

Luminosity series

Metafiction

by

Alicorn`s fans

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Prism
by
Bluelantern 2814

"How marvelous!" proclaimed Adele, her hold on Aide half-possessive and half-prideful, a mother basking in the accomplishments of her daughter. "How delicious!"

"A new aspect of the power," Aide said neutrally, staring at the image of Elspeth.

Except it wasn't Elspeth - it was magic, Magic. Addy knew that Magic was usually more talkative with Elspeth, but her projection was just as neutral and quiet as Aide. That made sense. The power was a gateway to give information, but more limited in receiving feedback. Magic was there but wasn't listening. Addy looked at Magic for merely a couple of seconds -

"Taste it!" Adele demanded, with a tinge of annoyance and hunger. "I want to taste it!"

Addy reached around with her real arm to the real Elspeth, grinning with anticipation.

"I... don't like them in here," said Magic, staring at the projections of both Adele and Aide.

"Can't say that I do," said Elspeth uncomfortably.

"So much delicious potential," murmured Adele, staring at Aide and seemingly unaware that she and Aide were in Elspeth's mind.

Elspeth was so repelled that her concentration broke and she exited the "blank space" where she had met her and Addy's selves.

Just as expected, Emel's power wasn't happy with being a captive. Adele could control her easily enough, though, but was obviously bored with the magnetic power.

The boredom didn't surprise Addy a bit. Emel tasted the same as before. While the copy of her power showed resistance to Adele's hold, there wasn't much that Adele (or Addy) could care about the taste besides its practical utility.

Addy watched the copied power trying to escape, but it was like watching a vampire holding a human. There was no hope that Adele would ever lose her grip.

Addy decided that it would be pointless to give a new name to the copied power, or even call her "Aide". So she went back to fixing the structural damage the latest dozen newborns had caused.

"It is simple," Elspeth said. "I project my magic in your mind, and if you concentrate you can see it, and a manifestation of your power. You can get in or out at any time of your choice".

Marcus had a problem holding his concentration to keep "himself" inside the mental blank. He was surprised that in "there" he couldn't see relationships, not even his own mate bond.

The other surprise was the appearance that his power had. Nearly identical to Marcus, and even with the same modern day clothing, but it had no glassy skin or lines and lines and lines of scars. It was a younger vampire version of Marcus with golden eyes.

"I surprise you," the power said, eyes familiarly unfocused.

"Yes," Marcus responded, imagining the line between them. Could you have a relationship with your own power?

"Everyone should be happy. What is wrong with bringing a little cheer to the world?" said Didi.

"There isn't anything wrong with that," said Didyme calmly, but with uncharacteristic impatience.

"Everyone should be happy. That is why I do it all the time," insisted Didi, still with her cheery tone. "It's very simple."

"It isn't," Didyme tried to object for the thousandth time. "I just want to go to... the funeral without being improperÉ"

"But you can!" Didi said with the most optimistic smile possible. "You should! We can't let people suffer like that. How can you? Everyone should be happy!"

Didyme felt that she couldn't argue with Didi, and at the same time wasn't all that willing to disagree. Even the projected princess's image seemed to smile brightly around her.

Edward didn't suffer with Marcus' lack of power in the blank space. Both Edwards, real and magical, had mind reading.

The result was like banging a microphone in a sound box.

After five times the Emperor finally got the hang of keeping his mind clear enough to keep his concentration to "talk" with his magic-representative counterpart. It was an unfamiliar and yet interesting experience to communicate with his own power in that way. He was used to being able to hear thoughts and then replying vocally.

He remembered what it was to be on the opposite side, speaking to Edward the mind reader, who answered the literally unasked questions, but Edward had never had a conversation with a mind reader using mindreading. Even with Aro (especially with Aro) the approach was usually as much verbal as both sides could make it.

It was a truly introspective experience.

Bella's big surprise with her "talking with yourself" session was revealed as soon as the empress managed to keep enough concentration to lower her shield and stay in the blank mental space.

The surprise was that there was nothing there but one single Bella.

Empress Regnant Bella sighed, unsure whether that meant that she had more layers to shed or that she knew herself very well.

The Seer's power had Alice's own, human eyes, an oddity that fascinated her for a half-second before the mental space became anything but blank.

Alice was used to seeing chaotic currents of possibility caused by indecision and accompanied by severe headaches.

What she never saw was the beauty that surrounded her, herself, and Addy's projected selves.

She saw multiple possibilities around them growing, dancing and multiplying themselves in breathtaking fractal patterns. All the imaginable conversations that Alice could have with "herself", every single choice and consequence displayed in a kaleidoscope of fates. Not as chaos, not as order, but something else entirely, something beautiful and serendipitous.

Alice never spoke a word with her own power. She didn't have to. They knew each other.

Benjamin's "power-self", as they were calling it, was probably unique, and considered the most unusual in appearance.

It was Benjamin-shaped, but in no way an exact duplicate. It was Fire, Air, Water and Earth, and alternated between those states. One time it looked like a statue of dirt or clay; another, still water, solid but not frozen; it then changed to a cloud of barely visible mist that would burst into flames which could kill a real Benjamin. The transformation would happen again without any order or reason, only change.

The power never spoke, nor seemed to be capable of understanding, but Benjamin was fascinated all the same.

Most powers took a while before answering. Addy wasn't sure what it meant. There wasn't a discernable change of taste in them, so it might have a psychological explanation. Mental powers seemed more "talkative" than physical ones. But nearly everyone felt that the experience was, if not pleasant, at least unique.

Many witches found themselves victims of their own powers. Alec's power would cause his "master" to fall limp on the floor. The illusionist found herself surrounded by an illusory forest. The identity thief was bombarded with everyone she had ever impersonated, all at once.

On the other hand, Dwi managed to do the "trick" by himself without further help from Elspeth or Addy. His power was especially chatty.

Most people tried the sessions until they got their powers to say something at least once.

"I exist to see, to find out what is hidden. I am very curious, aren't you?"

"They can't be ruled by their own emotions."

"Stop looking at me! Stop looking at me! Stop looking at me!"

"There is so much that no one can understand but us!"

"You know they are truthful, different from people, they are simple, wild, yet honestÉ"

"To understand people is to understand the people around them."

"To understand people, it is to peep inside their heads, hihhih-"

"Without limits people are just animals. I just enforce those limits, for their own good."

"You will recover their minds and souls."

"Burn and destroy them all."

"Because we can't be weak, and we aren't. We can take anything they throw at us!"

"Don't worry."

"Be happy!"

"I am here for you."

"This sounds really confusing," Bernadette said after hearing the explanation about the so called mental prism.

"It can be," admitted Elspeth.

"But do you think I should?" Bernadette replied as a red spark burst from her hand. "It will make me control my power better?"

