jacob so that Fred would not be scared.

“Jacob is a wolf,” Renesmee said to Fred once we’d gotten a ways into the forest.

Fred nodded his head, not knowing what to say to that. If he were still human, he might have blushed to be singled out by a small child. He was distinctly uncomfortable, but Renesmee was not. We had told her that Fred was special, like Jacob.

“Are you a wolf too?” she inquired. She wasn’t ready to touch Fred to talk, so she chose to speak aloud to him.

“Uh...no.”

“How are you special then?” Renesmee wanted to know.

“I’m not really special,” Fred answered.

“Fred can do some interesting tricks,” I told her.

“Show me a trick! Show me a trick!” Renesmee said, getting excited and springing like a pogo stick five feet into the air. Fred copied her, bouncing into the air and back down, until both were pogo-ing about together...boing, boing, boing.

Renesmee started to giggle and Fred abruptly stopped jumping, his expression exactly as it had been before. Fred was not a smiler. In fact, Fred was not at all expressive. The only time I’d seen him become animated was when he had spoken about stealing computer resources from the University’s computer lab. Renesmee thought Fred’s deadpan expression was hilarious and she bent over holding her stomach with laughter.

“Fred’s funny,” she said to her mother, who wasn’t close enough to touch at that moment. Bella and I were both smiling, but Jacob was not. He was looking a bit irritated as he watched Renesmee play with Fred.

“Neeessssie,” Jake coaxed in the enticing child-like voice he used to get our daughter’s attention. “Bet I can catch the first buck. Race me?”

"I want Fred to come with us," Renesmee replied, looking eagerly at Fred to see if he would agree. The muscles around Jacob's mouth tightened and his thoughts took on the shape of daggers aimed at Fred's head.

Bella glanced discreetly at me and then cut in. "Nessie, why don't we let Daddy take Fred by himself for his first time, so he doesn't get distracted. I'll come with you and Jake." Wise woman. I quickly nodded my assent and kissed Bella on the cheek.

Renesmee ran and leaped into her mother's arms, slamming her palm into Bella's face. That was a bad habit we still hadn't addressed.

*But I want Fred,* Renesmee whined silently. Jacob guessed what she was saying. With an audible huff he turned at an angle to us as if he were preparing to take off on his own.

"Later," Bella said firmly to Renesmee. "Wait, Jake, we're coming with you," Bella called, taking off in a trot toward Jacob and grabbing his arm as she went by. Renesmee wiggled her legs to be set down and all three of them darted into the forest.

"Renesmee likes you," I said to Fred who nodded once with no change of expression. Okay, then. "Let's just run," I suggested. "Keep your nose alert for the scent of game. Mostly we find deer and elk in these woods, but we could get lucky and find a cougar. We're not likely to run into bear this close to home."

I started running and Fred followed on my heels. When I caught the scent of deer, I slowed, raised my nose as a signal, and nodded toward the east. Fred nodded to acknowledge that he smelled them. He also wrinkled his nose and I chuckled.

"Yes, most of us react that way the first time. Often we continue doing so too," I added with a smile. "Would you like to try first?"

"Sure," he said. Fred dropped into a hunting crouch and began creeping sideways toward the scent. I let him lead the way and he behaved as we all do instinctively—he scented, stalked, and then lunged, catching the two young bucks off guard and quickly taking down the one nearest to him. The other one got a jump on me, but I chased after him and caught up easily enough. When I finished drinking, I dropped the carcass, and turned around to see how Fred was doing.

My eyes widened in surprise at the spectacle I saw behind me. Fred was holding the buck upright on its hind legs and had his head tucked into the deer's inner front leg. I watched in fascination as he drank slowly without enthusiasm, before giving up and releasing the animal.

The deer fell to the ground with its legs still kicking. Fred hadn't drunk enough blood to render it unconscious and the animal was terrified. Not good. I dashed over, held the buck quiet and whispered, "Is that all you want?"

Fred nodded. He had spit out his last mouthful of blood and was trying to wipe the dribbles off his chin with his sleeve. I bit firmly into the buck's neck and let its already weakened heart pump the rest of its blood down my throat until the muscle faltered and expired. I dropped the buck and stood.

"I kinda made a mess of that," Fred commented.

"You didn't like it," I observed. Fred shook his head.

"It's an acquired taste," I said, smiling at him.

