

Highland Rose

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Highland Rose by **bkhchica**

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Summary: Rosalie's traumatic haunts her... Emmett wants to help her heal... Can they solve a mystery and survive when disaster strikes? Set in the Highlands around the 1300s. Rated for violence and an eventual lemon or two :

1. Preface

A/N: This begins the Emmett and Rosalie's story in my Highland series. It's not really necessary to read the previous stories to follow this one. But you should know that I envision this story taking place during the early 1300s.

Disclaimer: Stephenie Meyer owns all things Twilight, I just write for my own entertainment.

I must say huge Thanks to my betas, Prettyflour and Ninmesarra. I appreciate your help with this story!

Now, on to the story! Happy Reading!

~*HR*~

Preface

The sound of crying woke the blonde haired beauty and she immediately rose to check on the bairn. She quick stepped to the braided rug by the cradle to minimize her exposure to the cold stone floor. Bending over the cradle, she pulled the babe out and swiftly went to the rocking chair by the fireplace. Within a moment she had the wee baby suckling gently at her breast.

She hummed a soft lullaby to still the infant's restlessness. The baby had big, beautiful brown eyes and softly curling mahogany hair like her mother. A soft sigh of contentment escaped Esme Alice's lungs. The nurse maid smiled at the child of her heart, not her body. A few more minutes passed and the pretty lass was sleeping soundly again.

Rosalie gently laid the sleeping child back in the cradle and set it to rocking gently. As she quickly returned to her own bed in the corner, her mind was busy reminding her of memories she'd rather stayed hidden. The pain they brought her was too much and she angrily swiped the tears from her eyes. This night was going to be filled with nightmares again. She could never forget the feeling of loss and the heart-wrenching emptiness that consumed her.

Rosalie had decided months ago that she would never forgive herself. The loss she felt was less than she deserved. The hair shirt she donned daily to castigate herself for her own perceived crimes would never be enough punishment. She could only pray that God, if there really was one, would forgive her. She had flayed her flesh open many times with the flogging whip. Surely that punishment wasn't enough though. She thought herself condemned to hell. Even then, the fiery pits the priests spoke of may not be enough punishment for the crimes of her past.

The horrific screams in her nightmares kept her from sleep once again.

~*HR*~

A/N: So, this is just a short beginning and a glimpse inside Rosalie. She's going to be OOC from the SM series... maybe we will like her better by the end. Hmmm.... A self-recriminating Rosalie... What do you think?

I'd love to hear your thoughts on this so far!

I'll be posting updates weekly unless RL interferes!

2. Chapter 1

Just a quick history for you... We begin Chapter one a year and half after the preface ends. If you read Twilight in the Highlands, you know that Rosalie is the nursemaid for Edward and Bella's daughter, Esme Alice. Emmett is Edward's brother; Alice is Bella's sister who married the Englishman, Jasper, in An English Twilight. Carlisle and Esme are Emmett and Edward's aunt and uncle, and raised them after their parents died in an epidemic. Now that you've got the history I'm working with, on to the reading!

~*HR*~

Rosalie straightened to a stand, stretching the muscles in her back. She'd been bent over picking herbs and mosses for the healing lady for hours. Victoria had given her a very specific list of things to gather for her potions and poultices. Rosalie didn't trust the fiery-haired wench. There was something about her that set her teeth on edge, and made her stomach churn.

How dare I be so untrusting? If anyone shouldnae trust someone tis they that shouldnae trust me! This whole clan ought to throw me out o' the keep and send me on my way. Rosalie's thoughts of herself were always less than flattering.

She knew she was pretty, but she felt that was a curse put upon her from the time of her birth. Rumors had abounded marking her the most beautiful in all of Scotland. Whenever she'd get wind of those rumors, she would roll her eyes and shake her head. She'd even had a visit from the King- he too had wanted to see if the rumors were true. All it took was one look in her frosty eyes to make most men cower and flee. The King was not as easily put off, but he suspected she would be less than pleased to be the Queen of Scotland. She was the only lass that suffered that affliction.

Rosalie's long hair hung past her waist and the color was of spun gold. Her eyes were the deepest blue with swirls of gray throughout the midnight depths. She had high cheekbones and perfectly bowed lips. Her skin was silky smooth and the ivory color had not a blemish upon it. She'd often heard men remark on her figure; she had a high bust, slender waist, and perfectly curved hips. And her legs were never-ending, or so she'd been told.

She cursed the day she'd been born mightily. She'd only ever caused the people she loved pain and heartache. It was getting close to time to move on from the MacCullens' before she became the cause of their demise.

"Hello, there, Rosalie! I see ye're still out here gathering the herbs for the crazy Victoria," a booming voice interrupted her self-chastising.

"Aye, I am. I fear I'll ne'er finish with it, Emmett! That wench has a list a mile long. And I ne'er heard o' some o' them. I thought I'd leave those be and she can find 'em herself," Rosalie said, as she stretched again.

Emmett couldn't help but let his eyes travel the lengths of her body. He'd never seen such glorious perfection. The clearing of her throat brought his thoughts back to the task at hand, "I came out to escort ye back into the keep. Edward and Bella have a proposition for ye." He could tell by the look on her face that she suspected the worst. Before she could voice her fears he rushed to reassure her, "I ken ye think they mean to send ye on," he said quickly when she gasped, "But they dinnae. I dinnae ken what it is, but I ken it isnae *that*."

"Weel, I probably should be moving on soon though, ye ken. I ne'er have stayed long at any one place. I like to wander free, ye ken," she lied to him. She dreamed of nothing more than calling Cullshire her home, but she didn't dare.

Emmett looked aghast at her intention of leaving. "But Rosalie, surely ye ken we want ye to stay, lass. Everyone here loves ye dearly. Weel, exceptin' o' course the two lads ye caught trying to see ye bathe," he chuckled. "But I think ye ken they'll nay be doing that again!"

"I ken ye all want me to stay, but I cannae, Emmett. Tis time for me to move on," she finished as she bent to gather her basket full of offerings for Victoria.

Emmett took her basket in one hand and offered his arm to her. They strolled in silence, each lost in the thoughts of her impending departure. He couldn't fathom Cullshire without her even though he'd survived many years before she'd come to stay, and she couldn't imagine leaving the only family she'd known for far too long.

They found the healer in the herb shack. She was working on creating some foul smelling poultice, "to draw out poisons in putrid wounds," she'd explained. There was also a curious smelling potion in a glass. Rosalie picked it up and smelled it. She was shocked when Victoria shouted at her for touching it, "If ye spill that I'll ne'er be able to make one just like it again. I cannae recall what all is in it, but tis perfect for ridding hair of lice."

Rosalie and Emmett shuddered at the thought of having bugs crawling through their hair. They were both very clean people.

Rosalie caught Victoria admiring the hulking form of her escort. Emmett was tall. He towered above almost all he met (all she'd seen except for Jacob the Black). His body was rippling with muscles upon muscles. His tanned skin made the green of his eyes pop, Rosalie likened them to emeralds. His dimpled cheeks framed a boyishly charming grin. His head was topped with a shock of dark curls. He was definitely easy to spot in a crowd.

As Rosalie returned her focus to Victoria, she noticed the woman glaring at her. To her knowledge she'd done nothing to cause Victoria to dislike her. It was something worth looking into.

Her thoughts again were interrupted by Emmett's booming voice asking her if she were ready to continue on to the keep. At her nod, they were off again. She had to remind Emmett many times that her legs were much shorter than his otherwise she was running through bailey with him dragging her at his side. She was sure it was quite comical to see.

As the couple entered the keep, the smell of lamb stew for the evening meal filled their noses. Rosalie's stomach growled in appreciation. Emmett motioned to a serving lad to bring her some bread. "Are ye hungry, Rose?"

"Aye, I forgot to break my fast this morning, and just realized I missed the nooning meal as weel," she answered and then thanked the lad for his attentiveness.

"Weel, brother, what did ye want with our Rosalie?" Emmett asked, not caring if it was his business or not.

Bella glanced at Rosalie and then told Emmett, "I think that she and I will discuss that without ye, men. Trust me that it isnae bad a'tall."

Rosalie stood when she'd finished chewing her bread. "Lead on, my lady, I'd be happy to talk with ye now, if that's acceptable."

"Aye, weel just go to the ladies' solar and be comfortable there." Bella turned on her heel and marched to the solar with Rosalie following quickly behind, leaving the Edward and Emmett to stare after them.

Once they were seated in the cushioned chairs, Bella began, "Ye ken that Esme Alice has been weaned, for ye took care o' that for us. And I ken that ye are thinking on leaving us. We dinnae want ye to leave. We want ye to stay on and help us with the children until the time ye decide to wed, or forever, if ye like."

"Bella, I thank ye..." her words trailed off as she thought over what Bella had said, "Wait... Children? But ye only have Esme Alice..." Rosalie's eyes lit up and she gushed her congratulations to Bella.

Bella laughed joyously, "Thank ye, Rose. Now will ye stay and help me? If we continue at this rate, the nursery will be filled to overflowing in the next five years."

Rosalie's happiness dimmed a bit. She shouldn't stay. She'd already been longer than anywhere else. Her heart ached at having to leave. "I would love to, Bella, but I cannae," she whispered out.

"But why cannae ye? Esme Alice adores ye as does our entire family. And I believe ye'd be breaking Emmett's heart if ye left now. Please, take a few days, even a sennight or fortnight to decide. We dinnae want ye to leave," Bella laid her request out before Rosalie. She could see that Rosalie was fighting an inner battle as to whether she should stay or go. "Whatever ye decide to do, ye ken that we will still love ye, and if ye go, please ken that ye can always come back," she told her softly. Then, Bella stood and walked out of the solar, leaving Rosalie alone with her thoughts.

Rosalie battled back and forth within herself; *I should go afore someone else ends up hurt because of me. But I love them, they're my family. I cannae leave them; they need me. Which is why I must go, I shouldnae stay any longer.* She waffled back and forth, unable to decide that day. She was giving herself a headache with the inner-war raging in her mind. She decided a short rest was in order.

~*HR*~

Her nap had been a farce. All she could do was lay there and replay the conversation she'd had with Bella over and over. When she finally did manage to close her eyes, the terror of her dreams would have her bolting upright and gasping for breath as she tried to calm her racing heart.

She gave up on trying to rest. Rising Rosalie picked up a tapestry she'd been working on. The bold greens and subtle browns depicted the village she'd spent the first years of her childhood in. A lonely tear escaped as she thought of her loving mother. Always working endlessly to make sure their home was cleaned, laundry done, and meals ready for the hungry brood of six children. She'd been the only daughter. Her mother had doted on her and depended on her, even at only five years old. Laying the picture down lovingly she began the regime she'd slipped into since coming to Cullshire to ready herself for the evening meal.

Finally dressed for dinner, Rosalie descended the stairs. She'd dressed in the gold dress with the navy braided belt to cinch it to her waist. Bella had had it made for her, and no amount of arguing from Rosalie would sway her, and she'd tried every argument at her disposal.

Emmett met her at the bottom of the stairs and bowing slightly, kissed her hand. She tried to ignore the tingle that shot through her arm at the feel of his warm lips. She smiled up at him and took his offered arm. He led her to the high table and ignored her protests that she should eat in the kitchens.

"No lady dressed as fine as ye are should eat in the kitchens," he told her with a waggle of his brows.

She gazed at him, fighting down the chuckle. *I don't deserve to be happy.* She acquiesced finally and sat down in the chair beside his. Rosalie glanced at Bella who had an eyebrow raised and a knowing smile playing upon her lips.

Rosalie tried not to listen to the conversation going on around her. She was trying to distance herself from this family, to see how much it would hurt when she left. She ate in silence, only answering when she was directly spoken to.

Emmett noticed her sullenness, and leaning over whispered in her ear, "Why so glum, Rosie Posie?"

She glared up at him, hating the nickname he'd coined for her. "I am nay glum. I am tired and suffer from a headache. I think I shall retire soon," she told him.

He laughed at her look, then dawned an expression of concern, "Did ye overdo it in the sun this morning, lass? I'll help ye to ye're room so that ye can sleep. I'm sure Bella will care for Esme Alice this night, if ye're ill."

"Nay, Emmett, I am nay ill. Just have a headache. I'll be fine. Ye stay and finish eating. Goodness knows ye have a massive stomach to fill."

His laughter thundered throughout the hall and everyone looked at him curiously. She stood and fled to her room, while he continued to laugh. She could hear the gaiety from the supper party in her room. The minstrel was playing and singing and the mead and wine flowed freely. The raucous group was surely having a good time.

She dressed in her night rail and slipped in between the cool blankets a top her bed. She was asleep in minutes. It didn't take long for the nightmares to plague her again:

The fire was burning hotter and she couldn't get the door opened. She tried to rouse her parents, but they were covered in blood. The smell of burning flesh had her retching in the floor. She ran to her siblings to try to get them to flee with her. But it was to no avail. The fire was growing closer and so the small blonde-haired girl escaped through the only window. She ran to the shrubs at the edge of the clearing where her family home was. She tried to suppress her coughing and tears. It would help nothing at this point.

She stared at the flames licking higher and higher into the sky. Peering between the leaves that surrounded her, she glanced toward the rest of the village. The whole of it was going up in flames as the riders with the red and blue plaids slayed the entire town. She couldn't close her eyes to the horror.

She finally fled deeper into the forest, to try to get to the secret door that led to the laird's keep. She stopped when she was almost there and hunkered down behind the huge fallen tree. Peeking over top of it, her heart almost exploded. Even the laird's keep was on fire. The reivers had killed her whole family; including her hero, her uncle and laird.

Silent tears streaked through the soot on the child's cheeks as she sobbed out her pain. One big hiccupped sob escaped just as one of the enemy's guardsmen walked past. She opened her eyes to see a big, meaty hand descending towards her.

The rapid knock at the chamber door had her sitting upright, a scream stopped in her throat. She slid her feet into her slippers, pulled on her robe, and quickly tugged open the heavy door. The sight of the distraught man before her had her wishing she'd already moved on. "What has happened, Edward?"

"It's Bella."

~*HR*~

A/N: So sorry that I am late posting! It's been quite a doozy of RL lately... :) But its up and hopefully now I will be back to weekly postings, if not sooner. :) Please review! I love to hear your thoughts!

3. Chapter 2

A/N: I do not own anything of Twilight; it belongs solely to Stephenie Meyer and her affiliates. I just like writing! : -)

~*HR*~

“What’s the matter with Bella,” Rosalie asked, as she tried to calm herself from the nightmare and worry about the lady of the keep.

“She could nae stop retching after dinner, and then she fainted dead away and struck her head on the stone floor before I could catch her. She will nae wake up. I need ye to stay with her whilst I run for the healer,” the laird begged her.

“Aye, o’ course,” her quick reply was barely out of her mouth before the Edward was rushing down the stairs and out of the keep.

Rosalie hastened across the hall and a few doors down to the laird’s chamber and entered quickly to assess the situation. Bella’s ashen figure lay haphazardly on the bed, as though Edward had scooped her up and tossed her there to rest. She stepped up to the bed and smoothed Bella’s shift down to cover her body, and straightened her out into a more comfortable position. She walked over to the ewer and bowl and wet a cloth to wipe the lady’s brow with. Laying it across Bella’s forehead, Rosalie felt the back of her head, searching for lumps.

Her hand met with some stickiness and she quickly rolled her up on her side. The sight of the blood-matted hair made Rosalie’s stomach jump. She swallowed back the bile and forced herself to cleanse the head wound. She’d just begun to search for a clean cloth to use for a bandage when the haughty healer huffed her way into the room.

Victoria looked put out at having to be summoned to the keep in the middle of the night. Her withering gaze found Rosalie, “What did ye do to her? Ye are nae trained and skilled with herbs as I am. Ye must needs grab the babe and get out so’s I can work. I will nae be needing ye to help a’tall.”

Rosalie blinked at the venom in her voice and shook her head. Mumbling under her breath over the abrupt dismissal, she gathered Esme Alice and stepped to the door. “My laird, if ye need me, ye ken where to find me,” she said over her shoulder. At his nodded acknowledgement, she left the room.

Esme Alice slept the night through, and Rosalie appreciated the respite she received. She woke early and went about her morning ablutions, intending to call for Jessica, one of the maids, so that she could check on Bella. She still didn’t trust the healing woman. Stepping into the hall, she ran into what seemed to be a wall.

“Hmmpf...” she groaned. “Emmett, why are ye standing outside my chamber door?”

“I was coming to escort ye down to break ye’re fast with me. I even brought Jessica. I knew ye’d be coming to find her soon,” the big man replied with a gentle smile.

“Thank ye, Emmett. Jessica, Esme Alice is still sleeping. She’ll be wanting her morning gruel soon,” Rosalie told the mousy maid.

“Aye, mistress,” was the only reply uttered, before the girl was quickly shutting the chamber door.

“Emmett, I’d like to see how Bella fares afore we go to the hall,” her pleading glance wasn’t needed; he’d already planned on going with her and told her so. “Oh, weel, then, shall we?”