"It will make you understand your power better," Elspeth said.

"Will that make me control my power better?" insisted the little witch.

"If your own power has a way to control..." Elspeth said, "It is possible. Either way, I recommend it. You can learn a lot from yourself."

Disconnected

by
Marri

We never learned how to be alone, Jane and I. It was never even something we could comprehend. The idea of "aleness" was for the people unlucky enough to be born by themselves. We were sometimes apart, but it was not the same as being alone. We were not alone; we had each other. And then we didn't, and now I am alone. What do I do now?

I don't remember much from when we were human. What I do remember all involves her. I can remember that our father had other children, but we always played by ourselves, without them. I'm not even sure how many half siblings we had, or what genders they were. I know we didn't get along, but only because I remember Jane protecting me from them. She protected me from everyone- from our stepmother, then from our half siblings, then other children, then the older villagers. She was our champion, and I loved her for it. She did her best to keep us safe, and I did my best to keep her happy in return, and we were content.

But then finally she couldn't keep them away any more. We were only fourteen, and they attacked us, calling us evil, witches and demon worshippers. They beat us and tied us up and burned us at the stake. Even when the Volturi saved us from the fire, our burns were too severe, and they had to turn us. So badly burned I should have died, and yet I lay there for days, on fire inside and out, and throughout it all I could hear the screams. Her screams. Jane, *strong* Jane, Jane who always knew what to do, Jane was screaming and screaming and I had to make it stop. She had always protected us and then she was *screaming* and she needed me. I would have given anything to make the pain stop, to make my pain stop and *Jane's* pain stop. And finally, when it was over, when it was too late to mean anything, I could.

She was so pleased by what we had become. We were immortal, and beautiful, and powerful. No one would touch us ever again, she said. We would be safe forever, if we helped Master Aro with his plans. "This is so much better than being human," she would sigh happily. "Now we will be together forever." And she would talk to Master Aro and relay his instructions, and we did what we were told. And Jane would smile and everything was all right.

Eventually, keeping Jane happy became the only thing I cared about. It was a habit, from when we were human, and I kept it when I turned. She had always been my guardian, and I had always trusted her, followed her lead and known on a gut level what she did was for the best. They say vampires don't change much, unless they mate; I certainly never did. Where she led, I would follow.

People said we were monsters, but hadn't they always? They called us monsters when we were human, too. And we were monsters, truly, if you look at what we did for the Volturi. But back when we were human, we were still vulnerable. As vampires, we were

extraordinary. As Volturi, we were untouchable. Everyone feared us and did whatever what we said. And if they didn't obey? We made them. What did I care if people hated us? Jane knew how to keep us safe. And so I helped her, to make her happy. Little by little, we took over the world. And Jane smiled.

In some ways it was better, before Addy. I never cared much about anyone in particular in the guard- I had Jane, and it was good enough. At least, when I missed her, I knew what to do when she was gone. But not missing her was the only way I could stay alive. So I let Addy snip the thread, and I didn't miss Jane any more. But I didn't know what to do instead.

I try to fill the time. I work for the Empress, but I don't actually do very much. At first I read while people turned. Later, I tried video games, but they didn't seem worth the time I'd have to spend learning how to play. Nowadays I get university degrees, just to have something to do. Last time I counted, I had six or seven. Simplistic things, engineering degrees mostly, like math or statistics. Nothing where I have to analyze or interpret or convince anyone that somehow, my ideas are better than theirs, even though neither of us can know for certain. Better to stick to the sciences. Sit down, solve the problem, right or wrong.

I know the Empress still keeps an eye on me. Addy sometimes tells me things like that if we're tending a batch at the same time. She likes it when people react to what she tells them, I think, so she throws out tidbits to see if I'll respond. "Bella has Edward and I listen to you sometimes. You mope just like Pera did." She sulks when I ignore her, which I've always found strange. Why would I be surprised they're checking my thoughts? I was a Volturi. Of course they watch me. Why would I be upset? Aro did it for centuries, if only out of habit. I don't care that they spy. Or maybe I'm supposed to be upset that I sound like a girl?

It wouldn't surprise me, I guess, if I sound like Pera. We both lost the one person we relied on. Jane wasn't my mate any more than Brady was Pera's, but it still felt like she was the center of my world. Chelsea's power took that away from us. Only... now Pera has Razi. I'm not likely to ever find a mate. I can't fill the void it left when Addy made me be just Alec, instead of Jane's twin.

I don't know how to be Alec.

Truth
by
James Orland

Slowly, so subtly she didn't see it happen, Elspeth fell in love. It started as a strange itch in her Magic. It was different from before, not quite as strong, but every bit as insistent. It remained there, though, even while she spoke the truth. After a while, she got annoyed enough that she put her hands on her face to find out what it was about.

And she was confused.

Magic looked disgruntled, and Memory was smirking. Well, actually every time Elspeth looked at Memory she remembered someone smirking, but that amounts to pretty much the same thing. Magic's facial expression was there, though, no remembering anything, and she was looking pretty annoyed.

"...What happened?" Elspeth asked both, after a while of staring contest.

"I don't *know!*" Magic exploded suddenly. "Memory told me we were missing something and it was *true!* And now I don't know what we're missing!"

Elspeth turned to Memory. "What are we missing?"

Just the smirk, followed by a shriek from Magic. "Well, once you find out, will you tell me? And stop itching, please," she asked of Magic.

Magic grimaced. "I can't! I can't just not itch when we're leaving something out!"

And so it went on itching. And the itch grew.

On a side note, she realized she spent more time with Jake. She thought more of Jake. And when she thought 'my Wolf,' the word 'my' had a slightly different tone. To Jacob, of course, she was still the center of the Universe. She was his imprint, he was her wolf, they'd discussed it already, it didn't have to look like anything else.

Still, she started swooning and sighing. And what she didn't realize was that she was also dreaming of him, quite often. Until he said, one morning:

"Last night you dreamed of me." He had his lips pursed to avoid smiling.

"...Yes? Don't I often dream of everyone I know?"

"This was... different," he said.

She had a weird feeling in her stomach. "How different?"

"Um... well... you were..." He cleared his throat. "You kissed me."

She stared at him, gaping, for ten seconds. "I-" She didn't know what to say to that. "I- I need to go to the bathroom," she decided, and she went, and closed the door behind herself.

Slowly, so subtly he didn't see it happen, Jacob fell in love. Elspeth was his imprint. Jacob was her wolf. That much he knew. She was the center of his universe, the one and only that could possibly be. Everything was about her, every smile was the sun, an undeserved gift; every frown was his fault, he'd done something wrong. And if she was so much the most important thing in the world to him and he wants to worship the ground where she walks and he would jump in front of a train for her, how would he realize when he actually fell in love with her?