"I dunno about that," Fred said expressionlessly. "Do you always bite their necks like that?"

"Yes," I said, surprised that he would ask such a question. "Unless I'm sharing."

"I bet everybody else does too, huh? I know I'm weird."

"Whatever gets the job done is fine, I suppose. I am curious, though, what made you bite under its leg?"

"Well..." Fred seemed hesitant to say. I looked at him and waited politely for him to continue.

"That's how I drink humans. So I just did the same thing I always do."

"I see," I said slowly. "That's one way to do it, I guess. Did Riley ever take you hunting?"

"No, he just set us loose in groups of four or so and I hated those guys, so I always ran off on my own. I couldn't stand the screaming and the taunting, and the general mayhem that Raoul and his friends always seemed to enjoy. I never stuck around long enough to watch, but I could hear them no matter how far away I got."

Those were the most words I'd heard Fred string together at one time, I thought. His distress was written on his face.

"And you've always hunted alone since then?"

"Yeah. Like I said, I haven't seen any other vampires since I ran away from the coven."

"So you've never seen anybody else hunt?"

"Nah." He paused. "But no, I'm not retarded or anything. I've seen a lot of vampire movies." Fred didn't smile at that comment either, but I thought I saw a slight twinkle in his eye.

“You developed your own style on purpose?” I asked, feeling my mouth twitch a little at the corners.

“Yes. I’ve never been a big people person. I didn’t like getting that close to their faces, so I started drinking from the top of the brachial artery. Raoul used to call me ‘Armpit Fred,’ but I never knew whether that was because he saw me drink or because of the smell I used to aim at him whenever he came near me.” This time Fred did smile and I chuckled along with him. He had an idiosyncratic way of looking at things.

“I hated that guy. I’m glad he’s dead,” Fred added, losing the smile. “I wish Bree had gotten out too.” I nodded, remembering the child we had tried to save from the Volturi without success. If there ever was a next time, with any luck we wouldn’t be hamstrung like that again.

“She was your friend,” I observed.

“Yes.” That was all Fred said on the point, but his thoughts told me that he had become quite fond of Bree and had hoped that she might grow to appreciate him too—at least until Diego entered the picture. Now both Diego and Bree were dead. We stood there silently for a moment.

Finally, I said, “Would you like to look for some cougar? Most of us find that the taste of predator blood is more to our liking.”

“Is that right? Well, it couldn’t be much worse,” Fred said, meaning to be humorous, but his face again remained completely stoic. That was something interesting I was learning about Fred. The emotions he felt when he spoke almost never matched the expression on his face. I could only assume that he didn’t have brothers or sisters and that he had spent most of his life alone. He didn’t seem to have learned to make his intentions and his facial expressions congruent. That’s also characteristic of autistic humans, I recalled. Perhaps Fred had been mildly autistic before he was changed. He was obviously intelligent.

“Let’s go see what else we can find for you. I’d hate for you to give up on game after tasting only deer. You might prefer elk, or cougar, or fox. My brother Emmett prefers bear.”

“It’s worth a try,” Fred responded.

“By the way,” I told him. “I wouldn’t say the words ‘Armpit Fred’ to my daughter. I have a feeling you would never shake the name. Words like ‘underarm,’ ‘butt,’ and ‘crotch,’ are her new favorite taboos. She thinks they’re hysterically funny.”

I smiled at Fred, but he didn't reply and his expression didn't change. Probably, he couldn't relate to children all that well, but it was clear to me that Renesmee was going to relate to him if she had anything to say about it.

It will be very interesting to see how Jacob responds to that... I'm looking forward to it.

*Edward*

## GIANNA'S DEMISE

I was talking to Alice the other day and we got onto the topic of fashion, as is not unusual with my sister, and wouldn't it be great to have an outfit you could wear when you might or might not need to go out in the sunshine? Like an emergency kit that humans keep in the trunk of their cars, vampires could keep the clothing in their trunks in case of sunshine emergencies.

I commented that the Volturi should start selling their capes on the internet. "It would be a useful item to have," I admitted. "I bet lots of people would buy them."

"Sure they would," Alice said sarcastically, "if they wanted to look like Count Dracula, though it would be fun to wear for Halloween."