They walked over to the chamber where a very sick Bella was being nursed. Knocking swiftly, they entered when Edward bid them to. Bella was still lying curled on her side with half of her head covered with a white wrap. Her face was ghostly white, not even the hint of blush apparent on her normally rosy cheeks. Her long lashes rested on the apples of her cheeks.

A glance at Edward showed how worried he was. While his bronze hair was normally sticking every which way, his appearance was extremely haggard. He still wore yesterday’s clothing and it was rumpled as though he’d slept in it. His eyes were blood shot and bleary and encompassed by black circles, showing he’d not slept at all. He had a day’s worth of stubble dusting his cheeks and chin. The way he was continuously running his hands through his hair didn’t help.

Rosalie walked to the side of the bed and rested a hand on Bella’s brow. The heat that seeped into her hand made her gasp. “Edward, how long has it been since the healing wench was here? Has she checked on her,” motioning to Bella, “a’tall? Or has she been neglecting her duties?” Emmett was admiring the she-bear in Rosalie, while Edward was lost in thought. “My laird, how long has it been since Victoria was here?”

“She left after putting a stinking poultice on Bella’s head and wrapping it up,” he moaned as if he were the one in pain. “This is all my fault. I should nae have been across the room. I ken she’s expecting, and I should be here, by her, all the time. What have I done?” He seemed to forget they were in the room, as he slid from his chair to kneel by Bella’s side, “Bella, please, please dinnae leave me, love. Please.”

Rosalie looked pointedly at Emmett, and beckoned him to the doorway to have a word, “Emmett, ye must get Edward to go with ye to break his fast. I’ll stay here with my lady and cleanse her wound. I dinnae like the smell of that poultice the witch put on her. I’ll re-wrap it with a fresh linen and we’ll see if that helps. When ye come back with Edward, bring some broth up with ye so’s I can try to get her to eat.” She didn’t wait for a reply, but instead strode to Edward and gripped his free hand. “Edward, ye must go with Emmett and break ye’re fast. I’ll stay here with Bella, until ye get back.” He started to argue but she shushed him with a raised hand, “Dinnae argue my laird. Please. Ye must stay strong for our lady or ye’ll nay be of any use to anyone.”

Edward recognized the truth of her words and stood up. With his head down and shoulders drooped in defeat, he made his way to the hall with Emmett.

Rosalie carefully unwrapped the bandage from Bella’s head. She tried not to move her too much. Once the linen was removed, she set to work cleaning away the reeking poultice. As the goo was removed, Rosalie’s heart fell. The wound was red and seeping with infection. Rosalie sent the serving lad that came to check on her after heated water and clean linens. He returned at once, as the cook had hot water on for dishes. Rosalie soaked the fresh linens in the steaming liquid and laid it across Bella’s head. The moan Bella elicited broke Rosalie’s heart. She couldn’t stand to see her dear friend in so much pain.

She changed the linen with a fresh, clean one and was pleased to see the infection draining. *I dinnae ken what that crazy lady put in that, but it is nae any good*

for people. I hate that she's made Bella worse. I must tell Edward nay to let her close to her again.

That plea wasn't received quickly enough. Edward was still eating when Victoria stormed into the room. "What are ye doin' to the mistress? Get ye away. She is nae ye're patient. What do ye ken about healing? Ye only brought me half the herbs I needed yestereve."

"Weel, I ken that ye're poisoning our lady with ye're putrid poultice. Her flesh is red and inflamed as weel as oozing. It isnae helping her fever a'tall!" Rosalie said indignantly.

Victoria continued, "Ye need to leave this room immediately!"

"I will nae leave till I ken that ye are nae going to put that vile poultice back on the mistress's head," Rosalie stood her ground firmly. She would not back down.

Victoria grabbed Rosalie by the arm and tried to force her from the room. Her black eyes flashing fire, she yelled, "I told ye to leave, now get out!"

Rosalie gripped the healer's arm tightly and gave a quick twist, causing Victoria to scream in pain.

The fighting women didn't even hear the sounds of feet pounding up the stairs. They were intent on their disagreement. Finally the sound of the laird's voice shocked them into a modicum of decency, "By the saints! What are ye doing? Ye're supposed to be caring for my Bella, nay fighting each other. I can nae believe ye two. Rose, ye said ye'd care for her, but alas, ye're bickering with Victoria. I expected better behavior out of my workers."

It was the first time Edward had ever spoken disparagingly to Rosalie. It mattered not to her that he was so upset; she picked up her skirts and fled the chamber. She ran down through the hall, out to the bailey and didn't stop until she reached the loch just outside the gates of Cullshire. She crumpled on the shore and let the tears spill.

"Where's a good whip when I need one?" Rosalie muttered to herself when her tears were spent.

"And why would ye be needing a whip, lass?"

She jumped up and spun around, surprised that someone would dare to disturb her brooding. "Emmett! Ye just took a month of Sundays off my life! Saints alive!" She pressed a hand to her chest to try to calm her frantic heart.

"I'm sorry, Rose, I dinnae mean to. I was making quite a ruckus to get to ye so ye'd nay be frightened. I suppose it dinnae work, eh?" he asked.

"Nay. I was distracted."

"Aye, I could hear that. Now, why do ye need a whip, lass? I ken I've been bad, but..." he trailed off suggestively.

She cuffed him upside the head, "Emmett, now is nae the time for your teasing! I dinnae trust that healer. The poultice she packed to Bella's head reeked. When I cleaned it away, the wound was red and infected already. It is nae usually that quick to spread infection. The hot towels were helping to speed her body's expulsion of the poisons. That witch is going to kill her. I think she plans to. We need to find out why, since we ken the how. Will ye help me?"

"Do ye e'en need to ask, Rosie Posie?" he questioned her softly.

Normally that name would have sent her into a tizzy, yelling at him for calling her that. Instead, she smiled into his eyes and answered with a quiet, "Nay."

He lifted his hand to tuck a wisp of hair behind her ears. She shivered at the connection. When he trailed his hand down her jaw to cup her cheek, she sighed her contentment. He bent his head toward hers, the silent question hanging between them. He could see her fighting the link they had. "I'd do anything for ye, lass." He said as he closed the distance. He placed a chaste kiss on her lips before pulling back, their breath mingling. The smile on her face almost undid him. She stretched on her tiptoes to kiss him again. He'd been the only man to make her feel so... so... so alive!

She pulled back suddenly, breaking the bliss of the moment. "We can nae do that again, Emmett. I am nay- we can nae- it just-" she stuttered, unable to form the words to tell him he deserved better than her. He laughed quietly at her, before he kissed her again.

This time she pulled back and slapped him soundly. Staring in horror at the welt that spread across his cheek, she mentally rebuked herself for acting so shrewish, "I'm sorry, Emmett. I dinnae ken why I did that."

"Tis alright, my Rosie. It dinnae hurt..." his voice ended on a sigh and he stared after her as she once again ran from what she really wanted to cling to.

Rosalie fled to the sanctuary of the tiny chapel that Cullshire was home to. She lit a candle for Bella and found the priest to confess her distrust and anger to, as well as her harsh reactions. She said her penance, then begged God to hear her prayer for Bella and spare her. *He will nae listen to me, though. I dinnae deserve his attention. I dinnae ken why I e'en try. I'm nay worth his time. I should nae e'en be here.*

Standing, she crossed herself and returned to the keep. She passed Emmett without glancing at him once. She climbed the stairs slowly feeling exhausted. She strolled past her chamber door and stopped in the doorway of Edward and Bella's chamber. She gazed at the still and almost lifeless form of her lady and friend.

"Edward, I'm sorry for earlier. I just dinnae trust Victoria. That poultice was putrid. Did ye see Bella's wound?"

"Aye, Rose I did. I'm sorry too. I should nae have yelled at ye. But Victoria is the healer. I have seen her work wonders on the people in the village," the laird's voice was barely louder than a whisper.

"I ken it. I've seen it too, Laird. But I can nae help but feel that summat is nae right here. It does nae set weel, ye understand? My guts say that it is nae as clear as we'd like it to be," Rosalie returned in an equally quiet voice.

“Weel, I dinnae have time to distrust her. My heart is lying here on the bed, and has nae moved a’tall. I can nae bare to see her this way. It is killing me,” Edward murmured, fighting back the cry that was building. He was a laird after all. He was meant to be strong and show no emotion.

“Weel, Emmett and I will worry for ye. We will nae let her kill our friend, sister, and lady,” Rosalie vowed. She’d come to the conclusion that if she could figure out why Victoria was doing this to Bella and bring her wicked plot to an abrupt and disappointing end, she may actually not have to punish herself so often. She might even be free to pursue her own happiness.

Who am I jesting? I’ll ne’er be able to undo what’s past, but I can change what has nae happened. I’ll catch that viper somehow.

With that, she set about making plans to find out the why behind Victoria’s treachery.

~*HR*~

A/N: I hope you are enjoying reading this story as much as I am writing it! Leave me a review and let me know what you think! Thanks! I do read and reply to each review, if they are signed...

4. Chapter 3

A/N: Thank you to my Betas, the amazing Ninmesarra and wonderful PrettyFlour. The ledge ended up not being quite so high, and I really appreciate the encouragement! You guys are awesome!

~HR~

The hands that were reaching for her finally caught her and flung her to the ground. The village was burned to the ground. She could see no survivors as she struggled against the abuse of her captors. Her clothes were being torn from her body, exposing her. It was nothing she wasn't used to already. Even the beating they gave her as she struggled was familiar.

Realizing that no one was going to be able to save her- everyone was dead- Rosalie went limp and stopped fighting. She felt dead inside. The monsters had left her for dead after they'd each taken a turn defiling her body.

After an indefinable amount of time went by, she forced herself up and through the ashes of her home. Her husband had been burned badly. He was beyond recognition. Rosalie was numb. She could feel no pain, no horror, no grief, nothing.

Her friend, Carmen, was lying in the field with a dirk protruding from her chest. Carmen's husband, Eleazar, the Spaniard that had made his home here, was beheaded- his body falling beside the sheep he cared for. The blacksmith was face down in the pyre of his shop. His wife draped over him lifelessly. The priest and the children that had taken shelter in the chapel had stopped screaming a while ago. The building was nothing but ashes.

Digging through the collapsed piles of what used to be homes; Rosalie finally managed to find some clothes. Donning them quickly, she set off to the closest keep. Maybe should be able to find work and shelter in Cullshire.

Finally, relenting to the pain that gripped her heart, she sobbed out as she plodded on, one foot in front of the other.

"Rosalie?"

She looked for the speaker, but saw no one.

"Rose? What's the matter?"

"What's the matter?" she railed. "I've lost everything! My family, my home, MY LIFE!"

Rosalie bolted upright in the bed, a strangled scream tearing from her throat. She slapped at the hands that were shaking her awake. Finally realizing she was safe, the fight left her and she sobbed out her grief.

The giant of a man that stood beside her bed had the sweetest look of concern in his eyes. "I heard ye crying, Rosie. I came to make certain ye were nae hurt, lass."

"Just my heart, Emmett. I dinnae ken how much longer I can stay here. I can nae get... weel, I should nae get too close to anyone here. They always end up dying," she choked out. Her exhaustion made her loose-lipped.

"Lass, ye can nae change the ways of the evil men ye've kenned. May haps ye need to let go of the hurts o' ye're past and try to heal. I dinnae ken what has happened, Rosie Posie, but I'll always be willing to listen to ye, should ye need it," Emmett's words to reassure her only made her cry harder. "Nay, Rosie. Ye must nay cry any longer. I can nae see ye this sad. Besides, ye'd ne'er live it down if I told the men. They all think o' ye as the stone lady," He ducked as she slapped him again.

Her eyes were narrowed in a piercing stare as she spoke, "Emmett, I am nay *stone lady*, but ye will nae tell them what ye saw or else I'll gut ye slow and spit ye o'er the fire to share with the witches for my last meal, ye hear me?"

He laughed in response. Stooping to kiss her temple, he whispered into her ear, "Weelcome back my spitfire." With one last wink over his shoulder, he exited her chamber.

She gazed out at the darkened sky. A storm was imminent today. She was weary of rain. They'd had a few days of sunshine and Rosalie wasn't ready to part with it. It made everything sparkly and vibrant. The colors were more pronounced and she could appreciate the beauty of the country side surrounding her as she gazed at it through the sunbeams.

Hurriedly dressing in the first dress and chemise she laid hand to, Rosalie gathered Esme Alice to her chest and ran from the room to check on Bella. It had been yester eve since she'd checked on her mistress, and the worry over Bella was eating her alive.

The knock was soft on the door, and the whispered "Come in" was even quieter. Rosalie slipped into the room and glanced around. Noticing the healer in the chair not far from the fireplace, Rose growled a greeting at her. The sentiment was returned, and Rosalie crossed the floor to the bedside of her friend.

"Good morning, Bella. Are ye going to wake up anytime soon, my lady? I ken that Esme Alice misses her mother. Ye can nae leave her yet Bella. She needs ye," Rosalie continued whispering on for an hour before she grew horse.

Victoria became tired of sitting around and left when Rosalie's voice made its final departure as well. She had checked Bella's head wrap once more as well as feeling her forehead for a fever. Victoria hissed when she found her fever had spiked again. She then rushed from the room with no promise of return.

Rosalie huffed in exasperation. She couldn't understand why the woman would keep running off. Victoria had a job to perform, and she must do it well. Rosalie was going to see that the wicked witch didn't succeed. She rushed to the door and called out for the serving lad that waited at the stairs. After he'd scampered off for hot water and Emmett, Rosalie began undressing Bella's head wound.

Cursing again when she revealed the disgusting poultice that Victoria had slapped against Bella's head, Rosalie prayed the lad would return quickly. She needed

to get whatever this was off of Bella's head. The scent of it was so over-powering and yet strangely familiar. Rosalie tucked that thought away to address later. Right now, she needed to clean this wound.

A quick knock at the door revealed the lad as well as Emmett. Rosalie thanked the boy and requested that Emmett go on guard duty just for a short while. "I need to get this off of her head Emmett. Dinnae let the witch in here 'til I've completed changing the heard wrap. Please?"

"O'course, Rosie! I'll keep on lookout," Emmett replied with a wink tossed over his shoulder.

Rosalie directed the serving lad to place the hot water down and compelled him to stay and assist her. He held Bella's head still as Rosalie cleaned away the disgusting mixture. Once the paste was gone, Rosalie soaked a rag of clean linen in the hot water and laid it along the gash on Bella's head. After a minute had gone by, Rosalie removed the dirty cloth and wiped away the infection that was being drawn out. Then, she placed a new doused rag upon the wound. The poor boy that was helping, Daniel, was trying valiantly to keep his gag reflex at bay. She finally dismissed him to stand in the hallway on guard so Emmett could help her.

He gratefully flew from the bed and ordered the big man. Emmett entered laughing at the little boy. He looked to Rosalie for orders, happy to help however he could. After all, he'd grown rather fond of his tiny sister.

The little boy dashed inside to announce footsteps in the stairwell. Emmett went again to the door to stand guard.

Rosalie smiled to herself at the high pitched sound of Victoria's shrill, angry voice, "Ye must let me in! I must attend to the lady! 'Tis my job, ye great oaf! I will-" the rest of her words were garbled as Emmett interrupted.

"Ye'll nay be calling' me names, but ye'll also nay be going in there right now. Get yerself gone afore I decide to punish ye. Dinnae forget, *I* am the laird's brother. I'll be certain to send for ye when we're done." Rosalie could envision the steely glint and hard set of his jaw as he delivered his chastisement.

Victoria squealed once again in rage, and her stomps could be heard through the heavy wooden door as she fled down the stairs.

The confrontation over, Emmett rejoined Rosalie to help her finish with Bella's care. He looked at her in concern when a sigh as big as she elicited from her lips. "What's the matter, Rosie?" he's voice rasping a little as he spied her tongue dart out to wet her bottom lip.

"I am trying to remember where I have smelled this before. Is it familiar to ye as weel?"

"Aye, now that ye say summat, I ken it does." He drew in another lungful of the scented air. His brow creased in concentration as he tested the air again and again. "I ken I've smelt it somewhere. Let me ponder this awhile."

"We need to have someone follow that deceitful wench. I dinnae trust her. What did she have with her when she came back?" Rosalie questioned.

"A basket of herbs and a jar with some muddy-colored liquid," he said as he lifted Bella's head so the Rosalie could wrap a clean bandage around it.

Rosalie's eyebrows drew together in thought as she hummed to herself. When her tongue zipped along her bottom lip again which drew a moan from Emmett. Rosalie jerked her head up and her blue eyes flashed with unspoken questions.

"Ye dinnae ken what ye do to me, do ye, Rosie?" Emmett asked, his voice sounding as though he were in pain.

"I dinnae ken what ye mean, Emmett. What-?"

He sighed and raised an eyebrow at her, "Surely ye ken what ye do to me?" For added emphasis, he cupped himself. Her eyes grew round as she rushed from the room.

~HR~

Emmett trudged into the hall looking for Rosalie. He needed to apologize. Sometimes he just let his mind run away before he actually thought out his actions and words.