It started with the dreams. He dreamt of holding her all night long, watching *her* dream, and just that. And he started acting on it, going to sleep later and later, trying to hold her for as long as he possibly could before crashing, trying to wake up before she did, trying not to miss a single moment with her.

Then he started thinking about it. He felt it was somehow wrong. He knew he was hers to keep, not the other way round, but he still caught himself *wishing* that she would be his, that he could keep her forever, and imagining forever with her.

And during one of the nights he watched her dream, inside a little cottage in La Push, he saw them kissing. And kissing. And kissing. And it was just that. It was a simple, romantic dream, that lasted for about two hours, where they cuddled under the sun on the fjords of the place she was born. And then he fell asleep, and had exactly the same dream, which lasted all night long, until he woke up feeling her stir in his arms. And he smiled. But he had to hide the smile. It wasn't right. But it *felt* right, righter than it had a right to be. Once she was up, he said, "Last night you dreamed of me."

"...Yes? Don't I often dream of everyone I know?"

"This was... different," he said.

He felt a bit panicky. "How different?"

"Um... well... you were..." He cleared his throat. "You kissed me." He couldn't tell her he had had exactly the same dream, after he fell asleep, that he wanted it to be true.

She gaped at him, and he felt a sinking feeling in his stomach. He had done something wrong. "I- I- I need to go to the bathroom," she said, and he let her go, and she went to the bathroom. And despair took over him, because he had no idea what to do, no idea whether he had broken whatever it was they had, and he couldn't *stand* the thought of having scared her off and never being with her again and...

Elspeth sat on the floor and blinked, many times. She felt that itch again, stronger than ever, and once again put both hands on her face. Memory was smiling triumphantly, and Magic

looked confused, but less annoyed than before. She looked between them, and finally asked: "What's happening?"

"I *think*..." Magic started, "that *maybe*... we... love Jacob."

Elsbeth blinked once, and tried to find a way around it. "I know that. We always did, didn't we?"

"No," Magic said. "I mean, *love* love. As in... we are *in love*." That was the first time Elspeth saw Magic struggle for words. She was usually very articulate, very good in making herself understood, but this time... she was lost. And it was all the more terrifying when Memory nodded virtuously - or, rather, showed her a memory of someone doing that. That gave Magic more certainty in her statements.

"So," Elspeth said, and swallowed. "So," Magic concluded. "We are in love with Jacob."

And then it finally dawned on her. As she slowly lowered her hands from her face, her mouth hanging open, she whispered to herself: "I love Jacob." And it was *true*, and once that settled in, she couldn't take another minute away from him, and she stood up and opened the door behind herself.

He had both hands covering his face, thinking. *How can I fix that? How could I be so STUPID to break it in the first place?!* Of course, that was the general idea. Most of his thoughts were more like *AAAAARRRGHHHHH!* and *UUUUCK!* and other inarticulate ideas. And then he finally, really asked himself why he was so stupid in the first place. And it dawned on him.

He loved Elspeth.

He *loved* loved Elspeth. As in, he was in love with Elspeth.

As soon as that hit him, the bathroom's door opened, and he raised his head to look at her. And she looked... what? He was usually so good at reading her face, at knowing what she was feeling. Not now. That was an expression he'd never seen her wear before.

"Elsbeth..." he breathed, trying to explain himself, but no words came. Her *face*...

"Jacob," she stated, in that magical way she had of doing it, and he stopped short. It wasn't that he couldn't understand her expression. It was just that it was so much like his own feelings he couldn't distinguish it. The way she said his name brought to memory the dream again, what he was feeling from her then.

She walked in his direction, and sat in front of him on the bed. She just *stared* at him, and he felt and looked afraid, nervous, and confused. He blinked a few times while looking at her, and she didn't say a word. She was just looking at him with a certain intensity. And from her magic, he *knew* she had something in her mind, but she was confused. So he just waited for

her to say something, and when it looked like she wasn't going to say anything, he started with "I'm..."

But then she leaned against him and kissed him.

They didn't do much talking for the next few hours.

She had to hold his hand to do that. She wasn't even sure *how* to do that, but she knew sooner or later her father would see it in her thoughts, so might as well be sooner. As they walked towards the compound, Jake squeezed her hand. She smiled at him, but kept thinking very hard and very loud *please don't tell mom please don't tell mom please don't tell mom...*

So, of course, dad told mom.

As soon as they got to the "throne room," Bella snatched her lightning fast and growled, which prompted an instinctual and instant phasing of Jacob. Edward had a weird expression on his face.

"*Mom!*" Elspeth cried. She'd stopped calling Bella 'Mama' a few years earlier.

"*You!*" she growled, looking at Jacob. "*My daughter!*" Oh. Of course. She forgot. La Push was within Edward's mental borders, at least when it came to familiar minds. So he would... he'd have... *seen...* everything...

Edward pursed his lips, looking guilty, as Elspeth slowly turned her head to look at him, horrified. Never mind that she did have the memory of their honeymoon, it was just a *memory*, which she tried oh so hard to suppress, she hadn't actually *watched* it. But then she heard Jacob bark, and floof, and her head snapped back to look at him. And... after earlier this day... looking at him naked was... different. Now it was Edward's turn to hiss. To Jacob's credit, he managed to look somewhat ashamed... or, at least, sheepish.

"*Mom!*" Elspeth repeated, more fiercely this time, in that magical voice. And Bella simply ignored it, possibly trying to stare a hole at Jake. Elspeth didn't see any sign between her parents, which led her to believe her mom learned how to lift her shield more reliably when Edward quietly nodded, still looking a bit angry, and bolted, returning one and a half seconds later and tossing a change of clothes in the wolf's direction.

"My little *baby!*" her mother hissed.

"Hold on. I'm not a *baby!* I haven't been a baby for a long time!"

She didn't turn around to look at Elspeth, and just said, "You told me *nothing* was going on between you two, and that he thought *nothing* like that!"

"That was *fifteen years ago*, mom! I'm old enough even by *human* standards to have a boyfriend!"

"*Boyfriend?*," Bella shrieked, finally spinning on her heels to stare at Elspeth. The growl in her voice made Jacob run and try to get between them, and Edward instantly put himself in front of the wolf. And to more of his credit, he managed not to phase, and instead just looked at Elspeth's father intently.

"Yes, mom, boyfriend! It was *bound* to happen! You *knew* it was going to happen eventually, I'm his *imprint*! He's my *wolf*!" Elspeth's words carried that weight of truth that forced Edward to look at her and sort of see her point. But Bella had her shield up, which meant that it had no effect.

Once again, through purely mental communication (or so Elspeth suspected), Bella asked Edward to move out of the way, and as soon as that happened Jacob didn't even have to move, because Elspeth sprinted towards him, making a point of holding his right hand. Bella was still looking menacing, but Edward was starting to look a little bit less angry, staring at Jacob with what was turning into curiosity and - was that awe?