Despite her dismissive response, I'd given her an idea for a line of vampire wear, beginning with hooded capes, "...but in fashion colors," she noted, "that would change every year. Detail them differently so that people could collect them, like Manolos or Fendi bags. Hmm..." Her mind was churning with inspiration for a new fashion product, maybe even a business, or the beginnings of one, anyway.

*Maybe I'd call it "Vamping,"* she thought, which made me smile.

"What?" she half-asked, half-accused.

"Oh, nothing," I grinned. "I just like the name."

"Oh, right." Even Alice could forget now and then that her thoughts weren't private...not often, though.

"Who would be my target market?" Alice mused, mostly to herself.

"Vampires, for starters," I offered.

"Ob-vi-ous," she said, one syllable at a time. "I meant, after that."

"Oh, I don't know. Goth teenagers or adults like that receptionist in Volterra, what was her name?"

"Gianna. She's dead, though. I saw it."

"Dead? You never mentioned it before."

"Never came up," Alice replied, but she was still thinking about colors for next year. Pumpkin, cinnamon, warm brown, maroon... Fall colors for cool weather.

"So?" I prodded.

“What?”

“How did she die?”

“Oh. Well, it’s kind of funny, actually, in an awful sort of way, you know.”

“Of course,” I humored her, as she purposefully dragged out the story.

“You knew that Gianna was always hoping to find someone in the guard to change her?”

“Yes, every time I saw her,” I remembered, “she was wondering when it would finally happen. She was starting to worry about her age. She wanted to be young and pretty for eternity.”

“Don’t we all?” Alice smirked.

“Anyway...” I led.

“Anyway, she would have been happy whoever changed her, but she really wanted it to be someone as high up ‘the corporate ladder’ as possible.” Alice chuckled at her own joke, then dropped into silence again.

“I can see that you’re pretending to lose track of this conversation just to irritate me,” I reminded her, reading that in her thoughts.

“Oh, right. She always put out the bait, but nobody was ‘biting.’” Alice stopped to laugh again.

“And...”

“And so she decided to pick someone to ‘work on,’ Felix being an obvious choice because he always flirted with her at the desk, winking when he went by and such. But Felix is basically a cad at heart.”

“I knew it,” I commented to myself. “He flirted with Bella too, though I think he had an actual crush on her.”

“He did, all right!”

“What do you mean by that?” I pressed. Now I was intrigued. Well, *intrigued* isn’t the right word. *Irritated* would be more accurate, or possibly, instantly and homicidally *jealous*.

“Don’t get all bent out of shape, but he decided he wanted to act on it and that gave him away to me, though in the end, he changed his mind. You actually scared him.”

“I did?” I repeated, surprised.

“Yes, of course! You must be aware of the ‘scary face’ you get when someone is flirting with your wife!”

“I do?” I hadn’t been aware of that. I notice when anyone flirts with Bella, but I generally keep my thoughts to myself.

“Trust me, you don’t have to say a word. The message is delivered loud and clear.”

I just grunted. “Can we get back to Gianna?”

“Sure. So she set her sights on Felix and decided to try working him into enough of a crush that he would agree to change her. It didn’t work, though, you want to know why?”

“Yes, Alice,” I replied, humoring her.

“Because she is too tall!” Alice laughed.

“You’re kidding!”

“Nope.”

“But he’s 6’7”! Wouldn’t he want a tall woman?”

“You’d think, but no, he likes them small, like Bella,” she taunted me.

“Alice...,” I growled a warning.

“Okay, okay. Months of effort didn’t pay off in the slightest indication that he might change her, though he did think about doing *something* with her,” Alice said suggestively. “She would have let him, too, but he was afraid he’d lose it and get in trouble with the ‘masters’.”

Alice finally gave up teasing and continued without prodding. “So, her next pick was Alec.”

“Little Alec?” I repeated superfluously.

“Yes, she started being extra nice to him, doing special favors for him, like making sure he got his paycheck the instant it was issued, et cetera.”

“The guard gets paychecks?” I said, surprised by that for some reason.

“Of course! How do you think they shop?”

“What was I thinking?” I rolled my eyes.

“Anyhoo, Jane started to notice, which is kind of funny, because Gianna would have done the same thing for Jane, if she thought she had any chance with her, but Jane never gave Gianna

any indication that she would be soft toward anyone, let alone a human, so she didn't try. But Jane notices Alec's special treatment, even though Alec doesn't notice he's being singled out at all.