He finally found her in the kitchens with Esme Alice, sneaking cookies for the tiny toddler. Emmett laughed as her baby lips pouted at being denied more cookies. Hearing her favorite uncle, Esme Alice ran to him and hugged his shins. She wasn't tall enough to reach his knees yet. He gathered her up into his arms and kissed her on the cheek.

Cuddling his niece close, he strode over to Rose. Draping his arm around her shoulders he whispered his apology into her ear, "I'm sorry I'm such a vulgar arse! Will ye ever forgive me?" He clutched his heart with his free hand while Esme Alice giggled at him, not understanding his antics.

Rose took the baby from his arms and pinched him hard enough to provoke a growl. She laughed merrily as she danced away. Before she made it too far, he grabbed her by the waist and pulled her to him. "I was goin' to tell you afore ye wounded me so," he paused to grin at her, "I set Jacob to following the bit-wench. He'll tell us everything he kens as soon as he kens it. Then we can finally get rid of the vicious.... Healer."

"Thank ye Emmett."

"Dinnae thank me lass. I want to get to the bottom of this as much as ye do." He pulled her closer and bent his head to hers, aiming for a chaste kiss on her ruby lips...

~HR~

A/N: Leave me some feedback! Can't wait to hear what you guys think of this. Love it or hate it? I wanna know!

Also, want to apologize for the delay. I should be back to posting weekly- I'm aiming for Mondays. Thanks for reading!

5. Chapter 4

He pulled her closer and bent his head to hers, aiming for a chaste kiss on her ruby lips...

Rosalie couldn't help but laugh at the disaster struck right before his lips met hers. Emmett's pucker was but a breath away when Esme Alice vomited down the front of his plaid. His colorful curses were still echoing in her ears as she laughed at how quickly he'd fled to change his clothing. She hadn't laughed that hard in close to two years. And even longer before she'd met Ewan, her late husband. He'd been quite the jester, but he'd loved her with a vengeance. Not caring that he had to be oh-so-careful with her battered emotions.

Emmett and Ewan were night and day in differences. Emmett blunt and Ewan tactful. Emmett is built like a mountain and Ewan was barely taller than she and lanky. Emmett was black curls and blue eyes, Ewan had blonde hair and brown eyes. Emmett was the laird's brother and rich, Ewan was but a poor farmer. The differences were endless, but they had one good thing in common. They both made her smile again.

Rosalie was searching for Jessica, she needed her to care for Esme Alice so that she could check in to see how Bella was. Rose also planned on tracking down Emmett to see if he'd heard any news from Jacob. She was ready to put Victoria behind them and get Bella well.

Rounding a corner, she crashed into none other than iniquitous woman. Eyes flashing fire, the two women stared at each other maliciously before Victoria began cursing Rosalie to the fiery pits of hell. Rose managed to smile and laugh in Victoria's face, making the latter's ire rise even higher. The healer knew some very interesting ways to curse a person... "May ye're arse ever be covered with boils that weep daily. May ye fall out the window and break ye're bones into shattered little pieces. I hope ye're hair turns to ash and falls out and ye're teeth rot like Ole Man Cameron's!"

Rosalie continued laughing at her until her eye's flashed black and she raised her fist to punch Rose. Rosalie's hand reached out to catch the clenched hand in flight. Raising an eyebrow and smirking, she told her, "I would nae do that, if I were ye. Ye're but a small lass, barely bigger than a bairn, and I ken I am more evil than ye could dream to be."

Victoria's face drained of color and she jerked her hand from Rosalie's and fled before she gave away just how terrified she was of the other woman.

Victoria had just fled up the stairs when Emmett came around the corner holding Esme Alice. "Rosie, I can nae keep her all day. Find Jessica so's we can talk and can get back to drills. I've a slew of new bairns to train. They just turned old enough to join, and so..."

His words trailed off as Rosalie stuck her finger to his lips, "Shhh," she whispered, "I am still looking for the lass. She can nae just have disappeared. Look with me and tell me what ye've heard from Jacob."

"That will be a short discussion, Rosie. Jacob has nae said anything yet, and I dinnae suspicion he will until he has solid news."

"I understand that. I am just anxious to be rid of the crazy loon! She is nae sane. Did ye hear her cursing me?" Rosalie asked as they rounded the corner to the kitchen.

"Aye, how could I nay? She was screaming them was she nae?" He chuckled as he remembered, "I think I shall have to take lessons how to curse a body without actually cursing."

"Dinnae waste ye're time! Ye ken-" Rosalie stopped short when they found Jessica in the pantry with one of the stable hands, Michel, the French cousin of Jacob the Black.

The couple sprang apart and straightened the clothes that had been mussed as they mauled each other. Jessica's muddy hair was falling out of the tight bun at the base of her skull and Michel's was sticking up- perhaps crazier than Edward's!

Emmett and Rosalie laughed at the blushes on their faces and their kiss swollen lips.

Rosalie began to speak as soon as her laughter was under control, "Jessica, I need ye to keep Esme Alice for a wee while, whilst I help the Lady Bella. I need to keep a close watch on her."

Jessica reached for Esme Alice who was clinging to Rosalie, but didn't fuss overlong when Rosie and Em quickly left the room.

They made their way quickly to the laird's chamber, where Bella was still unconscious. Victoria was there already, smoothing a thick paste over Bella's head. Rosalie muttered a curse as she marched to the bed and grabbed Victoria's arm. She forced the caterwauling woman out the door and bade Emmett to stand guard.

Luckily, there was a ewer full of steaming hot water that Rose was able to use to clean the nasty mess from Bella's head. As she leaned over to wipe more of it away, a memory was triggered. The smell of the fresh poultice had the same scent of the liquid that Victoria said would rid the hair of lice. Rose's brow puckered in frustration. *Why would the crazy lady use lice removal for a healing poultice? It does nae make any sense!*

Emmett quickly entered the room at her summons. She explained her thoughts and he sniffed at the goo. "I think ye're right, Rosie. That does smell the same. But Bella does nae have any bugs in her hair, so why...?" his voice trailed off as he thought of the ramifications of this. That she-devil would probably end up banished because Edward couldn't bare to punish her with a traitor's death. Even though that's exactly what she is. A traitor.

He laid a gentle kiss on Rosalie's cheek and strode purposefully from the chamber in search of Jacob and Edward. They had to stop this madwoman before Bella ended up in a cold grave.

Rosalie continued to cleanse away the poison. Bella's wound was healing nicely and the infection was gone. The swelling in her head was almost gone as well. As she continued the ablutions, Rosalie stopped cold in her movements.

Bella had moaned.

"Mmmmmmm...." Came the repeated sound. Rosalie tossed down the rag, and gripped Bella's shoulders.

"Bella?" she questioned. "Can ye hear my lady? Ye must wake up. The laird has been beside himself with worry o'er ye. Wake up. Wake Up!"

Bella's eyes blinked a few times and she tried to swallow, but her tongue was too thick in her throat from lack of eating and drinking. Rosalie poured her a glass of water. Slipping her arm beneath Bella's shoulders, Rose helped lift her to drink. Once she'd swallowed enough to wet her throat, she began to question Rosalie, "What happened?"

"Ye fell and struck ye're head on the stone of the floor."

"Oh..." she drifted among her thoughts, "How long have I been asleep?"

"Four days, my lady."

"Four days?" her voice rasped out. "Saints alive! I've missed four whole days?"

"Aye, Bella, ye have," Rosalie squeezed her Bella's hand before continuing. "I should get the laird. He'll want to ken ye're awake. He's been so anxious for ye to wake up." Rosalie sped over to the door, and yanked it up. Stepping into the hallway, she lifted her voice to yell, "Edward! Bella is awake!"

The sound of feet rushing up the stairs showed Edward, Emmett, Jacob the Black, and Jessica toting a sleepy Esme Alice rushing to get to her. The reunions were sweet. Each person fawned over Bella until she set eyes on Esme Alice. She swept her baby out of Jessica's arms and cuddled her close.

After Emmett had kissed Bella's cheek and welcomed her back from death's door, in a way that only Emmett could, he caught Rosalie's eye and nodded to the hallway.

"I thought ye might like to ken that Edward will be sending Victoria away verra soon. Jacob said that she has nae gone anywhere but to visit patients, although she did stop at the crofter's hut, but she did nae stay long enough to share information or the like. So, my question, lass, is... Do we continue to watch her after she's gone? Jacob is willing to take on that task. He loves Bella like a sister as weel."

"Alright. I believe that's what we should do as weel, Emmett. Thank ye for helping me save her. She's my best friend."

Emmett gripped at his chest humorously, shouting, "How ye wound me Rosie Posie!"

Rose's reply was to giggle again.

~HR~

A/N: Sorry for the delay! Once again, I had a short bout of writer's block. I think I'm going to stop promising weekly, lol! I will have Chapter five up in the next two weeks, but I will for sure aim for sooner! Make sure if you want to get the updates that you follow the story. Also, I'd really like to know what you think! Is it too predictable? What are your suggestions? I totally take them into account if you have them! And I always respond to them. Thanks for reading and see you soon!

Oh! One last thing! I've been working on a O/S for the Show Me Your Patriotism Contest. Make sure you check it out! :-)

6. Chapter 5

A/N: This chapter deals with childhood violence and rape. If you are sensitive to or have triggers of some kind, please pass the part in italics. If you are currently, have been, or know someone who is a victim of rape please call the RAINN hotline.

I must always give thanks to my amazing beta ladies- Ninmesarra and Prettyflour. You guys are amazing!

And last but not least: No infringement is intended on S. Meyer's work... and on to the story...

~*HR*~

Rosalie and Emmett rejoiced as they watched Victoria leave the keep from the tower window. Rosalie almost giggled she was so giddy with the relief of finally being rid of that witch. While they still didn't know why she had mixed a poultice to try and poison Bella, Edward, Rosalie, and Emmett were all so very glad to see her go.

Jacob the Black would be following her from afar, to see where exactly she ended up going. He was going to try to stay far enough away that she didn't see him, but close enough that he could see her. They had to get to the bottom of this mystery.

Rosalie was surprised as Emmett scooped her up in a bear hug and spun her around until she was dizzy. He smacked a wet kiss against her cheek as he shouted jubilantly, "We're finally rid of the bitch!"

Rose laughed at his silliness and ran from the room declaring a need to check on Esme Alice. She heard Emmett's pounding footsteps in pursuit and sped up. When she reached the hall, she was forced to come to a sudden stop, causing Emmett to crash into her from behind. He caught her around the waist before she hit the floor.

Emmett gazed at Rosalie in concern as all the color in her beautiful face drained away. She looked as though she might pass out. He quickly led her to a chair by the fireplace and motioned for a tankard of mead to be brought to her. His eyes widened as she downed it in one long drink. She pulled him to stand where she couldn't be seen by the visitors. When he glanced back down at her, he was surprised to find her trembling like a leaf in the wind. She was rocking back and forth slightly, seemingly lost in her own mind.

Rosalie was being bombarded by the vicious memories of her painful childhood.

At five years of age she'd been captured by her uncle's enemy. They'd taken her to their laird as a gift. They'd known he'd had a sickness and appetite for beautiful young children. And of course, Rosalie had been the most beautiful child any of them had ever seen.

A maid had taken her to the kitchens for a bath and to dress in a thin chemise. She had looked beyond saddened at what Rosalie's fate would be. Rosalie herself felt sick.

Someone led her to a darkened chamber and ordered her to rest. She'd lain there with tears seeping from her clenched eyes. She was completely terrified of what was going to happen to her. She prayed and begged, pleading for God to somehow save her from whatever fate had sentenced her to.

After an hour or so had passed, she heard steps stopping outside the door. Then it swung open, revealing a huge beast of a man. He was ugly the ugliest thing she'd ever set eyes on.

Rosalie began to shudder in fright. She was almost paralyzed by the fear she had of this stranger. She could tell by looking at him that he was a bad man. All she wanted was to wake up from this nightmare and see her mother and father again.

The pain she'd experienced that night had led to her blacking out to escape it. Unfortunately, that was only the beginning of the torture she suffered there.

Emmett was becoming increasingly worried about Rosalie. She'd begun crying but a few seconds after she'd finished the mead. He crouched beside her, careful to continue shielding her from whatever had her so broken. Then a slow keening sound began to come from her throat. He picked her up and cradled her against his chest. He made sure that the unexpected visitors couldn't see her face and took her to her chamber upstairs. He sat down on the small chair beside her bed and gripped her hand.

"Rosalie?" he questioned quietly. When there was no answer, he tried again, "Rose? What is causing this distress? What can I do for you?"

Rosalie finally inhaled a deep breath and released it with a shudder from her lungs. She opened her eyes and began to tell Emmett the story of her childhood. How she'd spent every day of what should have been her childhood. With every word she spoke, Emmett's expression grew fiercer and his eyes grew darker with his silent rage.

When she'd finished detailing how she'd escaped, she stopped and took a drink of the water she hadn't seen Emmett fetch her. After she'd swallowed, she chanced a glance at him. She was confused by his expression. Most people that knew her story had looked at her with hatred and as though she had been to blame, but Emmett's eyes were full of compassion and anger.

"I am so sorry that ye had to suffer through that alone. I'll kill the villain that did that to ye and then I'll kill the ones what took ye to him and offered ye up like a lamb to the slaughter. I have a feeling that is nae all the pain ye had to suffer either, is it?"

She shook her head negatively and he sighed his frustration. He was enamored with this strong, beautiful, intelligent woman that was before him. He couldn't imagine someone going through what she went through and not curling up and dying or going completely mad. He admired the courage she had to keep facing every day during the darkest times of her life.

Rosalie watched as the emotions played over his face before she started talking again, "If ye want to kill the bastards, ye have nae got far to look, Emmett."

His expression again grew furious. "One of these days, I want to hear the rest of ye're story Rosalie, but for now, I want to ye tell me how ye ken they are nae

far from here.”

She closed her eyes and whispered I abject horror, “They are ye’re surprise visitors.”

Emmett disappeared as soon as she spoke the words. She could hear him shouting for Edward to meet him in the solar.

~*HR*~

Edward was seething when Emmett finished telling him Rosalie’s story. It was no wonder she hardly ever smiled. Then, Emmett dropped the rest of the hammer when he told him that their *guests* were the ones that had held her captive and used and abused her child’s body and deprived her of her innocence in the most brutal way imaginable.

Edward and Emmett returned to Rosalie’s chamber because the laird had some questions for her. “Rosalie, first I am so sorry that ye had to suffer so as such a wee lass. The sick bastards that wounded ye will pay for it, I vow it. But I need ye tell me how ye ken it is those men that did it to ye.”

Rosalie closed her eyes and replied, “The laird... H-h-he had nay hair and evil, black, beady eyes. His skin was chalky and his teeth were half gone- the teeth he still had were black and rotting. There was a set of three scars that were slashed across his face as though someone had taken chunks out of his flesh with their fingernails. He was huge. And the ugliest thing I’d e’er seen.” She inhaled a shaky breath, “He had the scars dinnae he?”

Edward’s eyes closed and he nodded once before ordering Emmett to rejoin him in the solar. Emmett kissed Rose’s cheek and assured her that he’d not be gone long.

They strategized a way to rid the earth of the foulness that was currently gracing the halls of their home. Edward didn’t care that he was being the epitome of rude behavior by ignoring the offensive swine. Emmett and Edward sent Michel to count the number of men the new enemy had with them. He returned telling them that he had fifty men within the walls that were not MacCullens. But that there were two regiments of fifty each outside the walls as well.

It seemed these people were gearing up for battle. Well, Edward and Emmett were itching for a good, bloody battle now as well. As long as it wasn’t MacCullen blood being spilled.

After another hour had passed, Edward lit the torch on the wall signaling to the closest neighboring clan that they had trouble and to send some extra help. The Piersons were always spoiling for a fight; they may as well help them. Not to mention, that the watchers in the woods they had set up, reported two other contingents camped inside the forest numbering the same amount of men, carrying the lout’s colors. They really were going to declare war.

Edward rejoined the unwelcome visitors while Emmett returned to Rosalie.

~*HR*~

A/N: So.... I told you we’d hear from Rosalie’s past so that we’d be able to understand her better. Do you hate me for it? Please drop me a line and let me know if you’re still with me. I will promise an HEA, but there is always angst and healing to do before we get there. Not to mention a battle that’s going to happen...

7. Chapter 6

As Always, thanks go to my lovely betas- prettyflour and ninmesarra! You ladies ROCK!

~*HR*~

Rosalie was so tired. The day had been full of upset and stress. She felt like she could sleep for a fortnight. But every time she closed her eyes, she was up again to empty her stomach until all that was left was dry heaves. The memories held her captive in the darkest, blackest, and dirtiest dungeon imaginable. She felt as though she needed to scour herself with the roughest and most abrasive substance she could find. The feeling of big, meaty, dirty hands on her skin was a memory that felt as though it happened only yesterday. She had cried until her eyes were almost swollen shut. Her throat was raw and when she tried to talk her voice erupted out more as a croak. She was completely exhausted and devastated.

She needed to leave, but was afraid of being seen and captured. Rosalie didn't want to take the chance of her friends getting hurt. She didn't want a war or battle to break out. It would break her if they were killed because of her. Rosalie thought that just might be the string that unraveled the weak hold she still had on sanity.