It took another two seconds for Bella to calm down and straighten from her instinctual crouch, clearing her throat in the process. Not that it was needed. It was just a symbolic habit. "So," she said. "Boyfriend."

Elspeth held her *boyfriend's* - it was starting to become easier to think of Jake that way - hand tighter, and said, "Yes. Boyfriend. As in boyfriend and girlfriend. As in..."

"I know what it means," she interrupted, but then held back. "Sorry," she said. She herself hated being interrupted, so she tried not to do that.

"Good," Elspeth said, and Jacob relaxed visibly. "Now, I *did* come here to tell you. In fact, it was *Jake's* idea to come here so soon. We hadn't *realized* that dad would *already know*." She glared at Edward, who looked truly apologetic when he said, "Sorry."

Bella didn't look at him as he took a position beside her similar to how Jake was acting around Elspeth, holding her hand too. She seemed to be weighing something, pondering, except... "Mom, dad, could you please talk in a pitch we can hear?"

Dad suddenly went very still (stillier than he was, anyway), and Bella just sighed. "I'm sorry, Elspeth. I was just checking if..." She actually trailed off, to which her daughter said, "You know I can't lie. Or not convincingly anyway. I don't *like* lying."

Jacob cleared his throat then, to Elspeth's (and her parents') surprise, and said, "I'm sorry if it came in a bad time. I'm not sorry, though, that it had to be Elspeth. I love her, as I have since I first saw her. She's still the most important person to me. You can be *sure* I'll *never ever* let *anything* happen to her, never hurt her. I'm hers, for as long as she'll have me." The half-vampire looked at her wolf with awe and pride and love. She had known everything he was saying was true, but it still made her feel very good that he said it.

Bella looked between both of them, and finally sighed, resigned. "Okay. I'm sorry I reacted this way. I guess I should have seen it coming, you're a woman, and he's your wolf, and... I just wasn't prepared, that's all. My little baby..." she repeated, and it looked like she would tear up if she was capable of doing that.

Elspeth smiled, and leaned closer to her wolf, who immediately let go of her hand to wrap his right arm around her shoulders and hold her close to him. That was the happiest day he could remember in his life.

Elspeth wanted her wedding to be spectacular. And she was the daughter of the queen of the world, so that was quite easy to arrange. Everyone was invited. Literally. All of the Cullens, the Denalis, the Trafelis, the Grecos. Even Allirea went and managed to stay unfaded for the whole event.

Edward took his daughter to the altar, and Elspeth's beam could only be matched by Jacob's. She didn't pay enough attention to the fact that it was really odd that she looked older than her father. She didn't pay attention to the fact that Jacob looked older than her father. She had eyes only for her wolf. *Hers*.

And when she said "I do" and kissed him, she knew the world was beautiful and perfect and exactly the way it should be.

When Elspeth was 35, she got pregnant. And even though Bella had said that she wouldn't allow Elspeth to give her grandchildren until at least age 45, she didn't much mind, and was in fact really happy.

Ten weeks later, named after Jacob's mother, Sarah Black was born.

Elspeth's pregnancy went well, and she was born the conventional way; she didn't break any of Elspeth's bones, and didn't chew her way out. When they first saw her, they were taken by her. Even though she wasn't as lovely as an immortal child or even a half-vampire newborn, she was still lovelier than a human, and a very cute baby, too. She had her father's eyes and her mother's hair, and her skin didn't glow. That was expected of any one quarter vampire. And when she was born, no one noticed anything peculiar about her. She didn't seem to have any specific powers like her mother's, that showed very early. Her parents reasoned that either she would develop one later or she would never have one.

At age 6 months, Sarah said her first words, while she played with Elspeth's long head of hair: "Mommy, your hair's *pretty!*" And it was *true*. Truer than anything Elspeth could ever think of saying. The very idea that Sarah might be wrong or that what she said could be somewhat inaccurate or biased was tossed away immediately as insane. Nonsense.

Jacob was right there, and he grinned at his daughter. "It is," he agreed simply. He *knew* Elspeth's hair was pretty, but this was more than knowledge, it was a pressing certainty that felt like it would never leave him.

The next thing she said, after playing for five minutes with mommy's undoubtedly pretty hair, was "Chocolate is *good*," which prompted Jacob to go immediately to the kitchen and fetch some chocolate for her. Indeed it was one of the human foods she loved, but the fact

that chocolate was *good* was much bigger than that. Elspeth furrowed her brows when Sarah said that and went herself to the kitchen, still holding her daughter, to grab a piece. She'd never thought of chocolate as particularly tasty, just barely passable as human food went; but with such *certainty*, there was no way that could be right.

And she bit down, and it *still* didn't have a good taste. Then, Elspeth herself must be wrong, because otherwise chocolate would be *good*. And that prompted immediate itching from her magic. Elspeth waited until she didn't have her arms busy anymore to touch her face with both hands, which brought an amused expression from Jacob. He hadn't seen her do that in over ten years. She saw Magic and Memory, and both looked very confused.

"What?" Elspeth asked. She didn't want to waste time with that, when she could be wasting time with Sarah, but she had learned not to ignore that itching.

"Something is not right..." Magic started.

"I *remember* the taste of chocolate and it's not good, not for us," Memory interjected.

"But it *should* be good. And it's not. And our body can't lie to us. So chocolate *isn't* good. So that's not true."

"Brilliant," Elspeth said, rolling her eyes.

"We *know* that chocolate isn't good through experience. And yet, it should be good." Magic continued, and went quiet for a beat. "How?"

"Huh?"

"How do we know chocolate is good?"

"Well, of course it's good, because..." She was stumped. Memory offered, helpfully, the image of Sarah saying that chocolate was good. Then it dawned on Elspeth, who stopped touching her cheeks and smiled at Jacob, who was still looking at her and waiting curiously.

"I think our daughter is special," she said triumphantly.

"Well, we know that," Jacob said.

"No, I mean..." She sent a thought to him in her special way: *Like this*.

"Oh..." Jacob said, and looked at the baby on his arms.

"I'm special!" she giggled, and both *felt* it was true, but they also *knew* it.

"Wait. What does she do, then?"

Elspeth thought. "Her power looks like mine... except more powerful. We should ask Addy."

"Chocolate is *gooooood*," Sarah giggled again, and Jake smiled and brought her more, while Elspeth had to magically dismiss the notion that chocolate was good in her head, with furrowed brows.

"Fascinating," Addy said, after touching Sarah. And it was obvious then that Sarah's power was indeed fascinating. Or... hang on...

"So?" Bella asked, expectantly. She had proven immune to whatever power Sarah had, and when they tried to speculate, she stopped to think for half a second and then decided to first see what Addy had to say about Elspeth.