"Then one day when Jane had had about enough of it, Gianna smiled at Alec and asked him, 'How are you today?' Jane absolutely lost it and gave Gianna the x-ray eyes. When she stopped, Gianna was on the floor writhing and Jane hopped over the tall desk and was on her in a second. When Alec saw that Gianna's goose was cooked, he said 'Save me some, sister' and grabbed a wrist for himself.

"If it had been anybody but Jane, the other guards would have complained because lots of them had their eye on Gianna...for dinner...but were too timid to act on it without permission. When word got back to the Volturi, Caius and Marcus couldn't be bothered with the death of a trivial human, and Aro is so indulgent with Jane that he didn't do anything either. That really pissed off the rest of the guard."

"Is that all to the story?" I inquired.

"No," Alice replied. "Before she expired, Gianna asked 'Why?' and Jane said, 'Because I suck.'" With that punch line, Alice burst into laughter.

"Good one, Alice," I said with irritation. "You really had me going there. Ha ha."

"Gianna really is dead, though."

"Is she?" I asked skeptically.

"Yes, because Jane is a sucker, just like you!" With that, Alice skipped off to her computer chuckling all the way.

I'm still not sure what happened to Gianna or whether she is actually dead. Probably she is. It was always just a question of time.

*Edward*

## ALICE ALONE #1: Jackson

Alice doesn't remember much about her early years as a vampire. I ask her questions from time to time and usually she just shrugs. Every now and then, though, an odd fact or disconnected experience will pop into her head as if she always knew it. When I repeat it out loud to her, she often seems surprised. It's odd.

I don't know exactly what happens to a human's brain when it is repeatedly subjected to doses of electrical current (though Carlisle and I strongly suspect organic damage), and I don't know how it is then affected by oxidizing into what we are. I do know one thing, though—the result is Alice and she is a one-of-a-kind miracle.

I've kept track of the bits and pieces that Alice has revealed to me over the years, though I doubt if she could repeat much of what I've collected. As far as I can tell, all her long-term human memories were lost and never recovered. She has no recollection of anything from before her time in the asylum. Memories that were shorter-term, such as experiences in the asylum and just afterwards, come out in flickers from time to time. I can only guess that once the electroshock stopped, her brain began to heal and she gradually became able to store memories again.

So though most vampires have only vague recollections from their human years, Alice has almost none and the few I've caught are just wispy images from the last six months or so of her life. She might have had more toward the end except that she was kept in darkness most of the time. I've seen nebulous images of a door at the end of a long hallway, for example, and the memory of pain in her eyes when she went through it into the light.

The ill effects of Alice's shock treatments lingered into her new life as a vampire, making her the only one of our kind I know of who does not have clear memories from the moment of her birth. Her earliest ones are piecemeal. For instance, she remembers where she woke up, but not how she got there. She remembers a sickly sweet burning smell, but not what it was from.

Alice awoke from her burning time in a cave, alone. She later identified the strong odor there when she witnessed the annihilation of a vampire for the first time. We know now that what she smelled was smoke from the burning of her creator. The evil James destroyed him, but saw no sport in killing a bewildered newborn. He left Alice to struggle on her own with no guidance and without even knowing what she was. Though ignorant and abandoned, when Alice emerged from the cave into the sunshine, she was thrilled to discover that she was a stunning creature adorned all over in sparkling diamonds.

Alice didn't find out until much later that she had been created and left to fend for herself in Jasper County, Mississippi. It was portentous—the county where she was born as a vampire bore the same name as her future true love.

Alice set out into the world with nothing except the rags on her back and the visions in her mind. Fortunately for us all, Alice had survived with a gift undoubtedly enhanced from what it had been when she was human. That helps to explain why her lack of memory caused her little grief. What had already happened was not as important to her as what *would* happen, something that remains true today.

Rosalie once described Alice aptly: "...secure as always, living ahead, her mind in a time her body hadn't reached yet. Always so calm." I believe that was never more true than when she was first created for, after all, what else had she?

As far as I've been able to determine, Alice made her first public appearance in Heidelberg, Mississippi, a tiny town southwest of the asylum where she had lived for so long. She was drawn there by her newborn thirst, for it was the closest place with a population of human prey. In the 1920s, Heidelberg was barely a bug spot on a map of the state, with dirt wagon trails and no telephones or automobiles (or indoor plumbing). Its remoteness and lack of any modern means of communication turned out to be a good thing for Alice.