She got up from her bed and stepped quickly across the cold floor. She stood before the fireplace trying to warm herself from the outside in. She felt frozen. As though she were made of cold, hard, unforgiving stone. Her bones felt brittle; it was hard to force movement.

Esme Alice was staying with Jessica for the next couple of nights. Rosalie was in no shape to care for the toddler. She hated the silence and being alone. Especially tonight with her memories.

Without another thought, she quickly walked out of her chamber and down the hall just a ways to Emmett's. She knocked quietly and stepped in without waiting for an answer. He sat up quickly and tried to rub the sleep from his eyes. "Rose?" he whispered.

"Aye. It is. I can nae sleep. Can I just..." she stopped, hesitating for the impropriety of the situation. Deciding she could send decorum straight to hell, she continued, "Can I just stay here tonight? I dinnae want to be alone. *I can nae* be alone anymore with these thoughts."

He stood and gathered her to his chest. Emmett carried her as though she weighed no more than Esme Alice. It was warm and wonderful, sunshine in the night, to feel his strength encompassing her. He laid her gently on his bed and covered her up before sliding in behind. He pulled her close to his chest and asked, "What can I do to make it better, Rosie? I want to help ye if I can."

She yawned and then replied, "Tis nae anything ye can do. I must work it out in my own wee mind. Tis just that I had nae really thought on it for a long time and then to have it thrust in my face again..." Her words trailed off and her throat closed with the threat of sobs. Her eyes clouded over with tears she thought she'd spent.

Emmett tried whispering sweet words of nothingness in her ear as he rubbed soothing circles into her shoulders and back. Her appreciative moan had him smirking in satisfaction. "Just ye relax, lassie. Nay one will hurt ye in hear. They'd have to kill me first, and that is nay easy chore. Ye are safe here. Tomorrow the Piersons will be here. Try to get some sleep, please?" he was almost begging her to sleep. He placed a chaste kiss on her cheek as he fought his body's desire to have her.

She nestled in closer to him and sighed again. Her body was trembling, but he wasn't sure if it was from cold or fear. Her feet were so cold; he was surprised her toes were still attached. "Can ye tell me a story, Emmett? Just one of ye're childhood?"

He agreed and began, "When I was but six years old, Edward and I..." he got no further before her breathing evened out and just barely after that, her soft snores filled the room.

~*HR*~

The next morning, Rosalie had a massive headache. She almost wanted to cry again from the pain, but refused. She slowly sat up and glanced around. Her surroundings were unfamiliar. It took her a moment to recall she'd sought Emmett for comfort. She hadn't cared if they'd been caught either. The embarrassment of the possibility turned her cheeks pink as she quickly left for her own room to ready for the day.

She no sooner stepped foot through the door than she was set upon by several large men. They were slapping and kicking, punching and pinching, pulling hair and caressing her all at the same time. It was maddening. She screamed out, but was rewarded with a merciless backhand across her face, making her lip bleed.

She fought as hard as she could but it was no use. They had her and were quickly making their way through an opening in the wall. It shocked the hell out of her to see it there. She had no clue the keep had secret tunnels leading to God knew where. Her body was growing tired but she would not let them subdue her so easily.

They went down, down, down, deep into the belly of the keep before taking so many turns she'd never find her way through it to get back in this way. It seemed like forever had passed before they were going up, up, up, and emerging into the sunlight. She could see the keep wall from her vantage point in the woods. It was disheartening not to see an alarm having gone up yet. She had screamed after all. Surely someone would have gone investigating.

She was tied up and tossed across the pommel of a saddle. The force of contact was sure to leave her ribs bruised. They chanced a few glances behind them and set off through the heavily wooded forest. All the while Rosalie prayed *Please God, not again. Please God not again. I can nae do this again.*

~*HR*~

Emmett was filling a tray with food. The rest of the household had already broken their fast. Edward and the men were out at the practice fields, readying for battle as secretly as they could. Bella and Jessica had taken Esme Alice out to the loch to pick flowers. He was filling a platter with bread and cheese when a scream rent the air. The tray was dropped to the floor and his heartbeat accelerated. His breath hitched and he ran quick as he could to his room, taking the stairs two at a time. He was afraid he'd be too late.

He threw the door to his chamber open, finding it empty. He cursed, because he was wasting precious time. Emmett busted through the barely opened door of Rose's room and looked around quickly.

The sight of a struggle was evident. Her candlesticks had been knocked to the floor, the mirror was hanging crookedly, and the wash basin had shattered. There was no door opened, he'd passed no one in the halls, where could they have disappeared to? He quickly left the room again, running down to the hall to send a serving lad to get Edward. They needed to figure out where she had disappeared to.

It seemed to take forever for Edward to return to the keep. The laird was out of breath and his expression was grieved. Emmett's heart was in his throat as he explained to his twin.

They took the stairs back up two and three at a time, rushing to get back to Rosalie's room. Emmett had been gone no more than ten minutes, so they can't have gotten too far with her. Michel quickly reported that six of the men that had been within the keep, as well as one of their serving wenches, had left at some point, but no one saw them leave. Edward's brow furrowed before he recalled why that could be. "They must have figured out a way into the tunnels. But I dinnae ken how..." Edward's long legs carried him quickly to the wall. He twisted a sconce, pushed a couple of bricks before he fully remembered the way to get the door to swing open. The men looked at each other and were getting ready to begin their descent into the underbelly of the keep. A cry went up from the walls. The Piersons were here. And so was Jacob the Black.

Emmett and Jacob met together in Emmett's room so that Jacob could tell Emmett his findings. Jacob had hidden his face beneath a cloak, so when he pushed the hood back, Emmett gasped in horror at the bruises that were mottled over his face. His naked torso was in even worse shape, bearing bruises, scrapes, and cuts. "What the hell happened to ye Jacob?"

Jacob laughed darkly. "The bitch spotted me in the keep of the MacDougald's. It took me three hours to get away. I joined with the Pierson's to get here safely. I see the MacDougald's are now trying to hold court here. They are working with Victoria for some reason. Weel, I can nae say that for certain. I ken that I saw them meeting together. I dinnae ken why though. I could nae get close enough to hear what they said."

Emmett clapped a hand to Jacob's shoulders and told him in as few words as he could about Rose's past with their new enemy and that she was missing. Jacob's eyes turned black. For all of Rosalie's crankiness, he still considered her a friend. He did not want those men to have her. Especially not considering what they must have in store for her. He could admit that she was probably the most beautiful woman in all of Scotland, but that did not mean that they could do with her what they wanted if she said no.

Emmett and Jacob quickly joined the Pierson in the laird's solar. The Pierson agreed to their plan and they set forth to put it in action.

~*HR*~

Rosalie was thrilled when they stopped no more than twenty minutes away. She was even more surprised to find that the dirty laird of the MacDougald's was absent from their party. She knew he would be fiercely angry and exactly how cruel he could be in his punishments. She glanced around and noticed Victoria was with them. Rosalie growled fiercely at her, and was not surprised to see the witch flinch. She wanted to laugh outright, but Rose was afraid.

Shoring up her courage, Victoria walked over to where Rosalie sat and spit at her. Since Rose wasn't tied up, she stood quickly and slapped Victoria across the face. Victoria raged her fury at her, "Ye can nae do that! I am in charge here, and I will have ye killed ye bitch! Dinnae touch me again.

Rosalie laughed at her naiveté. She didn't know who the hell she was up against. She had no doubt the MacDougalds had somehow found her. That bastard laird of theirs was cruel and vicious. He was only toying with Victoria. It was quite likely she'd be dead before the day's end. But not until MacDougald violated her, too. Rosalie couldn't help but think that maybe he already had. She'd noticed that Victoria seemed to be a loose sort, freely giving her favors out to the village men for coin, regardless of the status she held as healer of the clan.

Holding out hope, Rosalie prayed that someone had heard scream and was even now working on trying to find her. She couldn't stand the thought of leaving Cullshire. This had become her home, regardless of her determination not to stay too long. She loved the people there and had begun to think of them as family. That was why as soon as this was all over, she'd be leaving. She could not even begin to think of putting them in any more danger. Especially The laird's family; Bella, Esme Alice, Edward, and Emmett meant too much to her to continue putting them in harm's way for the sake of her own selfish desire to be safe. The curse she was under was too strong. She couldn't pull anyone else under with her.

Everyone she'd ever loved or cared about had been murdered and some tortured. She could recall after being taken by the MacDougalds at five, how the maid that cared for her had been brutally raped and murdered for trying to sneak Rosalie out in the dead of night. It was unfathomable to allow anyone else to court the same fate.

She'd heard a year after she'd managed to finally free herself from that evil and vile prison that the merchant that had helped her had been tortured and killed, his body left to hang outside the walls of the MacDougald keep. It was so disturbing that Rose suffered nightmares- seeing the faces of them both asking her why she'd cursed them and begging her to stay away before they were damned to hell in the afterlife.

How on earth was she going to get out of this mess without any of her new family paying the price for her?

~*HR*~

A/N: Ok people, please let me know what you think (Remember, I do answer each review... You may get teased if you ask for it)! I want to know what kind of ideas you may have for Rose to escape! What do you think we will happen?

Also, if you haven't checked out the Show Me Your Patriotism Contest, you should! Find the profile by searching authors for SMYPContest. :-D See you soon!

8. Chapter 7

A/N: First and foremost, Thank you to my amazing betas, Ninmesarra and prettyflour! You guys rock and always make my story much better. ;-)

Disclaimer: Unfortunately, my name isn't Stephenie Meyer and therefore, I make no money off of the Twilight works- but I wouldn't be opposed to her sharing :-D

~*HR*~

The dinner hour found the keep covered in darkness. The black of the sky promised rain during the night. There were no stars- the only light that was found was being cast by the torches that lined the wall. The soldiers on the wall kept their eyes peeled for trouble. They could not afford to allow the enemy that was within the walls to take the first step.

The main hall was loud. Men were eating, drinking and talking. The laird had ordered his female relatives to their rooms for the evening. Bella knew what was going to happen. Edward had alerted to the plan so that she wouldn't be surprised. Emmett and Jacob were standing guard at the door of the keep. No one was allowed in or out for the rest of the night.

The visiting clans each had several men in and out of the keep and its walls. The laird of Cullshire had also positioned several men outside of the keep for the night. The plan was to take no prisoners. They had no room for them and Edward didn't have the stomach for executions, and that was what every person in the MacDougald's clan that was present in Cullshire deserved. How they could stand by and allow the laird there to continue in his depravity was beyond the MacCullens. It was sick and wrong.

Edward glanced around, ensuring that his men were ready to leap to action. It was almost time to rid the world of some evil devils. The tables were cleared of the remainder of the dinner and the ale began to flow freely.

"So, ye devil, MacDougald. I hear ye have a taste for the young, eh?" Edward demanded of him.

MacDougald's eyes widened at the accusation, "Here now. Ye ken that is an enormous accusation to be making. What's this about?"

"We've had a lass staying with us for a while now. I believe ye ken her well, as ye stole her childhood from her. Rosalie?"

Edward caught the tell-tale sign as MacDougald's eyes widened with shock. It was too late for him to deny it. With a sharp whistle, his men stormed out of their seats and off the benches scattered around. Giving a loud battle cry that sounded more like a roar, Emmett launched into battle. The Piersons and MacCullens fought the MacDougald's man to man, hand to hand, sword to sword.

Edward leapt from his chair, his claidhmor swinging in a wide arc, quickly dispatching two of the enemy. He was quickly set upon by another and the MacDougald laird tried to maneuver his way out of the fray and closer to the door.

Emmett kept his eyes on the men opposing him, but still watched the rival laird to make sure he didn't escape. Taking advantage of a defensive block, he stuck his dirk in the neck of the enemy. The body dropped with a thud to the ground. He spun around to help Jacob as he had three men that wanted to go down in history as felling the notorious Black. Emmett parried and thrust with his new opponent trying to gain the upper hand. It was obvious that Emmett's new opponent had a lot of skill. Their deadly dance continued until Emmett finally saw his opening. The other man was growing tired. His sword arm dropped a bit and his shield wasn't poised quite right. It was all the invitation Emmett needed to stab his sword upwards and into the blackguard's stone cold heart.

He'd no sooner kicked the man away than Emmett caught sight of the MacDougald laird rushing down the keep stairwell and into the bailey. It was deserted, but it didn't make Emmett feel any better. He wanted to rid the world of this devil. No one of his villainy should be allowed to live. He jumped from the stairs to land in the bailey and take off at a sprint to catch him. Emmett reached the stable door and threw it open in time to scare the stallion that MacDougald had mounted bareback to try and escape. The horse reared and threw MacDougald to the ground.

Emmett kicked him in the ass, demanding that he get up and fight. He was not going to be allowed to flee the MacCullen keep alive. MacDougald sprang up and threw dirt in Emmett's eyes. Blinking furiously, Emmett tried to dispel it. MacDougald managed to get a good swing in with his sword and had Emmett not moved slightly, it wouldn't have been a wee nick to the arm, but rather could have taken his arm completely off. Blood poured from his sword arm, but Emmett just tossed his sword to the other arm, closed his eyes and focused on the training Carlisle had given him and Edward as children. He listened intently, waiting for MacDougald to make a sound. It was the feel of the wind of a swing that alerted Emmett to the fact MacDougald had swung out at him again with his claidhmor. He managed to block it with his sword, but it wasn't long before there was another swing at him, this one nicking his calf. Emmett could feel the blood trickling from his wounds. He blinked furiously, finally dispelling enough of the dirt from his eyes to see.

It couldn't have been better timing. Emmett ducked quickly, narrowly missing having his head separated from his body. The battle raged on between the two. They were both equally matched. The MacDougald laird might be old, but he kept himself in shape by practicing with his mercenaries and soldiers. Emmett swung his sword and managed to graze MacDougald's side. The laird was momentarily stunned, allowing Emmett to strike again. He rained down blow after blow, finally gaining an advantage. MacDougald dropped his sword arm slightly, and Emmett plunged his sword into his black heart.

Emmett wiped his sword off on MacDougald's jupon and stood straight. The battle within the keep was done. The gates raised and the Piersons and MacCullens that were inside rushed out to see what damage had been done to the troops outside. They stopped just outside the keep. Glancing around, Edward, Emmett and Jacob clapped each other on the back. The battle was over. The losses were few. The Piersons were paid in fine wines and a feast, while a contingent of the MacCullens set out into the forest to track down Rosalie.

~*HR*~

The bitch wouldn't stop spewing her venomous accusations. "First Bella had my lover killed. MacGuillicuddy ne'er did anything to her, but that blasted laird had him killed. So I tried to kill her. But ye could nae leave weel enough alone now could ye? Ye had to go sticking ye're nose where it dinnae belong. Ye nosy bitch. I heard ye had managed to escape the MacDougald's so I went to him and told him I kenned where ye were. He is supposed to help me get rid o' ye all. Ye're gonna get what ye deserve, ye whore of Satan!"

Rosalie had reached her breaking point. She doubled up her fist and punched Victoria in the eye. The woman stumbled back into the fireplace before landing on her butt with a thud, her skirts around her knees. "James! Ye can nae let her get away with that! Do something!" Victoria ordered her lackey.

Though she'd braced herself for it her head still spun and her lip still cracked when his fist met her face. She spit the blood from her mouth in his eye when he bent down to leer at her. His hand came back across her face in the most painful backhand she'd ever been dealt.

She glared at Victoria, who sat laughing. James helped the red-headed witch up and she kissed him passionately. The two looked back at Rose. "Ye ken, she is verra pretty. Mayhaps we could have some fun with her afore MacDougald takes her away," James said.

The thought caused a shiver of fear to ghost over Rosalie. She knew what they wanted. They would have to kill her first. She was done letting people abuse her body and take their pleasure whenever and however. Death would be less painful.

Victoria considered it. "Weel, we best nay. Do ye ken what the MacDougald would do to us if we did?"

The evil laugh that erupted from James sounded throughout the cabin. "Do ye think I care about that fat lout?" he asked.

"Ye mean to tell me, ye actually like his bitch? Ye can nae touch her if ye e'er want to touch me again."

Pondering the thought in his mind, James sighed. "Then I shall behave myself, but ye're going to owe me. I will nae be easy. Denying me what I want gets ye punished, dinnae ye ken?"

Victoria purred at the thought and Rosalie thought she might be sick. Thankfully Rosalie still wasn't tied up. She was waiting for the perfect opportunity to grab the small dirk hidden in her braid and kill Victoria. This insane woman needed to be sent to hell.

~*HR*~

Emmett led the small party of soldiers. Jacob rode close beside him. They began their trek at the hidden door that led into the tunnels of the keep. There were still tracks of men and horses headed north and the group followed them until they reached a clearing after just thirty minutes of slow riding. They hid themselves amongst the brush and glanced around. There were only five men outside, but they couldn't be sure how many awaited them within the cottage. Emmett dispatched four of his quietest men to make a circuit around the clearing to rid the enemy of those that watched for an approach within the forest.