Addy's eyes shone like she had just been given a new toy. "She has a power that's... in many ways... the exact opposite of Gwen's..."

And that was obviously true. "Who's Gwen?" Jacob asked.

"You may know her as the Cardiff Bint, that's how Maggie used to call her," Bella explained quietly. Then she asked Addy, "So, Sarah's power is to tell the truth?"

Elspeth looked curiously at her daughter, who looked confused but happy. "To tell *her* truth. While wearing her power I'm not even *able* to lie. If I tried to state that my name is Mary, it just wouldn't come out."

"You just said it," Bella pointed out, even though everyone else instantly believed Addy's words. Everyone else, here, consisted of Elspeth, Jacob, Sarah herself, Edward, Renata (who was paying more attention than usual), Alice and Jasper.

"I was being hypothetical. I had to say 'if' and 'tried' and 'wouldn't', because otherwise it would be just unpronounceable."

"Okay..." Bella said, thinking about it. "Is that it?"

"Not quite," Addy continued. "Her truths are stronger than even Elspeth's. People can still have different opinions from Elspeth's, while the instant Sarah says something, everyone else just can't help but believe it."

Sarah was looking at everyone curiously. Alice smiled in her direction. She'd learned how not to try to pry at any Hybrid's future anymore, to avoid the headaches, and now she could be around Elspeth and Jacob and Sarah with no problems. "What does it taste like?" Elspeth asked.

"Tutti-frutti bubblegum," she replied brightly. Then Addy, and Elspeth too, because she had many of Addy's memories and abilities inside her mind, started thinking about everything that power could mean.

"Jasper," Addy said as soon as Elspeth said, "*No!*"

"What?" Jasper looked confused.

"She's my *daughter!* You're *not* experimenting on her!" Edward didn't say anything. Why didn't Edward say anything?

"No, of course not. He can experiment on me."

"*What?*" Bella asked, curious now.

"You see, apparently now my truth is absolute. So I was wondering... how much I can extend that. Jasper, could you please try affecting my mood?" Sarah had decided she didn't want to participate in the conversation anymore and she was just giggling while Alice pulled faces at her. Of course, she was a vampire, so she could pay attention to the conversation while entertaining Sarah.

Jasper nodded quietly, and then furrowed his brows. He seemed to be concentrating, and Addy was still smiling cheerfully. "I can't," he finally said.

"Delicious..."

"What? Why?" Bella asked.

"My truth is absolute. What I am feeling is true, and nothing but myself can change it." Addy looked at Jasper for confirmation, and got a nod in response.

"It's like... I don't *want* to change it, or my power doesn't... like any mood but hers is incorrect." He actually looked like he was trying to concentrate on something, and Elspeth felt the notion that Sarah's power was really *delicious*...

And then Elspeth and Addy both turned to Edward at the same time. He raised both eyebrows, and seemed thoughtful. "Yes, apparently her thoughts feel true, too," he said to both vampire and half-vampire. The feeling of deliciousness disappeared as soon as Jasper seemed to get a grip on himself.

"Mine don't?" Elspeth asked.

"Yes, but... not the same way." He couldn't seem to find the words to explain it, so Elspeth gave it a shot.

"What I think feels true because *I* believe it, but what she thinks feels absolutely true, like there's no bigger truth than that, and anything else must be false."

"...Yes," Edward finally breathed after three seconds thinking about it.

"Chocolate is *gooooood*," Sarah repeated, because every time she did that a grownup seemed to go get some for her. Her parents no longer fell for that, even though Jake himself was starting to develop an unusual taste for the thing; but as soon as she heard it, Alice bolted away, probably to fetch some, while Bella asked, "So she does like human food..." All the

other vampires looked confused, because it didn't make sense in their heads that chocolate could not be good, even though they all knew it wasn't.

Elspeth had an idea. She sent all of them a little blast of 'truth' so that they would know what was real for *them* and what was real for *Sarah*. They instantly looked better, and Alice showed up then, with chocolate, and gave it to the baby. Elspeth sent another truth blast towards Alice, which left the little vampire looking a bit confused.

"Can you turn it off?" Elspeth asked Addy.

The vampire thought about that for a moment. "Not at the moment. And I don't think she will ever be able to stop telling the truth, but she *may* be able to one day tone it down so that other people don't feel compelled to believe her." Addy had to stress the word 'may' because it was a remote possibility, and Sarah's power wouldn't let her lie even by omission. She thought a little bit more about it, and then said, "I think that maybe we have a new Pyotr here."

"What? How?" Bella asked, but Edward seemed to agree with her - in fact, everyone seemed to agree with her. That it was possible if nothing else.

"Well... it will probably not be as strong as Pyotr, because he *had* to be obeyed, when it worked, but maybe if she says it would be a *very good idea* to do something, it might be just enough to convince everyone to do whatever she wants them to do."

Of course Sarah wasn't thinking anything like that, and was just chewing on her chocolate cheerfully while she looked at the faces around. "...That doesn't sound very good," Elspeth said.

"Well, of course it would be limited by her nature," Addy continued. It looked like the power just forced her to spill the beans when she thought of some noteworthy aspect of the power. "She'd have to truly believe that it would be a good idea for someone to do a specific something, otherwise she wouldn't be able to even say it." Then she looked annoyed and decided she was tired of having to tell the truth all the time, and touched Edward instead. "It would be lovely if..."

"That's enough, Addy. I think we understand it," Elspeth said, and then sent a new wave of truth to everyone, so that they'd return to having their own opinions. Then she turned to Bella and asked, "So, why do you think you are immune to her? She's not a threat," Elspeth said.

"Hmm... Well, technically, she *is*. She's a threat to my beliefs and to what I think, since she would force me to believe whatever she believes, and I think my shield interprets that as *bad*." She didn't have to tell anyone that she agreed with the shield there.

Elspeth and Addy nodded, confirming their suspicions. Then Sarah yawned hugely and said, "Sleepy..." Apparently she didn't need to be very articulate with her truths. They all said their goodbyes, and then Alice said something about a vampire stalking a human in England, and Razi showed up. But that wasn't Elspeth's job, and they just left.

"Are you *sure* you can't push it?" Addy said. Apparently by borrowing Sarah's power, she became immune to it herself, because her truth was as absolute as Sarah's.

Sarah huffed impatiently. She'd been trying for over a month to use her power without words, like Elspeth's blasts, with absolutely no success. "Yes, I'm sure!"

Addy sighed. Sarah's power didn't taste like much potential, but it could be stretched pretty far. They'd been practicing for a year, all with Edward's supervision of course, to find out all that could be done.