The town had a general store on its one street with a gray-haired proprietor who served as Alice's first meal. His wife, bringing her husband his lunch, was her second. In such a small community, the death of one citizen was instant news and the mysterious deaths of two at once constituted a public emergency. There was no such thing as anonymity in Heidelberg and when the bodies were discovered, the ensuing ruckus—galloping of horses, ringing of the church bell, screaming and shouting—compelled Alice to run north in search of a bigger town with a larger population. Fortunately, it was easy for her to escape, since all she had to do was dodge one or two rifle bullets and outrun a few horses.

Alice didn't know better than to travel by day and so that's what she did, which worked to her advantage in rural Mississippi. Her glittering skin caught the eye of solitary farmers and hunters who would come to investigate and provide her with convenient meals. Like a newborn human, a newborn vampire has everything he or she requires to survive, which in Alice's case, was simply the instinct to drink what smelled like sustenance.

Not too far along in her journey northward, Alice came upon some railroad tracks and, assuming they led somewhere, followed them until she reached the state capital of Jackson, Mississippi. In the city, she quickly discovered that her beautiful diamond skin was not an advantage. While it drew humans to her, it always drew too many and they frightened her with

their screams and cries, and their tendency to gang up on her or try to capture her. Good sense told her that during the daytime she would be hounded, so she became a creature of the night.

Alice being Alice, she soon discovered that her ragtag appearance—chopped-off, half-grown-out hair, ragged clothes, and no shoes—set her apart from all other females she encountered. Finding none of our kind, Alice chose what she wanted to look like from among the women who could be seen on the city streets in the evening and at night. They came primarily in two varieties—visions of beauty and elegance attending the theater, opera, and glamorous evening parties; and a wide range of ladies, most of less-than-elegant comportment, who wore revealing clothing and ambled up to men on the streets. She preferred the former group.

Alice set about styling herself in the manner of an elegant lady. She soon discovered that with the new 1920s hairstyles, her chopped-off locks could be made to look chic. Jackson, Mississippi, was not known for being at the cutting edge of fashion, but Alice acquired a few beautiful evening dresses, including a violet one with a flounce made from ostrich feathers. I've seen a very clear image of that particular dress in her head, but when asked to recall it, she cannot.

Alice quickly learned where the best ladies' shops were located and she made a habit of breaking into them at night to build her wardrobe. Soon, she had acquired a collection of striking clothes to wear during her evening forays.

After careful observation, which was her only way to learn how to dress and act, Alice was soon able to participate in the social scene of Jackson. Her favorite mingling spot was the luxurious Edwards Hotel (another portent?) across from the Union Train Station. It was the favored location among the wealthy elite for society balls and parties. Fortunately for Alice, shop proprietresses could not afford to attend the exclusive functions that she attended or she might have been caught out in a stolen dress.

Again, Alice being Alice, she quickly became the Belle of the Balls, known for the coquettish fashion she established of wearing hats with colored veils over her eyes. Men seemed to find this mysterious and it attracted them to her in droves. If pressed, she would admit to a hereditary melanin defect that gave her pale skin and un-pigmented eyes which were very sensitive to the light. If anyone grew too curious, she simply drank them for dinner (*La Belle Dame sans Merci*). She had learned to hide her corpses meticulously in order to avoid suspicion.

By charming wealthy male patrons, Alice was able to establish herself in Jackson, buy a house, and fill it with the finest of furnishings. At first she simply stole what she liked on midnight raids of shops and import warehouses, especially those with luxury goods from France. Soon, though, she learned from a gentleman friend about investing in the stock market and she gave up her more risky means of acquisition.

Having foreseen the stock market crash of 1929 in a vision, Alice speculated in stocks to the highest possible degree and then converted everything to gold before the market began to fall. That was how she instantly made herself one of the richest citizens in the South, especially as the booming economy gave way to the Great Depression.

As is always the case with our kind, Alice could remain in Jackson for only nine or ten years before her noticeable lack of aging grew troublesome and she decided to move on. She retained the mansion she had bought and turned it over to a leasing agency, thus establishing a long-held tradition. She still acquires properties in every city she likes, and to this day, owns historic homes all over the country. Rents alone would keep her in high-fashion clothing and fancy yellow Porsches, but she generously supplements that income with continued speculation in world markets. It's something of a hobby nowadays.

*Edward*