An owl hoot sounded in the clearing three times, alerting the men with Emmett that the others were taken care of. Emmett and Jacob slipped up on the two men closest to them. With a quick and fierce punch to the jaw, both men were knocked unconscious. Emmett motioned to his other men to gather the other three and tie them up. One decided to fight, but Liam and Ewan made quick work of him. The other four were marched or dragged to a tree and tied together. They'd not be going anywhere anytime soon.

The cottage had one window. Emmett peeked over the sill and counted three men and a woman inside with Rosalie. The woman had slapped Rosalie in response to something Rose had said. He gave the signal to Jacob, and he knocked quickly on the door.

The man that answered saw no one there so he stepped out. Jacob was able to grab him in a choke hold and render him unconscious. When there was no sound heard, another man came to the door. He stuck his head out and was surprised to find the end of a sword held at his nose. He quickly threw his hands into the air in surrender. Liam jerked his arm hard and pulled him to the group of captives and tied him up as well.

Emmett stepped into the cottage. His heart broke at the sight of Rosalie's bloody lip and bruised cheek. He was going to make whoever had done that to her pay. Slowly and painfully. They would pay.

Victoria's sharp gasp split the sudden silence, "Emmett?" Rosalie smiled at the sight of him. Her savior had arrived. The cold fury in his eyes was a sight to behold.

~*HR*~

A/N: So, it's a little shorter than some chapters in this story, but I didn't want to go too gory with this. Sometimes less is more right? So... did you enjoy the battle? I'm dying to know what you think! ;)

And on a side note, you should check out the Show Me Your Patriotism Contest here. The profile is SMYPContest. The stories are anonymous and linked on the prof page. Voting commences Aug. 5 and ends the 12th :)

Thanks for reading!

9. Chapter 8

A/N: Thank you to my amazing beta-darlings: Ninmesarra and Prettyflour. They make the story better and polished. You girls rock! Thanks for all you do! :)

Disclaimer: I only wish I was Stephenie Meyer... As it is, I only get to play with her characters.

~*HR*~

Emmett stepped through the door, his blue eyes flashing with cold fury. He was so angry he could spit nails. How dare they touch his woman? *Your woman?* He questioned his own thoughts. *Aye! My woman. She is mine. I love her. I will protect what is mine!* He vowed silently.

His eyes swept the place, take careful note of the big, muscled man in the corner of the room. The man had an arrogant sneer marring what the lady's would call a handsome face. His hair was blonde and dirty and his eyes were black. It was fitting that the demon would have black and soul-less eyes.

There was a small table and two chairs as well as a filthy dirty mattress in opposite corners of the room. A black cook pot hung over the empty fireplace. The blankets upon the bed were so moth and rat chewed there was almost nothing left of them. It was disgusting within. No one had lived in it for the last three years, and it had been allowed to deteriorate.

The woman that he'd seen through the window turned around and he caught sight of her face. "Victoria," he breathed the name out as a curse. "I should have kenned ye were behind this."

Her red hair was riot of curls and it shook as she laughed, "Aye, ye should have. But ye dinnae." She crooked her brow at James and he swiftly unsheathed his sword and advanced on Emmett. Emmett was quick to pull his from the scabbard at his back and block the impending blow.

The women watched with wide-eyes as the men fought. Emmett forced James back a step or two and then James would retaliate and force Emmett back a step or two. Emmett knocked James' sword from his hand and threw his own down. "We are going to finish this, now, man to man!" Emmett yelled, punching James square in the jaw.

Rosalie glanced beside her, taking note of Victoria watching the fight with rapt attention. She quickly grabbed the blade in her hair, the hilt designed to look like a barrette, and pulled it from the hidden sheath. She grabbed Victoria by the arm and spun her to face her, pointing the dagger at her throat. "Dinnae move bitch, or ye'll have a hole in your neck."

Eyes wide as saucers, Victoria nodded her acceptance. She stared in horror at the knife in Rose's hand. The cold metal was actually touching her skin. If she moved an inch, it could be embedded in her body.

Emmett and James continued trading punches. They were hitting each other wherever they could land blows, stomach, face, arms; it didn't matter. James managed to knock Emmett offside the head, upsetting his balance as he tripped over a chair. He quickly picked up his sword, and turned with it raised.

The superior look on his face was quickly replaced with disbelief. He glanced down at the sharp pain in his chest and staggered backward. A small handle was protruding from his chest. Blood trickled from his lips as he dropped his sword to the ground. He glanced back at Emmett just before his eyes rolled back in his head and he collapsed.

Rose and Emmett stared at James' body. She in horror for what she'd done and he in pride. Both were surprised at the high pitched scream that rivaled that of a banshee. Emmett yelled out in warning. Rosalie turned quickly and punched Victoria in the jaw. The force of it, snapped her head back and caused her to drop whatever she held in her hand. Rosalie bent down quickly to grab it, seeing a small dirk. As she stood back up, Victoria kicked her in the face. Rosalie was sent flying backwards at the force of it. Grabbing a frying pan that had lain on the floor discarded, Victoria brandished her weapon. She leaned down to smack Rose with it, and Rosalie struck with the small knife. Effectively bringing it to rest in her throat. Blood poured from the wound and Victoria stumbled back, dazed. A silent tear floated quietly down her cheek as she realized she had met her end.

Emmett stood quickly and helped Rosalie up. He pulled her into his chest and held her tightly. Big, fat tears rolled down her cheeks and her slender form shook with the force of her cries. Emmett held her tighter. "Rosie, ye're safe now. I will nae let anyone else hurt ye if I can help it, lass."

Pulling away, she began to pace in the small area. Spying the bodies again she raced to the corner and retched. Emmett grabbed her arm when she was done and led her out of the cottage. He motioned to Jacob and Liam to take care of the dead within the small structure. He turned back to her and looked deep into her eyes. The depth was limitless. "Rosie Posie, tell me what is the matter? Ye're safe now."

"I ken I am safe!" She screamed. "But it does nae matter! I am death! I killed two people Emmett! How can ye stand to e'en look at me? Dinnae ye see what I did?" She cried and screamed her fury, "I am cursed! Death follows me everywhere! I can nae do this anymore, Emmett. I can nae. I will nae put ye and the rest o' ye're clan in danger anymore. I have to leave. Someone should just kill me. I am naught but a black omen," she ended with garbled words as she sobbed again.

Emmett plucked her from her feet and carried her to his horse. After making sure she was seated well, he mounted up behind her. He cradled her close his body, fighting the urge to kiss her lips. She was asleep before they made it a hundred yards into the forest.

~*HR*~

A gentle brushing of fingers along her jaw caused a moan to erupt from her lips. She stretched her limbs and fluttered her lashes until she was accustomed to the bright light of the sun shining through the window. Her eyes trailed up the hand, to the muscular forearm, over the crook of his elbow, and curve of his broad shoulders, pausing at the pulse beating in his neck. They slid to rest again on pouty lips before finally raising to meet blue eyes, darkened by passion.

Her tongue darted out to wet her lips, "Emmett? How long have we been back at the keep? What did I miss?"

Bending his tall frame, he sat on the bed beside her. He took her hand in his before speaking, "Ye slept for a few hours, Rosie, nay more than that. As for what

ye missed, weel.... Ye missed a battle. The Pierson's came and helped us get rid o' the MacDougald's."

"Is... is," she cleared her throat, licked her lips and tried again, "What about the MacDougald laird?"

"Ye'll ne'er have worry about that bastard again, love. I sent him straight to hell. I was nae going to leave him alive to do that again, ye ken."

"Aye," she whispered. Her eyes filled with tears and she hiccupped in her efforts to swallow the sob that wanted to escape.

"Rose, what is it? Are ye hurt?" Emmett's anxiousness spilled into his eyes as they roamed her body looking for a sign of injury.

She wiped her eyes and whispered, "I killed two people, Emmett. I did it. I am cursed. Ye must send me away afore I cause more harm to this family. I will nae be responsible for ending it. I can nae stay and let ye all be hurt."

Confusion was heavy on his features, "I dinnae understand Rose. How are ye cursed?"

Rose got up off the bed and stepped quickly to the rug by the hearth. With her back to him, she explained, "My family was murdered when I was five years old all because that arse could nae keep his grubby hands to himself. His men had seen me in the wood and told MacDougald about me. He sent them to get me. My entire clan, all o' them, were killed trying to protect me. When I finally managed to get away from him, the merchant that had pity on me and helped me escape ended up destroyed." She paused to pour herself a glass of water from the ewer on the stand in the corner of the room. Taking a big gulp, she set the cup down before continuing, "I made it to the Hales. The clan there took me and I fell in love with my late husband. He took care o' me. Dinnae care that I was nae a virgin bride. Ewan dinnae care that I was broken inside. He put me back together best he could.

"I went to the river to fetch water one day and another band of soldiers spotted me. I ran quick as I could back to the village when I should have ran the other way. I dinnae have time to scream a warning. They cut down everyone in the village. The blacksmith and shepherd, all their families. E'en the wee children were slain. I ran into my home and tried to hide my son. Ewan fought bravely but there was too many of them. They killed him easily. They ripped my baby from my arms and made me watch as they plunged a dagger into his heart. After throwing his lifeless body back in the cottage with Ewan, they set fire to most everything."

She took another drink to calm herself. Emmett was growing more and more distraught with every word she spoke. Her voice was cold and distant as if she had separated herself from her body. She continued on before he could question her, "Then, when everyone was dead, they held me down. Ripped my dress off, and used my body over and over again. All ten of them. I pretended to pass out. They thought they killed me. Left me there sure I'd be dead if I wasn't already. I dinnae ken how long I laid there afore I forced myself to get up. I searched for a new dress among the ashes of my village. My own wee home had burned with my husband and son inside.

"I kenned there was nothing I could do to change any o' it, so I walked. I ended up here. Bella had just had Esme Alice, and was nae having any luck with the feeding. Since my own son was still a wee babe, I could do what she could nae. I stayed here.

"And look at what I've done! I brought a battle to ye're door. Men were killed because of me! I can nae stay here and continue to put ye're lives at risk. I'll leave at dawn."

Emmett sat still on the bed, trying to absorb all that she'd told him. She was back in front of the hearth, staring at the ashes left from last night's fire. She swayed on her feet and he was by her side quick as a wink. He scooped her up and placed her lovingly back on the bed. "I dinnae think ye are a curse, Rosie Posie. I think that there are many evil men in the world and because ye are so beautiful, they were greedy and wanted ye. They took without asking ye first what should have been yours to give. I also ken that if ye go, I will lose a piece o' myself with ye. Dinnae ye ken? Ye are my heart."

Her eyes met his. They were shiny with unshed tears. Breaking the hold he had on her, she turned her head. "Ye would be foolish to love me, Emmett. I am nay fit to be loved. I am the blackest of omens that could darken any doorstep. I am death waiting to grab those that I love the most. Dinnae ye see? That is why must leave! I could nae stand it if anything happened to ye or Edward or Bella or Esme Alice. Ye're all my family, and so I must leave. I love ye, but I can nae stay here. I would nae survive it if ye died because of me, Emmett." She was begging, pleading for him to understand.

His brain had only registered that she loved him. "Ye love me?" he whispered into the room. He leaned down and kissed her soundly. "I love ye too, Rosie mine."

He laid down beside her, gathered her to him and slept.

Rosalie waited for his breathing to even out before she rose from the bed. She quickly filled a small satchel with a change of clothes and an extra chemise. She slipped her feet into her sturdy boots and slipped into the hall. She did her best to slink around amongst the shadows. Finding her way into the kitchen she grabbed a loaf of bread, cheese, and some dried beef before the cook noticed. She slipped them into her satchel, and grabbed a wineskin.

She quickly dashed for the door and ran into the bailey. Taking care to note that it was almost empty- those that were present were busy with chores- she slipped through the gates. She ran to the forest's sanctuary. Hidden amongst the trees, she bid her home, and heart, good-bye.

~*HR*~

A/N: I am dying to know what you guys think! Please leave me some love! They are better than Highlandward in his braies, wielding a heavy claidhmor! (Well.... Maybe! Lol ;) Please know that I do answer each review! See you back here next week! Thanks for reading!

10. Chapter 9

A/N: This chapter deals with severe depression. If you have issues with that or find it may be a trigger for you, please skip over the section in italics that begins and ends with a triple asterisk.

As always- thanks to my beta girls- Prettyflour and Ninmesarra- you guys rule the world! Without you, my story would be a pitiful attempt.... Thanks for your guidance and support!

~*HR*~

Plodding on, putting one foot in front of the other, Rose wiped the sweat from her brow. Her valise was feeling heavy in her hand, and she felt guilty for leaving without really saying good-bye to her new family. It was better that way. With a small amount of coercion from them, and Rose would have changed her mind. But she could not fathom the thought of placing them in danger again.

She had eaten the last of her bread and cheese during the night. Her stomach growled in protest of its emptiness. She'd spied some berries not far from her camp, but couldn't be sure if they were safe or not to eat. She'd contemplated eating them anyway, but decided that ending her life in such a way was the coward's way out.

She'd made it the place where the Hales' village had been, but it was still in ruins.

She'd wandered close to the charred remains that had been her home. The pain the sight caused drove her to her knees. She collapsed in a heap and curled in on herself to try and hold the pain in. It managed to escape in great, heaving, throat-ripping sobs.

She'd thought back to the happy times she'd shared with Ewan and the too brief time she'd been able to cuddle her son to her chest. That wee lad was their pride and joy- the apple of their eyes. Ewan would hurry home from his duties to spoil him with attention. He hadn't even had a chance to live. And Rose blamed herself.

Her fingertips traced the scabs that had formed on her cheek and she grimaced. The physical pain had helped release the emotional pain. Even if only for a moment.

****Thinking about how horrible her curse of beauty was and the consequences that it'd had on her life, she grabbed a sharp rock and slashed her cheek three times. Rose hoped that it would mar her enough that no one would consider her beautiful anymore. She hated her appearance. If she could have been an ugly shrew, her life would have turned out so differently. Or even if she could have just been plain- with nothing special to separate her from the other women.*

*Feeling the need to change more than just her face, she grabbed the handle of the knife she had hidden within her braid again and chopped her braid off. Her hair fell around her shoulders in uneven lengths. She couldn't bring herself to care at all. ****

She startled at the sound of footsteps behind her. She'd thought herself well-hidden in the brush and undergrowth of the forest. Her heart pounded in her ears. Silent tears escaped and made tracks down her cheeks as terror flooded her soul.

Slowly she turned, looking behind for the maker of the noise. Her jaw dropped and she stared in surprise.

"Katie?" she whispered.

"Rosalie?" the woman whispered back. "Can it really be?" She reached out a hand and caressed Rosalie's cheek.

"I was about to ask ye the same. H-h-how are ye here?" Rose whispered. "Or am I only dreaming?"

"Tis nay any dream," the blonde girl said as she teasingly pinched Rose's arm.

"But I saw ye all dead in the house. Nay one got out. I dinnae understand."

"I heard ye scream, Rosalie. I could nae get Collin off of me to go with ye. I tried. I really did. By the time I managed to get out of the hut, ye were long gone. I could nae get the others to wake up either. I tried to drag Collin out, but I could nae. He was too heavy. The others.... Weel, I dinnae ken, I could nae get them though. And then, I could nae find ye. I looked for ye for a fortnight afore someone found me and took me with them. I tried to tell them to find ye, but they kenned who had taken ye. It took me years to let ye go, and now here ye are. How did ye get away from the MacDougald?" Katie paced the ground back and forth while waiting for Rosalie's answer.

"A m-merchant helped get away. When they MacDougald found out, he killed him, but I was safely ensconced with the Hales by then, where were ye Katie?" Rose whispered her question, and before giving her the time to answer, she sobbed out, "I'm so sorry! I dinnae mean for mama and papa to get killed! I'm so sorry. It was me they wanted. I should ne'er have lived past birth, Katie! I'm so-" the words were stuck deep in her throat. Her cries tore out from her body like an arrow shooting from a bow. Tears left streaks in the dirt on her cheeks.

Katie gathered her close and rocked her back and forth, "Rose, surely ye ken ye are nae to blame for what happened. I ne'er thought that! Never!" she vowed. "I thought ye must have died at the hands of that beast when we ne'er heard about ye. Mama and Papa would nae want ye to blame yerself either, ye ken. Nay one could e'er think that. They were proud of ye." Katie continued to rub soothing circles into Rosalie's back as she waited for her tears to abate.

Wiping her eyes, Rosalie pulled back and looked at the face so like her own. The blue eyes were mirrors of her own. The only difference she could see, besides a different nose shape, were etched laugh lines around her eyes and mouth. Katie's face was framed by brown hair streaked with gray instead of the honey gold color of Rose's hair.

Katie was appraising Rose's appearance too. She took in the dirty, bedraggled state of her, and the scratches down her face. Taking note of the way her hung in different lengths around her shoulders, Katie sighed, her heart heavy. "What happened to ye, Rose? Ye look like ye've been in a fight. Are ye still being chased by evil men?" she questioned quietly.

"I dinnae think so. It is nae men I run from now, anyhow. Nay, I run from memories and my own curse," Rose told her quietly.

"I dinnae understand. Ye're own curse?"