They discovered that, yes, it was possible to compel people with her power, but it was limited. The mate or the imprint bond couldn't be overridden by anything, because even though it *felt* like there was nothing truer than what Sarah said, there really was nothing truer than the mate or the imprint bond. It was also impossible to convince someone to do something that goes against one's principles or one's mate's/imprint's principles. So, even if Sarah swore on her life that it would be a great idea to eat someone, Edward wouldn't be swayed by that because of how Bella would feel about it.

The power was also instantaneous. It worked at the moment Sarah said anything, but it could be reversed later. Elspeth herself had an easier time doing this because of her power, but anyone willing to challenge the notions implied by the power would be able to do so, after a while. But it was impossible, without Bella's shield, to prevent the power from having its effect.

Unless...

Addy blinked twice and said quickly, before it became irrelevant, "Sarah, have you ever met Allirea?" How lucky, to have the little hybrid unfaded at that moment. Quite... convenient.

"Who?"

"Good," she said, and thought very hard, hoping that Edward would catch it. She closed her eyes tight to do that, and Sarah looked at her, curious. Then she relaxed and said, "Well, if you can't do blasts... I think we should try distorting the truth a little bit more."

Sarah sighed and hit her head against the table between them. "But that's hard!" It really was. Sarah's power didn't cooperate at all when she tried that. Unlike Elspeth's, Sarah's could detect out-of-context truths and omission lies, and it didn't *like* that one bit. But there was a trick to it. If Sarah could think of a more important truth that made those omissions and out-of-context truths necessary, it would (grudgingly) help. It would never ever outright lie, that was against its very design.

"I know it's hard, of course it's hard, that's why we have to practice! You've already learned how *not* to say everything that comes to your mind, now..." And then, she stopped talking, and there was a knock on the door behind her, which opened and let Bella, Edward, Elspeth and an unfaded Allirea in. Addy turned immediately and said as quick as possible, "Please don't fade." Allirea just looked up at Bella, who nodded. Elspeth looked at Addy. "Edward told my mom you wanted Allirea to help with Sarah's power?"

"Yes. I want to see if her truths work while she's faded."

Bella blinked, and asked, "Why would they?"

Addy shrugged. "Just a test."

Sarah, who was absolutely clueless, said, "Wait, wait, wait. What?" Elspeth answered sending a mental summary explaining Allirea's powers with useful examples. "*Oh*," Sarah said, and looked at Addy. "I don't think that'd work."

"Won't hurt to try, will it?" Sarah looked at Allirea and shrugged, standing up from the chair she was sitting on and walking towards the half-vampire. She thought to ask what would happen when Allirea faded her but realized she already knew the answer. Everyone was looking at her, and then suddenly Edward and Elspeth looked confused about why they were there.

"I can see you!" Sarah said, surprised. The only method she could think of (with Elspeth's summary) to see Allirea while being faded by her was by being shielded by Bella. Bella raised both eyebrows, and Allirea immediately shrieked, letting go of Sarah. "Now there's *two*!"

Addy was grinning, while Edward, Elspeth and Bella looked puzzled (though for different reasons). "Well, not quite what I had expected, but still quite interesting."

"What is?" Elspeth asked, and Addy kept grinning.

Bella shot Allirea a stern look, but Sarah didn't know what it was all about. "We were just seeing the results of our experiment with Allirea," she said. And then Elspeth and Edward looked at the little half-vampire, and she shrieked even more. Addy's grin couldn't be bigger if she tried. "Bella, are you by any chance shielding us?"

"No."

"Allirea, are you by any chance unfaded?"

She cringed at the mention of her name and shook her head, and Addy laughed. "Why, it looks like we just found us a way to cancel Allirea's power."

Elspeth looked at Addy with wide eyes, and Bella looked very impressed. "No!" Allirea cried. "That wasn't part of the deal! Make them stop!"

"Wait, what happened?" Sarah asked, still very confused, while Bella answered, "We will, but could you please stay unfaded so that... this... newfound... ability can't be used against you?"

"...Fine," she said, and everyone looked at Addy, except for Elspeth, who was looking at her daughter.

She cleared her throat just for effect, and said, "Sarah's power deals with her own truth. And nothing but herself can change that truth, as we've first seen a few years ago with Jasper and tested so many times. So, when she first saw Allirea, it was *true* that she was there. And even if Allirea didn't seem important anymore to anyone, it was still true that she was there, and the importance of that truth couldn't be ignored. And when Sarah talked about Allirea's presence, it was clear that she was here, because it's *true*."

"Also, apparently she can't use her power while faded on anyone but Allirea because no one's paying attention to what she's saying, and just the memory of her doing it doesn't seem to quite cut it."

Allirea scowled, and tried fading again, to no success. Everyone knew without a doubt that she was truly there. Then she unfaded again and said, "Well, how do you *fix* it?"

"That will probably be me," Elspeth said, sending a blast of truth at everyone, like she usually did when Sarah stated too many things. She considered keeping Sarah's truth for herself so she would always be able to see Allirea, but her Magic itched that it wasn't true in the right way, it was a forced, foreign truth, and so she sighed mentally and erased Sarah's influence from her own head. "Done."

"I have one last test, before you fade again," Addy said, and she touched Elspeth once, because she was closer, and said, "There. Fade again." Allirea did, and was satisfied to find that only Sarah and Bella seemed to notice her anymore, and then she unfaded, while Addy nodded. "Apparently my truth doesn't become sacred anymore while I don't have Sarah's power, so I can't see you - or notice you."

"Are we about done?" Allirea asked, strained because of all the *attention* she was getting all of a sudden.

"Yes," Addy answered. "I think we've had enough for today. Tomorrow, same time, Sarah?"

Sarah nodded, and Allirea faded, which made everyone forget her existence. "Well, what a disappointing day. I hope tomorrow we meet more success," she said, and trotted off.

The others left at a leisurely pace. Forks had ended up being their main base, now that she had enough staff to keep every capital open all year long. While they walked, Bella thought of something. "Allirea... would you want your children and grandchildren to know you existed all the time?"

That question seemed to leave the little half-vampire stumped. Yes, it was true that she didn't like being noticed. But she also loved her children, and wanted them to remember they had a mother. "...Yes," she said, after half a minute thinking. Edward and Elspeth were ignoring Bella, assuming she was talking about unimportant topics with Sarah. Bella looked at her grandchild.

"Could you lend Addy your power so that she could tell Allirea's family about her?"

Sarah nodded absentmindedly. Her power did say a lot about her, she was all about the truth. So she was *curious*, and even though she didn't like much exercising with Addy, she wanted to know more about her own power, and that day felt like she'd just found a new application of the word truth, not any new ways to use her power.

And so, Addy borrowed Elspeth's power, savoring the bubblegum, and brought Allirea to notice to her family.

One year later, Sarah floofed. No one had given that possibility much thought. Well, in fact, they'd given it a lot of thought, but while she was growing up she kept everyone else busy with her fascinating power.