Rose found herself spilling her story out to Katie. It came in fits and starts among many tears. Katie cried for Rose too. She'd been through so much. When the tale was finished, Katie sighed again. "I wish I could tell ye how sorry I am, but there are nay words to describe it."

Rosalie stood and helped Katie to her feet as well. "I am so glad ye dinnae die in the fire, Katie! I can nae believe my sister is still alive!" she exclaimed. She grinned widely for the first time since leaving Cullshire.

Katie hugged Rosalie tightly to her again and whispered her agreement. Pulling back, Rosalie glanced around for the first time since laying eyes on her sister. She noticed the wagon and contingent of men surrounding them. Rose's eyes widened in fear before quickly glancing back at Katie.

"Katie? What's going on? Where are ye going?"

"Rose, dinnae fret. I promise we will both be fine. Ye can come with me to see Laird Cunningham. I am travelling with my daughter, Siobhan, so he and she can sign the betrothal papers. Why dinnae ye come with us? It will be good to have ye along. We can talk more whilst we are there. We plan to stay two months there so Seth and Siobhan can acquaint themselves. I ken they will have room for ye too."

Rose chewed her lip as she thought. Should she risk going with her sister? She'd thought her dead all these years, only to find her again. Could it be the fates finally smiling on her? With a quick nod, she joined Katie in the waiting carriage and was introduced to her niece.

~*HR*~

The food sat like a boulder in his stomach. He couldn't sleep either. The bags under his eyes only served to emphasize the emptiness within their glorious orbs. The one glittering blue was now lifeless. His hair hung in dirty curls and wild disarray. He forced himself to get up and run to the edge of the forest to empty his stomach again. When the retching stopped, he returned to the hall and sat at the table with Bella and Edward.

"Emmett, ye can nae keep on like this. We have to either find her or ye have to get over her. Ye are wasting away to nothing and I can nae stand it."

With a roll of his eyes, Emmett stood from the table and trudged to his chamber. He sat on the bed and held the pillow she'd used tightly to him. His heart was gone. Rose had ripped it from his chest when she'd left. He couldn't eat without remembering the conversations they'd partaken of at the table. He couldn't sleep without her invading his dreams and tantalizing him, only for him to wake gripping a cold pillow. The memory of the precious commodity her laughter and smile had been mocked him. He had no desire to bathe either. Edward was threatening to tie him up and plunge him in the freezing loch before long if he didn't clean himself up soon.

Motivation was a thing of the past. With his heart gone, his reason for existing was gone as well. It hurt to breathe. He stared out the window, praying she'd return soon. After hours would go by and there was still no Rosalie, he'd make his way to the chapel and light a candle, praying for her safety. He begged God to not let any more harm come to her. He wouldn't be able to stand it if something happened to her because he'd driven her off.

~*HR*~

Two Weeks Later

Emmett sat sharpening his claidhmor for lack of anything else to do as he stared, still watching, out the window. There was a ruckus at the gate. The messenger finally made it in the hall. Soon there was a loud knock upon his chamber door.

"Emmett!" his twin yelled.

With a sigh, he lay down his sword and opened the thick door. He grunted a greeting at his unwelcome visitor.

Edward slapped his shoulder and held the missive out to him. "Read this. Ye need to do it. Right. Now."

Emmett grabbed the parchment and began reading. His eyes moving back and forth over the paper. A frown appeared on his face before he quickly looked up, his blues eyes meeting the topaz eyes of his brother. "Is this for real?"

"Weel, I certainly dinnae write it and neither did Bella. It bears looking into, dinnae ye think?" Edward questioned.

With a nod, Emmett gathered a change of clothes, a clean plaid, and a saddle bag. Grabbing Edward in bear hug, he pounded his back and laughed for the first time in close to a month. Setting Edward back on his feet, Emmett ran down the stairs and loaded another sack with hard tack and salted meats, bread, cheese and fruit for the journey he was making.

Leaving the keep, taking two steps at a time, he noticed Jacob had their horses saddled. He grabbed the reins and mounted up, spurring his horse on with Jacob right behind him.

~*HR*~

A/N: So? What do you think? Rose's sister managed to escape the fire too! That's good news, right? I'll do my best to have Chapter 10 posted next week. It's not flowing so well right now, though. :(

11. Chapter 10

A/N: Thanks to my betas ninmesarra and prettyflour. Prettyflour made my letter in this chappy totally sound one hundred times better, so thank you SOOO much- a million orange skittles to you, girl! And Ninmesarra- thanks for keeping my grammar in check! :)

~*HR*~

It took only half a day to reach the burned ashes of Rosalie's former village. Emmett cast his eyes around, taking in the desolate sight of the destruction around him. All because men could not handle being denied. He quickly dismounted and tossed the reins to Jacob. He meandered down what used to be a road. The piles of burned rubble made his heart ache. He stopped before the debris of a small cottage and stared at it. *This could be the one that she lived in*, he thought morosely.

He knelt on the ground before the remains, and stared at the dirt and grass. A few rocks were scattered about and he picked some of the gravel up. He trailed it through his fingers and let them fall back to the ground. Again and again he repeated the action.

He stood and turned around, meeting the black eyes of Jacob. "I dinnae ken which house was hers, but I can nae imagine living through this horror. Nay one but she survived." He heaved a soul-weary sigh.

He studied the ground around him and noticed a lone set of footprints leading to what used to be the back of the cottage. He followed them, curious as to what would be there. He didn't expect to see a long blond braid lying at the base of what appeared to be a stone memorial. He looked at the braid closely and knew that it was hers. His fingers caressed the shorn ends of it. He blinked rapidly and stood.

Angrily he marched over to Jacob and grabbed the reins from him. He mounted his horse and sat staring at the landscape around him. "Men are evil, Jacob. I dinnae understand how God create such evil beings. He kens what's going to happen, aye? How could allow such a beautiful soul as Rosalie to be so brutally used and abused?"

Jacob mulled the questions over before he answered, "I dinnae ken exactly how God thinks. Most days, I am nay even sure he exists. But it is nae God's fault that men are evil. That blackness comes from within them. They choose nay to be good and so nurture the bad that lurks in each of us. Weel, that is what I think."

Staring at his friend for a moment or two, Emmett finally nodded before galloping off toward Lamburton where the Kerelaw castle was nestled.

When they stopped for the night by a stream, Jacob lit a fire while Emmett cleaned a rabbit they caught. He spit it on a stick and roasted it over the fire. It was a good thing Emmett had packed two loaves of bread and plenty of salted meat. One small rabbit wasn't enough for one of them, let alone two.

After they'd eaten enough to tame their hunger, Jacob went to wash up in the stream while Emmett pulled the missive from his saddle bag to read it again.

Sir MacCullen,

I have recently found my sister, Rosalie- long thought dead- and she has told me of her history. I can tell that she misses you and cares for you deeply. I can see it in her eyes when she speaks of you. I implore you to come quickly to Kerelaw castle. We will only be staying for two months before returning to my husband- the second born of the Laird Makenzie. Rosalie has not decided whether she will return with us and I fear she may set about wandering again. She believes that her past has marked her cursed. I believe that she is beginning to change her mind about that, but I cannot be certain. I believe I said enough for now.

God Speed,

Lady Makenzie

After reading it through once more, he returned it to his saddle bag and stripped his clothes to dip in the icy water of the stream. He felt as though he'd rolled in dirt and needed to remove it. As soon as he was finished with his quick bath, he spread out his bedroll and lay beside the fire. Emmett wanted to get what sleep he could before they had to be on their way again.

~*HR*~

Rosalie stared into the fire, watching the flames lick the wood. The glow was beautiful in its oranges, reds, and blues. She was trying not to think, but it was impossible to keep her thoughts at bay. Her mind really wanted to replay the conversation she had with the priest that morning.

"Child, I ken some about ye're troubles. If ye e'er want to speak of them, I'd be happy to counsel ye," the aging man had told her.

She sat there for a time, thinking of whether or not she should open up to him. She heard his audible sigh and the rustle of his robe as he turned to leave. "Wait, please," she whispered. He sat beside her quietly, waiting for her to begin.

"I am cursed," came her whispered confession.

"I dinnae believe that. I have watched ye with the village children. Ye are good to them. Ye have a good heart. Tis the men what used ye that are cursed. They have evil in their hearts and ken not how to do good, most of them. Ye dinnae beg them to defile and use ye, did ye?"

"Nay," she managed to garble out.

"Then I dinnae think ye have to confess to anything regarding that. If ye must do a penance, then here is what ye must do..."

She continued to watch the fire consume the kindling. She moved some of the lumber to the back of the fireplace with the poker, when it sparked out toward her. She couldn't let go of the memories. The past had such a hold on her that it was impossible to let go. She'd said her penance, but it seemed like it wasn't enough yet.

She stood from the chair and walked quickly up the stairs to the room she was sharing with Katie. Katie's husband Malcolm was staying with the men in the hall. She shed her dress and climbed quickly between the cool linens. Unable to relax, she began to recite some of the stories that Emmett had told her until she finally fell asleep.

~*HR*~

The morning was cold and bleary. The mist was cold as it fell softly to the ground. Emmett and Jacob were both glad to be almost at the end of their journey. They'd met with bandits the night before that thought they'd like to lift what coin the two men travelled with. They were not expecting to see The Black, as most people referred to Jacob. He was tall, dark, and wolf-like in his appearance and could hunt, track, and kill with the quick efficiency of a wolf. When he stood up out of his bedroll, claidhmor at the ready, the men before him began to quake. Emmett had jumped quickly to the ready, unsheathing his sword. The sight of his boulder-like appearance was enough to have them running. Emmett couldn't help but laugh at the memory.

Jacob quirked his brow at Emmett in curiosity, only to laugh at his antics, "Tis the Black, and a mountain! Away with us, now!" His voice mimicked a lady's voice as he joked with Jacob. "We must need more men to dispatch these two! Why The Black could end us all!"

Cresting a hill, they noticed a castle nestled amongst the rock and trees on the next hill. With a joyful shout, Emmett kicked his horse into a full gallop, yelling over his shoulder, "Last one there has to groom the horses!"

Jacob leaned forward in the saddle, his horse picking up on his silent cue and let the horse have free rein. It was a close call, with Emmett winning by a hair. The men were surrounded instantly by Cunninghams. Emmett explained their business and Jacob lead the horses to the stable. A man that introduced himself as Donald led Emmett into the keep.

~*HR*~

Rosalie heard the commotion in the bailey and glanced through the window. Her breath caught in her throat and she rushed from the room. Flying down the stairs and into the hall, Rosalie knocked into a very familiar back. The muscles were hard and well-defined. She let out an, "oompf!" at the rough collision.

She stepped back and the figure in front of her slowly turned around. Her eyes met the most beautiful blue ever. They were streaked with gray, reminding her of a slightly cloudy day. "How did ye find me?" she questioned.

"Mayhaps I should answer that," her sister Katie answered as she stepped forward, "I sent him a letter explaining where you were. Ye can be mad at me, but I ken that ye need him."

Rose stared at her sister in surprise. Glancing back at Emmett, she gripped his hand again, tightly. "Would ye like to take a walk about?"

"Aye, Rosie, I would," Emmett replied, offering his arm.

~*HR*~

A/N: I've never been to Kerelaw Castle, so I have taken creative license with it. Thanks!

Now, I see all these people reading, and I want to know if you like the story or not. Tell me if there is something I can do better. :) Thanks!

12. Chapter 11

A/N: Sorry it's later today, but it's a holiday and I'm off visiting family... But, it's better late than never right?

BIG HUGE Thanks and TONS of LOVE to my beta girls- Nimmesarra and Pretty flour. Thanks for all the hard work you guys put in- any mistakes left, are probably because I changed something in last minute tinkering...

No infringement intended... Characters belong to SM...

~*HR*~

The couple was silent as they walked through the lightly wooded forest just outside the keep's walls. Rosalie was taking him to her favorite meadow- a spot that was full of wild flowers. She'd found it by accident a few days prior.

Thoughts running through Rose's mind kept her from focusing well enough on the terrain around her. Catching her foot in a tree root, she pitched forward. Intending to brace herself for the fall, she was surprised to feel herself hauled backwards and upright against a solid chest. Her breathing was ragged, and she tried to force it to slow. Her eyes shut as she leaned into Emmett's steady strength. "Thank ye," she whispered.

"Dinnae think of it. I like saving wee damsel's," he whispered into her ear. Placing her feet firmly back on the ground, he was a bit surprised when she grabbed his hand and led him on beneath the canopy of trees.

When they finally emerged into a small clearing, his eyes swept over it, taking note of the quiet beauty that surrounded him as he checked for danger. Content that they were safe, his eyes met Rosalie's. "Why did ye run from me, lass?" he quietly inquired.

Her sigh disrupted the stillness of the air as he waited for her response. Her eyes filled with tears and she furiously blinked them back. "I... I dinnae want to leave... Cullshire was- is my home...Ye and yours are my family. But I could nae risk placing ye're lives in danger. I could nae bear it if... if something happened to ye all because of me," Her eyes were roaming over the meadow and she bent to pick a daisy up. She began to quietly pick the petals off of it.

"Rose, look at me please." When she didn't, Emmett took a step closer to her. He lifted her tear-streaked face to his with a finger under her chin. "Rosie, naught will happen to us anytime soon. We have many allies that are ready to fight with us and for us. Nay just the Piersons, but also the Swanningshams, and the king's own armies as Bella is his favorite niece, the Douglas's and Stewarts as well, just to name a few. And ye must nay forget ye're own allies now." Her furrowed brow caused him to continue, "Ye ken that ye're sister and her husband would protect ye if they could and so they, too, are ye're allies, lass. Ye are nay alone anymore." He wiped the lingering tears from her cheeks and walked a little further into the meadow. He sunk down onto his knees and waited for her to speak.

"I ne'er thought about having my own allies. But, Emmett, I can nae put ye at risk. I can nae lose another person I love-" she stopped in the midst of her declaration. She stood rooted to the spot as she closed her eyes in agony again. *I love him? I love him. When did that happen? I can nae love him. I can nae do it again.*

Emmett was speaking to her, but his words were making no sense at that moment. Her mind was overflowing with thoughts and memories. She could picture her mother and father tucking her in and telling her they loved her before they met their fateful end. Her husband caressing her cheek as he looked deep into her eyes and confessed his love for her. She could see herself rocking the cradle with her tiny son sleeping as she whispered again, "I love you." All the people that she'd ever loved or that had loved her in return, with the exception of Katie, had died.

"Emmett, nay!" Rose exclaimed, shocking him into silence with her outburst. "Ye can nae love me. I can nae love ye. It will nae end weel for ye. I can nae do it again."

"Rosie Posie, please. Just trust in me. Trust that I will keep us safe. Trust that I will be able to protect us both. I love ye too, Rosie-Mine. I dinnae want to return without ye. I'll follow ye to the ends of the earth if I must, to prove it to ye. I'll crawl across the lands and beg ye, if it will help. I can nae be without ye. Ye are my heart now." His eyes pleaded with her to understand and to trust him.

She covered her face with her hands and wept. She crumpled to the ground, and he sat beside her and gathered her to him. He rubbed soothing circles into her back and tried to get her to relax. "Please dinnae cry anymore, love," he whispered. She glanced up at him and he reached out his hand to caress the scratches on her cheek. "What happened here? Do I need to hurt someone?"

She sighed and admitted, "I did it. And I cut my hair off. It was much worse when we arrived here. Katie managed to fix it for me."

He lifted the shoulder length honeyed locks from her neck and let them sift through his fingers. His fingertip lightly traced the three slashes on her cheek. "Why?"

"I can nae be beautiful anymore. I dinnae want this curse of beauty. I dinnae ask for it. Why me Emmett? Why?" she sobbed her frustrations out.

"Well, I do ken that ye are most assuredly beautiful, but e'en if ye were the most wrinkled old woman around, I would still think ye beautiful Rosie. Because I love ye. As for the others- ye are nae responsible for the evils of the men that harmed ye and took ye're family from ye. I wish I kenned why God allowed such evil to live, but I dinnae and it makes me angry. Ye are nae to blame. Ye are nae responsible for it. I'll tell it to ye every day if I must, until ye finally believe me."

She leaned her head against his strong chest and let the tears flow once more. When she'd finally cried them all out, and there was nothing left inside, she returned her gaze to his. Her whisper barely reached his ear, "I'll try."

Grabbing her in a fierce hug, he dragged her into his lap. His lips descended on hers in what he intended to be a passionate kiss. She stiffened though and he lifted his head. "I'll nay do anything ye dinnae want me to, Rose. All ye have to do is say to stop and I will. I dinnae want ye to be afraid of me. I love ye. May I kiss ye?" She nibbled at her lip in thought before nodding. Not wanting to spook her, he asked, "Are ye certain?"

In answer, she leaned up and pressed her mouth firmly to his. He stroked one hand along her jaw, curved it around to the back of her head and entangled it in her short strands. The other hand trailed down her side and around to her back, anchoring her firmly against him. Her own hands delved into his hair to scratch lightly at his scalp. He slanted his lips over hers opening slightly. His breath was completely stolen from him when she mimicked the gesture and traced his bottom lip with her tongue. He let his dance with hers until she pulled back, panting and gasping for air. He cuddled her closer to him, trying not to allow her to feel the way she affected him.

“What now, Emmett?” she asked quietly.

“Weel, I’d love it verra much if ye’d agree to be my wife, but e’en if ye will nae yet, I will be content to just be with ye, talk with ye, however ye care to be. I love ye lass, and I’ll wait my life for ye if I must.”

She gazed into his eyes and found only love and sincerity in their depths. There was no ulterior motive, no desire to wound, possess, or dominate her. She believed he only wanted to love her. Her breath hitched in her throat. Could she do it? Could she let herself love and be loved again? It scared her to death to even contemplate losing another that she loved more than life. She wanted to trust him when he said he’d keep them safe, but Ewan had said that, too. *But Emmett isn’t Ewan*, her heart cried. *Nay; he isn’t. He’s stronger. And we do have many an ally now. May haps I can do this.* Her mind began to agree with her heart at long last. That didn’t stop her fear, but she placed it in the back of her mind to sort through later. At this moment, she wanted to enjoy her time with Emmett- for however long it lasted.

Standing, she held her hand out to him. He stood and took her dainty hand in his own large one, marveling at how delicate she was. He began to lead her back to the keep. When they reached the edge of the forest, he stopped and turned to face her. “Does this mean ye’ll come back to Cullshire with me? Or will I be traipsing across the countryside again, searching for my heart, lass?”

She giggled at his dramatic antics, but replied seriously, “I’ll go with ye, but only on one condition.”

He raised his eyebrow, encouraging her to continue on. When she hesitated, he reminded her, “I’d do anything I can to make ye happy lass. Ye dinnae have to fear asking me anything.”

“I’d like to go back with Katie and meet the rest of her family before we return. I have many questions still to ask her and I ken I still have issues to work through Emmett. But I promise ye, I’ll try. I love ye, too, and that’s the part that scares me most.”

He sighed, knowing it would take her time to work it all out for herself, and pulled her to him again. He placed a chaste kiss on her lips and tucked her into his side for the remainder of their walk to the castle.

~*HR*~

Sorry it’s kind of short! But, Chapter 12 has already been sent off to my lovely beta girls... Should be able to post next week, like normal :)

Leave some love... or hate, whichever makes you feel good- I just want to know what you think!

13. Chapter 12

A/N: It's been a while since I stuck this at the top of chapter: the characters belong to SM- the story however is one of my babies... No infringement intended.

~*HR*~

When Rose and Emmett returned, the melee they could hear from the keep caused them to hasten in the hall. The Makenzies and Cunninghams were staring at Jacob as if he were a monster. Both groups of men had the lust of power in their eyes. If they could go down in history as killing the Black, then they'd be considered unstoppable.

Emmett dropped Rosalie's hand and rushed to Jacob's side. He stood proud and tall- intimidating in his bulky muscle. He hadn't realized Rose was hot on his heels to try and stop the ridiculousness before it got out of hand. She began by addressing Laird Cunningham, "My Laird, ye must ken that the Black is good friends with the MacCullens and the King himself. Ye must nay do this."

"I can, ye see, he was kissing my betrothed," he spat at Rosalie.

"What? Surely ye are mistaken," Emmett began. Jacob glanced at him and the look in his eyes told Emmett it was no mistake. Stepping closer to Jacob, Emmett whispered lowly, "What the hell are ye doing? We can nae fight and beat this many men ye great idiot!"

Jacob whispered back, "I can nae let her marry him, and they are nae betrothed yet. Nay papers have been signed."

Addressing the angry mob, Emmett began again, "Have ye signed the papers already then?" He waited a moment and no one responded. "Weel, then, I imagine she is nae ye're betrothed yet and he was nae committing any crime. She is still a free maiden, aye?"

Her father stepped forward, "He was almost defiling my lass! I'll nay stand for it. His hands were nae where they should have been."

"Weel, I'm sorry for that, but as she and he," Emmett motioned to Siobhan and the Cunningham, "have nae signed anything yet, then it is nae a punishable offense. Although, if Cunningham does nae want her, ye could always make her marry Jacob."

Siobhan's eyes were saucer wide and full of hope. She looked to her father, "Papa, is it possible?"

Makenzie looked to Cunningham and the two men retreated to the laird's solar. They were in there for well over an hour. When they finally reappeared, Makenzie gripped his wife's hand and motioned his daughter to follow him. Rose, stepped a few feet closer to hear what was said.

Her brother-in-law was talking lowly, but she was able to make out most of the words, "We agreed ye'll nay wed... Ye must marry...Black... I had to make amends or.... war... We can nae afford to battle... Do ye understand the position... We dinnae have... coin... I dinnae ken how to meet his demands... starving... Ye are in great trouble lass. Ye're new husband will... make amends for half of what... demanded..."

Rose stepped away quickly and related what she'd heard to Emmett. He chuckled, "Weel, Jacob should nae have been caught with ye're niece lass. Dinnae worry, Rosie. He'll take good care o' her. If he dinnae want to marry her, he'd nay have allowed himself to get caught. Tis his own fault. And he has plenty of coin to make the restitution demands from his work as a mercenary in France for several years."

Jacob stepped close to Rosalie and tried to reassure her too, "I ken ye think I just met her, but I have known that woman for the last year. I'll admit to having seen her when she was but a wee girl and she was adorable, but last year, I saved her from reivers and ne'er told her father about it. They were going to steal her away. I could nae have anyone go about saying that I was kind now, could I? What would that do to my malicious reputation? I took her back to them then and have seen her several times since. She's beautiful, and I needed what she offered. I'll nay lie and say I love her yet, but I most likely could. I will see to it she is happy."

Rosalie looked to Siobhan and caught her staring at Jacob. The look in her eyes was the same that she'd seen in Bella's eyes when she looked at Edward and in Esme's eyes for Carlisle. Her not-so-little niece was in love with the Black. How could Rose object? But, then again, it wasn't her place to accept or reject his suit of her niece. She knew that Jacob wouldn't do anything to hurt her. Rosalie would have Emmett take care of him if he did.

She nodded at Jacob and told him good luck. She glanced over at her sister and joined the circle at her beckoning. "Siobhan must marry the Black. Ye ken him much better than I. Will he care for her weel? I can nae bear the thought of placing my baby's life in the hands of that man. The stories about him--"

"Are nae *all* true," Rose reassured her flustered sister. "He will take care of her. I promise ye that. He is nae a poor mon either, so she will nay want for anything. Nor will their children."

"Weel, I suppose we mustn't stay any longer. It seems we've already overstayed our weelcome," Makenzie told them and they set off to gather all their belongings.

Laird Cunningham did manage to allow them a quick meal before they set out. If the group kept a steady and quick pace, they could reach the Makenzie holdings in a fortnight.

~*HR*~

They had travelled for a few hours before it grew too dark to continue on. Stopping beside a stream, the men cared for the horses while the few women set about gathering wood from the underbrush for a fire. Once they were all set for the night and had eaten, Rose joined Emmett for walk.

They followed the stream for a while before stopping alongside a small outcropping of rocks. They sat beside each other on one and watched the slight current of the stream ripple the water's surface.

"Ye ken, for so long, I thought if I were plain that all of the pain in my past could have been avoided," Rose's soft voice cut through the quiet that surrounded them. "Before we left the Cunningham's, the priest and I spoke one last time. He said something that I'm tying verra hard to accept." Her voice trailed off

quietly as she was once again lost in thought.

Emmett stared at her profile for a while before finally asking, “What did he tell ye, Rosie?”

“He said that may haps all the bad happened to bring me to now, where it’s finally good. That may haps this is what God intended for me to make it to ye,” she finished softly, glancing at him from beneath her lowered lashes.

Watching as he processed her words, she was still surprised at his reply, “If it means that it would have saved ye all the heartache and pain, lass, I’d gladly take ye back there. We’d ne’er have met and that would be beyond despairing, but I’d rather have ye happy, Rosie. And ye ken, e’en if ye were nae so beautiful, I’d still love ye, dinnae ye? It’s the beauty that shines from your eyes, which come from ye’re heart that drew me into ye.” He reached over and wiped the tear that trekked down her cheek at his words.

“Emmett?”

“What is it Rosie-mine?”

“Can I just-?” she halted in her question.

“What do ye need?”

“Kiss me,” she whispered. Her eyes darkened as his lips descended on hers- devouring her honey-flavored lips. They were demanding in their need for each other. She opened her mouth to try to draw a full breath and he plunged his tongue deep in the recesses of her mouth. Their tongues swirled with each other as they showered each other with love.

Emmett slowly dragged his lips from hers and down her jawline, pausing to swirl his tongue over a spot just behind her ear. Her responsive moan spurred him on, and he kissed down her throat and along her shoulders, showering the skin above her dress with kisses and gentle nips.

He pulled the end of the bow that had kept her bodice tied, pulling it down and caressing her now-exposed breasts with his hands as he continued his sensuous assault on her throat. Emmett lifted his head and gazed at the beauty in his hands, groaning, he whispered, “Ye’re so perfect...” He returned his lips to her throat to kiss along the base of it again. His lips travelled down to the tip of her voluptuous breast and slowly drew her nipple into his mouth, suckling it gently. Rose moaned again and drove her fingers into his hair to hold him closer. He moved his mouth to the other breast. Leaning her back on the rock, he lifted her skirts and skimmed his hand lightly up the length of her leg, hooking it over his hip. Grinding himself into her, Emmett pulled back to look into her eyes.

“Why’d ye stop?” she whispered.

“I just remembered we are in the open by a stream. I dinnae want to take ye here. I want you to enjoy it much more, Rosie.”

“But I am, Emmett. Please, dinnae stop,” she pleaded.

He brought his lips to hers again. With one hand he pinched and rolled the pebbled tip of her pink nipple, while the other caressed her thigh, drawing closer and closer to the core of her being. When he finally slipped his finger between the folds, she cried out. Rubbing his finger along the length of her heat he returned his lips to her breasts. Finding just the right spot, he circled his finger over her clit reducing her to a mass of writhing passion. Her pleasure was foremost in his mind. After all the pain she’d suffered through in her life, Emmett was determined to show her just how much she meant to him.

“Oh God, Emmett!” she cried out when he finally plunged a finger into her depths. He relished the sound of his name falling from her lips. He thrust in and out as she moved her hips to the rhythm he set with his talented fingers. His thumb swirled and flicked over the bundle of nerves until finally Rosalie screamed and her muscles spasmed around his finger. He watched Rose’s eyes clench shut as she rode his fingers, and it was almost his undoing. She was the most beautiful thing he’d ever set eyes on.

When she finally calmed her breathing and looked up at Emmett, he had already retied her dress and rearranged her skirts. She inhaled deeply and noticed the musky scent of her release filled the air around them. Emmett kissed her lips gently and held her close.

Finally pulling back, Rose rubbed her hand over the steely erection that was pressing into her. Frowning up at him when he pulled her hand away, she whispered in his ear seductively, “I can help you with that.”

Pulling in a ragged breath, he explained, “That was for you. Only for ye, love. I wanted to make ye feel good, Rosie. I want ye to ken that I dinnae want to only seek *my* pleasure between your creamy thighs, but to give ye more than I e’er take.”

Rosalie smiled at him and gave him a chaste kiss. Emmett grabbed her hand and led her back to the campfire. After they’d eaten, the couple spread out their blankets beside each other and snuggled together until it was Emmett’s turn to keep watch.

The next morning, after breaking their fast with bread and cheese, the contingent of men and the few women continued their trip. They prayed they’d not meet any delays along the way. Because of the carriage and wagon, they still had a long trip ahead of them.

~*HR*~

Can’t wait to see what you guys think! Please leave some reviews and let me know if you love it or hate it!

14. Chapter 13

A/N: Sorry it took a week longer to get this out! It gave me fits! I couldn't get it to flow right. Hopefully you enjoy the ninth attempt at this chapter!

Thank you much to my beta girls: Ninmesarra and Prettyflour- you guys are awesome! *Hugs*

~HR~

Entering through the gates of the Makenzie's keep was a huge relief. The entire party of travelers breathed out a heavy sigh full of contentment that they'd finally reached their destination. They were all soaking wet after travelling two days in the rain with no shelter.

The servants informed the men and ladies that they had hot water for baths, but they were going to have to heat more in order for them all to have steaming water. Rosalie couldn't find it in herself to care if it was hot or cold, so long as she got to wash away the dirt and grime of the past few days. She couldn't decide if she were happier about the idea of a hot bath, a real bed, or an actual meal. They'd lived on salted meats and stale bread for most of their trip. Occasionally the men were able to snare a few rabbits or catch a mess of fish to cook, but those nights were few and far between.

One of the serving ladies grabbed Rose by the hand and led her up to the chamber she would use while here. A bath was already waiting for her. Rosalie hurriedly discarded her filthy dress and stepped quickly in the water before it had a chance to cool off. She savored the heat that infused her body and soothed away the aches. After a few of minutes of relaxing in the water, she hurried with her cleansing regime.

Stepping from the tub she dressed and brushed her hair then stepped out into the hallway. She glanced around and caught sight of a serving lad. "I'm sorry to be a bother, but can ye help me find my way back to the hall?"

"Of course, mistress, just follow me."

When they reached the hall, Rose glanced around. It was being decorated for a celebration and in the hour since they'd arrived, the Makenzie women had set up a beautiful array of flowers- some hung from the mantle over the fireplace, some were in bowls on the table- which were covered with cloths- and some were dressing the doorframe.

"What is all this?" she asked the lad.

"We're havin' a wedding! Siobhan is marryin' up with the Black and the Laird says to do it today. That way he can nae leave."

"Weel, I ken Jacob verra weel, and he will nae be leaving. He gave his word, but I under-"

"There ye are, Rosie-mine," Emmett said, wrapping his arms around her waist and hugging her from behind. He rested his chin on her head, and sighed in contentment. "D'ye ken how happy ye make me, lass?"

Rose turned in his arms and smiled up at him. One finger trailed along his bottom lip as she teased him. "Ye're playing with fire, lass."

Her eyebrow crooked in question and he leaned down to kiss her. Their lips moved together in perfect synchronicity. When he pulled back, he couldn't help but grin at the dazed look in her eyes. He loved knowing that he'd put it there.

The sound of others joining them caused them to step apart, but Emmett kept hold of her hand. Rose heard Kate's laughter and smiled in turn. It was wonderful to know that someone in her family had survived that horrible night and that she was happy.

"Rose, ye ken we could have a double ceremony. I am nay blind to what the two o' ye were doing on our journey back. The long walks and then when ye'd come back, ye're hair was all mussed and crazy. We dinnae mind having ye and Emmett share the ceremony with Siobhan. I'm certain I have a dress for ye to wear as weel that would be appropriate."

"Um, Katie, thank ye for the offer, but I dinnae ken that we are ready for that yet. It's something we'd need to talk about at any rate. How soon will the wedding start?"

"I hope to have it begin within two hours. Ye have plenty of time to discuss it and get ready for it if ye decide ye want to. Just let me ken as ye do," Kate said as she left the couple to see to the feast being prepared in the kitchen.

Emmett was looking at Rose with a look that said 'let's do it!' but Rose was so afraid. Seeing the look in her eyes that told him she was going to run, he gave her hand a slight squeeze and turned to her, "Walk with me, Rosie?"

She nodded her assent and the couple left the keep. They walked quietly through the bailey and out into the open area surrounding the walls. They stopped after a while and Rose sat down amid the heather that grew on the hillside. She picked at a sprig of grass and glanced up at him, waiting.

"Rosie, ye ken I love ye. Ye ken I want to wed with ye. That is nae the question. The question is, are ye ready, Lass?"

Plucking at another bit of grass, Rose contemplated the question. Her thoughts whirled. She was so scared- afraid that something would happen to him because of her. But then she recalled all the allies they had now. And with the almost healed wounds on her cheek, she was hoping she'd no longer be considered breathtakingly beautiful. If her beauty wasn't a question anymore, then she could relax and surrender to the love she felt for Emmett.

"Ye have me verra worried lass. What is going on inside ye're head?"

With a sigh she told him, "I am still afraid Emmett. I ken ye will protect me with ye're verra life and yet that is the part that terrifies me. I dinnae want ye to get hurt because of me. I could nae survive with another loss like that because of me. I almost dinnae last time. If it was nae for ye're family, I would nae have. I just... I want to, ye ken that, aye?" she waited for his nod, "But I can nae be responsible for another's death. I can nae. It will kill me."

Emmett sat beside her and reached a finger over to wipe away the tears that she hadn't known were spilling down her cheeks. "Ye just have to ask yerself, is it

worth it? Is the love we have, and the life that we could have together- is it worth the possible pain and heartache? Ye ken, I have to worry too. Ye are the one that will be bearing my children. Ye are the one what will be left at home if I get called to battle. It will nae be just ye taking a risk, Rosie. But I ken that even if tis only a week, it will be worth it. I love ye, Rosie mine."

"I love ye, too, Emmett." She stopped herself from saying more at that moment. She needed to think. Would a week of passion and love be worth heartache?