When she first phased, she looked different. Her fur was silver, and glowed in the sun. Her teeth were sharper than a regular wolf's, and her enhanced senses in human form carried over to her wolf form.

Furthermore, no one had given much thought to what would happen once Jake's pack shared a mind with a quarter vampire whose thoughts forced everyone to agree with them. And she also had so much *room*. Much more than a regular human's mind, even if less than a half-vampire. So, when she first turned, everyone shut up, and the first to talk was a wolf whose name Sarah never memorized, asking, "Whoa, did we just get fifty new wolves activating at the same time?"

"No, I'm Sarah!" the wolf thought. Of course, they didn't use words to talk in wolf form, but that was the general idea. "I'm..."

"My daughter," Jake completed as soon as he phased. Everyone snapped out of the stupor and welcomed her enthusiastically, and the surge of anger in the little quarter vampire was gone. Her power knew it wasn't hers, not really, that rage, so it tried to block it, but she argued, using the higher truth that she needed that fake rage at least once to phase, which got a temporary permission for the fake rage to build up.

But it was gone now, of course. Her power made her even better than Bella herself at sending her emotions away, because all she had to do was realize if they were true to her, and if they were not, they were crushed. The downside was that if they *were* true, and justified, her power enhanced them more than Elspeth's. If the half-vampire wore her heart on her sleeve, her daughter wore it as her regular outfit.

And suddenly everyone felt that feeling when someone who just imprinted phased, and Seth Clearwater thought: "*Sarah*."

Sparks
by
Wren

Ache

Melody had been old. Her bones had creaked, her joints had barely worked, and cold weather had made it nearly impossible to get around. Then her daughter - just as young as she had last seen the little thing, barely 22 - showed her the papers, and explained everything. Melody was too old to opt for having a vampire child, but her Sarah had told her that having family members who were vampires helped.

There was a terrible burning, now, at the back of her throat. But every part of her body obeyed her perfectly, and that was more than enough.

Bastion

Steve curls in his mate's arms, exhausted enough that he almost believes he could sleep. "Charles?"

"I'm here."

"Do you have anywhere you need to be today?"

There's a brief pause that Steve recognizes as Charles sorting through what he can put off. "No."

Steve's eyes close. "Thank you."

Cobalt

Jenny hesitated at the edge of the room, swallowing some venom that had come with the stress. The club was better-lit than she had expected, and so she had her eyes glued to the ground. Meeting her mate's eyes across a crowded room had seemed so *romantic* when it had just been in theory, but in practice...

How would Mom feel? Meeting someone in a club, then spending literally the rest of eternity with whomever. And I don't know anything about who it'll be, even if it will be male or female (she vaguely wishes she weren't bisexual here, though there isn't much weight behind the sentiment). And do I really want to be with someone I met in a club?

Jenny decided to leave and glanced around for the exit before going completely still at the vision in front of her.

"Hi," says the woman with the bluest eyes she'd ever seen. "I'm Linda."

Desperation

"I don't want to die yet." There was so much in that tone. Part of it was what Amanda had expected of any person with a terminal disease, the simple, obvious desperation, a literally hopeless desire. Another part was surprise, as if Genevieve had thought she had shed the desire to live when she shed any hope of living.

Amanda put a hand over Genevieve's. "I can help."

Everest

Gwen had finished her degree. She and her mate had all the time the world could offer to do anything and everything, as long as neither did anything stupid enough to attract the Golden Coven. She had never understood people who complained at the rules; they were much laxer than anything she'd dealt with as a human. This was her first time out without some sort of chaperone.

So, naturally, she was climbing Mt. Everest barefoot.

Whenever anyone asked why, she just shrugged. "Why not?"

Fluster

James noticed the woman looking at him, and managed half a smile before she was by his side.

"Hello."

"Oh. Uh," he stammered. She just smiled at him. She was surprisingly forward, which he found himself liking, and beautiful enough to bring to mind legends of sirens and mermaids. James did not yet know why his mind kept skipping to creatures that lure young sailors to their death.

"My name is Victoria."

Blood & Gold IV: Fall of Volterra

Ingrid jumped over the back of the couch to see how Carl's game was going. "Oh, hey, you got the good ending. Nice!"

"Eh, whatever," Carl said with an eye roll. "The good ending's never canonical."

"It was in the first one."

"Yeah, until you found out the characters you were playing were the *villains* in the later games. And they dropped hints at that throughout, too."

Ingrid paused, still not sure if there existed a right way to start this conversation. "So... if you could be a vampire, like in the games... would you be?"

Hearth

Once, on a snowy winter night in a land Fay had not visited in decades, her mother had built her a fire to keep the both of them warm. Fay had pretended to sleep so her mother would, but had cracked her eyes open soon after to watch the merry crackle of the fire.

Addy seemed focused on using the fire Fay could conjure to destroy or make large changes: to melt metal, to cage vampires with a ring they could not penetrate, to sever things from a distance. More for show than anything else, since technology could do most of that and other witches could do the rest, but apparently, "Fay tastes spicy, like good curry," and Addy seemed to find the developing flavor as interesting as Fay's developing power. Something about the flavors not having blended yet.

Fay called a little fire to her hand and watched it crackle, meditating on it. Then, because Addy wasn't wrong about everything, she created a spark across the room to light a candle.

Idealist

They wandered through another hallway in another hospital. Between dying patients, he said, with reverence and humor, "You never give up, do you?"

"Of course not." Plain as day, no arguments possible. "There are still people to save."

Joke

"You can't be serious."

"Come on! It'd be fun."

Maria rolled her eyes at Peter. "You realize we would have to practice the routine, right? And you'd have to be around me for that?" Maria had just barely learned to tolerate Peter's sickly-sweet stench, and she knew he had more trouble. "And if I sweat, it's going to get stronger."

Peter shrugged and smiled. "Still. How many skating pairs in the games do you think are going to have a wolf and a vampire?"

His eyes had lit up in that determined little way that reminded Maria of her son talking about activating, and she knew it would be more trouble than it was worth to argue. She sighed. "Do you have a song picked out yet?"

Kissed

Kelsey knew it was horribly clichéd to have her mind changed about becoming a vampire simply because some boy who looked her age and was over twice that had mated on her, but he was sweet and she liked him and didn't want him hurt and he was *kissing* her -

Lazily

Kelsey had sprinted to where she could get blood, first thing, and found that a vampire sprinting was rather impressive. Not just in terms of speed, but in how clear absolutely every detail remained; even while sprinting she could have counted each individual thread on every piece of clothing she passed.

And even now, weeks later, if she cared to she could still count them all, even distracted by the lazy circles her mate drew with his fingers on her back. Though, granted, the threads were far from a high priority.

Muse

Michael spent exactly 52 hours, 8 minutes and nine seconds doing nothing but paint Fay holding a consistent flame in her hand before it occurred to either of them that they had mated.

Nightflower

"Here, I want to show you something," Lionel said, holding Raven's hand.

"What is it?" Raven asked a little blearily, the hybrid having woken up a few minutes before she normally would.

"You remember last summer, when you woke up early enough to see all the flowers?"

"Yeah," Raven said, stretching. "Too bad they all close at night."

Lionel smiled at her. "I planted a garden. Come on, this is fun to watch."

She stepped in to a circle of bushes and promptly stopped. There must have been hundred of flowers, and every one was opening to greet the moon.

Obsession

Addy stood in the woods and watched the little witch work. Jane? She thought she'd heard the leader call her that.

Addy knew of the Volturi, and knew exactly how constricting getting tied up with them would likely be. Jane would be one flavor, and the risk might deprive Addy of so many more.

The copycat watched the torturer. Addy's hand twitched.

The other flavors were theories, while Jane was here, now, tempting, going to be gnawing at the back of her mind until she just -

Addy touched Jane's skin. It was briefly satisfying to know the flavor, and then she had a fraction of a second to realize why Jane was turning, which meant they hit each other rather than just Jane hitting Addy.

Jane screamed, Aro was interested, and the rest was Addy's game of speed chess.

Pristine

"Amanda, you look..." *pristine*, Lila wanted to say. Not just as if she hadn't aged a day, but as if she had never really aged at all. Grown, yes. Amanda was clearly and adult. But when they were in school together, Amanda had had freckles, scars. She had been beautiful with them, more beautiful, Lila thought. Now all the little imperfections living life had given her were just...gone. "Stunning," Lila settled on, if only because it was the literal truth.

Quixotic

"It doesn't make sense to be so devoted to anyone," his hard-eyed Jillian states.

"And yet I am." Lyle is just as unmoved, though the wolf and she had started at different places.

"Then you want me to be with you forever, due to some random bit of magic that's floating around?" She jabs his chest with her index finger, and neither of them comment on the fact that the action hurts her finger more than anything else.

"I would like to be with you forever. Should you desire otherwise, tell me so and I will go. Regardless of what you decide, I felt you deserved to know."

Jillian's mouth twists, and Lyle can't tell if she's suppressing a smile or a scowl. "The only way for us to be together forever is if I turn into a vampire. What if I mate on someone?"

"That's never happened before, so I find it unlikely. I also do not need to be with you romantically at all. Should you desire no partner, or one or more partners who are not me, I would not take offense. I want to be with you, and I want you to live." Lyle had compared how awful vampires smelled to how he thought he would feel if Jillian died, and decided the discomfort was more than worth it.

Jillian stares at him for a moment, then throws up her hands. "Go away. I need to think about this on my own."

Lyle nods. "Please call me when you decide."

"What, should I whistle?"

He smiles. "I believe most would use a phone. But if I hear you whistle, I will come running."

Recall

It wasn't quite the same as it should have been, Alice knew. Elspeth had happened upon a few snatches of memory around her life, a precious few second-hand, and all the rest third- or fourth-hand. It wasn't the same as knowing, as remembering.

But when she spoke to what remained of her family, sometimes it was enough to have any link.

Skullduggery

"But... you said we were mates." Kelly's brow furrowed a bit, trying to maintain her confusion because the alternative was more than she wanted to deal with, more than she could deal with. "Shouldn't I... feel something?"

Trent, if that was even his real name, shrugged. "I lied. Wanted to see if it could get past Edward, if *you* believed it."

Transient

Joham watched the human women closely enough to get in their beds, but never bothered much beyond that. If someone had asked, he might have compared it to picking a lock. One might be skilled at picking locks, and, in fact, might even enjoy the activity. But in the end, as soon as the door was unlocked, one moved through. He wanted a child. If he broke a few lockpicks that would hardly last a few decades anyway, it was annoying, nothing more.

Underground

The subway had about as many people as it always did, though Dahlia noticed that there were steadily increasing numbers of wolves, hybrids, and vampires on her daily commute. She wasn't any herself yet, but she'd always been able to spot them. When she was about twelve, she'd decided turning could wait either until she was 25 or until someone decided she was the center of the universe.

Given that she traveled the subway every day, the fact that she ended up turning at 23 was not that much of a surprise.

Vigil

Maggie sat by Gianna and tried to give what comfort she could. Gianna was in pain. Maggie knew how much pain because it was her first clear memory, screaming beyond anything coherent. But she had been alone.

Maggie remembered overhearing Emmett speak of his turning, how Rosalie and Carlisle had made it easier, because he'd known he had someone. She'd hoped to help, and tried singing, because Alice said Gianna would like it -

"Make it stop," Maggie was stuck in her memories of her own turning, wishing she could take the pain, because anything was better than watching her mate go through *this*. "I never asked you for anything - anything - this is the one thing I want - if you love me -"

Maggie hurt. She spilled truth, barely even paying attention to the words, just trying to help any way she could. "It's almost over," Maggie said desperately, then tried singing again.

Allirea's Wolf

Allirea was unfaded for the moment, and Adam couldn't decide which was weirder: the normally outgoing Mark sitting alone at his table - when she was faded - or a wolf half-successfully ignoring his imprint like this. Adam hadn't even known one *could* exude complete devotion without appearing to pay attention, but he supposed Mark had gotten a few years' practice.

Then Allirea saw Adam looking and she wasn't important.

Xenia

Steve had been a peculiar case. He, personally, wasn't that old of a vampire, but he still occasionally showed habits of a much earlier age, simply because the one who had turned him had been so old.

That was the entire reason he had been turned, actually. A guest in Alex's home had been injured too badly for mundane means. So Alex... healed him.

Yearn

Edward, perhaps, understood how Carlisle felt when he left Esme. Mindreader, and all that. Esme had wondered, occasionally, if that had helped. Knowing that someone knew how you felt, and why you felt it, even if they couldn't fully empathize.

She didn't know if she felt a little more for Edward and Jasper was because they had needed more help staying off humans - needed her as a mother in a way neither Alice nor Bella did - or because either of them would *understand*.

Zenith

Melody knew that the universe would keep surprising her, that she would find more fantastic things that she would hardly be able to believe. She recognized that she had endless years in which to see whatever she wanted to, and that everything would keep turning, shifting, changing, like a diamond showing a new facet, like a child growing, like nothing any metaphor could do justice.

But still, she believed that being the first to walk barefoot on the moon was one of the most amazing things she'd ever feel.

Want to submit a fanfic of your own? E-mail it to Alicorn (alicorn@elcenia.com) in HTML format - beware junk characters that programs like Word will sneak in; it's best to write in a simple text editor rather than pasting it in later. If you need to edit your fic, send her the revised version.