"We are nae guaranteed tomorrow lass. I could get called to battle with Edward and be ambushed. Ye could be riding ye're horse and get thrown. There are so many things that could go wrong, but we can nae live in fear of them. We have to grasp the moments that we're given and make the most of them." Placing a chaste kiss on her cheek, Emmett stood up. "I can see that ye have some things to think about. Let's return to the keep and ye can think on it there. Just know that whenever ye are ready to be mine forever, I will be ready and waiting.... For eternity if I must." He helped her stand and tucked her small hand into the crook of his elbow.

Rose allowed him to guide her back inside. She grabbed a piece of bread from the table that was laden with food and went to the chamber she'd bathed in. She nibbled on the bread but the few bites she took felt like lead within her stomach. She set it down on the table by the bed and lay down.

She closed her eyes to the light cascading through the clouds and the window slit, and tried to sort her thoughts. Before she got far into it, she fell into a deep sleep.

A giant man was standing with his back to her. She called his name and he turned to face her. Blues eyes flashing with happiness met hers and she watched his mouth move. No words were audible to her. She glanced down to see what was cradled in his arms. A blanket was bundled around a squirming baby. A tiny fist escaped the fabric to wave in the air. The man brought the baby to her and she gazed into baby blue eyes and sweet face, covered with smooth skin. Looking back up at the man, she could see his lips form the words, "I love you."

The image faded and Ewan was standing before her. He grabbed her hand and led her to a rocking chair. It was the same chair that had graced the cottage they'd shared. He began to speak, "Rose, ye can nae live ye're life in fear. Ye must embrace it and be happy. I dinnae want ye to mourn for me any longer. Ye're parents dinnae want ye to mourn for them anymore either. We are all safe and happy. We may nay have died easy deaths, but we'd do it all over again to keep ye safe. Dinnae let yerself lose the future, a beautiful future of happiness because ye can nae let go of the past. Ye need to be happy, Rosalie."

"But Ewan! I can nae be responsible for anyone else dying because of me!"

"Ye were ne'er responsible. Ye have been told so many times that ye can nae be held responsible for the selfishness of others. When will ye believe it? Ye must nay blame yerself for the evil in others. Ye dinnae tell them to kill us. Ye dinnae choose to be beautiful. Let us go. Let us go so that ye can go on with ye're life and live. We need ye to be happy."

Tears were pouring down her cheeks as Ewan left the cottage. She clutched her heart in agony.

Standing she blinked and was transported to the pile of rocks she'd stacked to try to create a memorial of sorts. She fell at the base of it and cried. When her tears were spent, she sat up and plucked at the flower growing by the base of the stack. She placed it lovingly on the top of it and whispered "I love you. I'll ne'er forget you."

The scene faded again and she was gazing at Emmett. The depth of love radiating in his eyes rocked her to her soul. She knew what she needed to do.

She bolted upright in the bed. Glancing around, Rose noticed that quite some time had passed. She got out of the bed and went to the ewer and bowl in the corner. Pouring some water into it and cleaning her face, she washed away the evidence of the few tears she'd cried.

Grabbing the bag that sat at the foot of the large bed, she pulled out the silver dress Katie had made for her. The dress had a blue sash on it and the laces on the stays were of the same blue. Slipping it on, she tied all the laces and slipped her feet into the slippers at the foot of the bed. She quickly ran a brush through her hair and left the room to find Katie.

In the hall she found her brother-in-law. He was happy to lead her to where Katie was helping Siobhan finish readying for the ceremony. She knocked on the chamber door and was let in by a maid.

"Siobhan! Ye look amazing!" Rose couldn't help but smile at the sparkle in her niece's eyes. "Katie, can I ask ye something verra quickly?"

Katie nodded and Rose walked quickly over to her. Siobhan watched as Rosalie whispered into her ear and saw her mother nod. She was curious as to what that had been about, but wasn't able to inquire about it. They were releasing her hair from the rags they'd rolled it in to fashion curls to allow to hang freely down her back.

Rosalie hurried quickly out of the chamber and down into the hall. Her eyes were immediately drawn to the man that held her heart. He turned around and winked at her, apparently as aware of her as she was of him. She beckoned him to her and Emmett made his way across the room.

"Have ye decided what ye want, Rosie mine?"

~HR~

A/N: Hope you've enjoyed the ride so far! We are almost finished with this story! I love reviews! (hint, hint ;)

15. Chapter 14

A/N: Do you hate me for leaving it where i did last time? I surely hope not! I promise, it will be worth it!

Thanks go out to my betas: Ninmesarra and Prettyflour- you girls Rock my Words :)

~*HR*~

She beckoned him to her and Emmett made his way across the room.

“Have ye decided what ye want, Rosie mine?”

“I did,” she whispered. Her eyes darkened as she gazed up at him. “D’ye ken that I had the strangest dream that led me to my decision. I’ll tell ye about it soon, but if ye still want to marry me, then ye best get ready, Emmett. I dinnae think it will take Siobhan long to finish. They were just finishing her hair when I came to find ye.”

His eyes were full of an emotion she couldn’t quite name as he asked, “Ye’re verra sure? I will nae let ye run, Rosie mine.”

“Aye, Emmett, I am verra sure. I love ye.”

“I love ye too, Rose. Ye’re goin’ to have to tell me what made ye so certain once we are wed. But it will have to wait. I need to go fetch my other plaid and shirt. I’ll meet ye at the altar soon,” she giggled as he almost ran from the hall to ready himself for the ceremony.

She found Jacob by the fireplace staring into the ashes. “What are ye thinking of?”

“I just dinnae want to put her in danger. There are many people that want to kill me for the reputation that it will bring them. I need to keep her safe,” was his quiet reply.

“Ye ken, Jacob, a wise man once told me that we can nae think only of what may go wrong, but of the happiness we can have. Is the happiness worth the possible heartache?”

His face was stony and his eyes pensive as he thought. Once he’d sorted it out, he answered, “Aye, it will be.” He smiled at Rose as he perused the soft smile that graced her face. “Ye’ve changed, Rose. Dinnae think this anything but a compliment- ye look so happy now. Even just since yesterday. Emmett too, is verra changed. Ye are good for each other.”

“Aye, we are. I love him verra much Jacob.”

“Any fool could see that,” he smiled at her. Growing serious again, he said, “I will take care of her. I *will* keep her safe.”

“I ken it. So does she or she’d ne’er have agreed to this. In just the few weeks I’ve kenned her I realize that much,” she smiled and then remembered she had a question, “Oh, do ye mind if Emmett and I share ye’re ceremony?”

He laughed as he replied, “O’course not! It would be an honor!”

“Weel, that is a relief as he is dressing for it now,” she laughed.

They joined the others in the hall as they awaited the other parties necessary for the ceremony. When Emmett reappeared, He wrapped her in his arms and whispered, “Ye’ve made the happiest mon in the world!” and kissed her quickly on the lips.

It wasn’t long before Siobhan made her descent in the hall. Everyone fell silent as they gazed her- thinking she looked absolutely stunning. Her dress was the perfect shade of red to bring out just a hint of blush to her cheeks and her lips looked like rubies. Her blue eyes flashed and her raven hair cascaded in curls down her back. Her ivory skin almost shimmered with her happiness. Rose glanced at Jacob to see a wolfish grin cover his face.

Emmett grabbed Rose’s hand and led her to the front of the hall where the priest waited. Jacob and Siobhan were close behind. The couples knelt and the priest began. Emmett stared straight into her eyes- she swore he was looking right into the depths of her heart- as he repeated his vows. Her mind couldn’t quite wrap around how quickly she’d fallen in love with Emmett.

Some may say that it wasn’t fast at all, but it was only this afternoon that she’d completely let go of the past to embrace the future. She smiled tenderly at her almost-husband. She spoke her vows in a quiet yet firm voice. The smile that encompassed his lips could have lit the entire hall. She was thrilled to be able to make him so happy.

They stared at each other while Siobhan and Jacob exchanged vows and before they knew it, the priest saying to kiss the brides. Emmett whisked her into his arms and their lips met in a crashing force filled with passion and love. He sought entrance to her mouth with his tongue and she opened gladly. He took the kiss to another dimension when he twined his tongue with hers. She’d never been kissed so deeply- *ever*. Finally becoming aware of the raucous catcalls and lewd remarks, Rose pulled back, only too happy to see it wasn’t just her and Emmett lost in each other’s embrace.

Kate was teary-eyed as she offered her congratulations to both couples. She turned to announce that the feast was ready. Everyone took their seats and the meal was served. Rose and Emmett enjoyed the discussion the others were involved in. Rosalie listened as her sister and niece debated the current fashion and Emmett listened as the men discussed recent battles.

The feast finally over, a minstrel started strumming his lute and singing a merry song- a song of a maiden with hair of spun gold, and eyes blue as the sea- no other lass comparing to her beauty; pretty as her namesake, a beautiful flower- the rose. Rosalie looked at Emmett and was able to relax at the reassurance she found in the depths of his eyes. It made her nervous to hear a song about herself. She’d been told that those songs existed, but never believed it.

The men didn’t wait long before demanding a faster tune. When the minstrel acquiesced, the tables were pushed against the wall and the ladies standing about

were quickly grabbed as partners. They were passed from one partner to the next as the men enjoyed the step.

Standing, Emmett held his hand out to Rose and asked, “May I have this dance, wife?”

Giggling, she nodded and laughed as he hauled her from her seat. He danced her around the crowd skillfully until she begged him to stop so she could catch her breath. She’d barely regained her equilibrium before he scooped her up and dashed up the stairs to their awaiting chamber to the catcalls of the watching crowd.

They barely reached their chamber before they could hear the laughter of the men followed by heavy footsteps as Jacob ran past carrying Siobhan, casting a “Good idea!” over his shoulder to Emmett. The door shutting was Emmett’s reply.

Rose laughed at the antics of her husband as he danced a jig around her before grabbing her to him and kissing her soundly. He pulled away and shed his shirt and plaid. Rose’s eyes darkened with desire as she gazed at Emmett’s well-muscled body. She ran a hand lightly over his abs and smiled at the hiss he gave.

She loosened the stays of her dress and watched his eyes as she peeled it from her shoulders and let it pool at her feet in silver puddle. She stepped from the fabric and loosened the tie of her chemise. His breath hitched as Rose pushed it down her body, leaving it lay on the floor beside her dress. When he stood still, panting as he stared at her nakedness, she reached a hand up to play with her nipples. She fought back the laugh as his jaw dropped open.

Finally coming to his senses, Emmett plucked Rosalie up and carried her quickly to the bed. Depositing her softly on the mattress, he quickly shed his braies. The look she gave him as she stared at his body made his member twitch. God he loved this beautiful woman. He found it hard to believe she was truly his now.

Lying beside her, Emmett pulled her into his arms and kissed her deeply as his hands skimmed over her silky skin. The growing passion left them breathless and they couldn’t get enough of each other.

She moaned when his hands finally found her breasts. He alternately pinched and fondled her nipples. Trailing his lips down her throat, he kissed his way to her breasts. He suckled and nibbled her while she writhed beneath him. His hands slid down her stomach to caress down her thighs. He moved his kisses lower; praying he didn’t frighten her with his boldness. He couldn’t *not* taste every inch of her.

Sliding his fingers in her folds to part them, he let his tongue caress her. He teased her, playing with her sensitive nub. While he kissed her so intimately, he thrust a finger deep within her. When she was begging for release, he added another finger and thrust hard, in and out, curling his fingers just so. The sound of his name on her lips as she came apart in his mouth was heavenly.

Kissing his way back up, he paused to lavish her breasts with kisses again. He continued kissing his way up, nibbling on her neck and the spot just behind her ear that drove her crazy. He loved the sound of her panting and moaning, knowing it was him that did that to her.

“Are ye ready, Rosie mine?” he whispered.

“Aye, Emmett, I need ye, now.”

Positioning himself at her entrance, he pushed slowly in, being careful not to hurt her. “Emmett,” she gasped, “more!” He was happy to take orders. Rocking back and forth, he continued to assault her breasts with kisses as he brought her to her peak. Knowing he was going to come quickly, he reached between them to rub her clit. It wasn’t long, before she was shaking and pleading in his arms for him to go harder. Emmett picked up his pace and felt her muscles clench around him, spurring his own release.

Finally spent, he collapsed to the side of her, listening to them both gasp for air. When he calmed enough to speak, he gathered her to his chest, and whispered, “I love ye Rosie mine.”

“I love ye, too, Emmett.”

They quickly fell asleep in each other’s arms.

~*HR*~

A/N: We have a short epilogue, that I’m hoping to post today as well. Please leave me some review love and let me know if you loved it or hated it! :)

16. Epilogue

A/N: And here we are! At the end. I'll see at the bottom!

Of course, I must thank my beta girlies! Ninmesarra and PrettyFlour, you girls have helped turn this story from words that needed help into something readable! Thanks SOO much for all the hard work and effort that you put into it. I luv ya'll!

~*HR*~

Ten Years Later:

The Cullshire Keep was bursting at the seams with family members. Bella, Edward and their five children, Alice, Jasper and their brood of three, Rose, Emmett and their brood of six, Siobhan, Jacob and their two, and Kate and William, and Uncle Carlisle were all present. Sir Charles, Bella's father was due to arrive any minute with his new wife, Susan, and his brother-in-law, the King.

The hall echoed with laughter as the children chased each other and held mock sword-fights with their wooden toys. The adults regaled each other with stories of the previous year as they didn't all get to see each other very often- with Alice residing in England.

It was almost time for the Michealmas dinner. The smells emanating from the kitchen had everyone's stomachs growling. Edward was just about ready to call everyone to dinner when the doors were thrown open and the missing guests entered with a flurry of snow. Dusting the chilled, white powder from their cloaks, the three additions gladly joined the adults surrounding the fireplace to heat their chilled bodies.

Dinner was announced and the nursemaids helped the children find places at the table and assisted the smaller ones' with their dinner. Esme Alice declared that at almost twelve, she was old enough to sit with the adults. No one argued with her, but they did watch the stories they told.

Rosalie excused herself and went to the stairs to find her shawl- she was feeling cool. Pausing, she turned to gaze upon the family she'd almost missed out on. She'd not only gained a husband and six children- Peter, Margaret, Mary, Jamie, Donald, and Gregor- but siblings and nieces and nephews and Sir Charles and Uncle Carlisle were more like fathers to her than mere acquaintances.

She looked at Carlisle and watched his smile dim as he gazed at the empty chair beside him. Esme, at seven and forty years, had conceived. The birth was too hard on both mother and child and they'd had to say good-bye to them both. That was almost six years ago. Carlisle still lavished the great-nieces and nephews with all the love he had in his heart, but Rosalie's broke to see him so lonely. She knew how it felt to lose the ones you held most dear to your heart.

She gazed at the man that had waited patiently for her to deal with the issues of her past and decide to live without fear, making the most of every moment with him. Feeling her eyes on him, he turned to grin at her. His smile never failed to make her heart skip a beat.

Emmett stood and made his way slowly to where she watched her family. Wrapping her in his arms, he asked, "What has ye thinking so heavily, Rosie mine?"

"I was thinking of how I could have missed this. That would have been such a tragedy. I dinnae ken how I would have survived these past years without ye and the bairns. And ye dinnae just give me children, Emmett. Nay, ye gave me an entire family to love and cherish for all my days. I love ye so much. It does nae seem possible, but more today than I did then."

"I ken exactly what ye mean. Tis how I feel for you, love. I'm glad we decided to be more careful after the twins were born. Donald and Gregor were almost the death of ye, wife, and I dinnae think I could live without ye. I dinnae ken how Uncle Carlisle does it."

"He still misses her. It's written in his every smile- they never quite reach as high as they used to."

Rose looked closely at her niece. Noticing how forlorn she appeared, she said a prayer for her. Jacob and Siobhan had dealt with more than their share of grief in the last few years. They'd laid 3 bairns to rest beside their small chalet and it was heartbreaking to see Siobhan so despondent. Rosalie may never have miscarried, but she still missed the son she'd had with Ewan every day. She'd grown enough in herself not to let it affect the relationship she had with her other children. As much as Rose wanted to help, until Siobhan was ready to open up and talk to her, or at least listen to her, there wasn't anything more that she could do.

Shaking off their melancholy thoughts, they turned their attention to the children at the tables- the twins, just barely two years old were both sticking carrots in their noses. Laughing as they went to help the flustered nursemaids, Emmett and Rose rejoined their family.

Despite all the heart ache they'd each suffered separately and what they'd endured together, nothing drove them apart. Rather each obstacle that came their way only knitted them tighter together as a family.

~*HR*~

A/N: I hate to end this story! I hope you all enjoyed reading it as much as I've enjoyed writing it!

I'm starting a new story- not a historical fic this time- called Countdown to Combustion! I've got the first several chapters written and plan to post the first tonight. Here's the summary: After a girls' night in, and drunken truth or dare, Bella goes on three blind dates. She unwinds after each one at her favorite piano bar, where she pours her heart out to bartender, Eddie. He listens and decides she needs dating lessons. Embarrassment, hilarity, and UST all combine in this Countdown to Combustion! Rated M...

Now that that's out there, I hope you guys will leave me some love and let me know if you loved or hated my story- suggestions on how to make them better in the future...

Thanks for sharing this journey with me! It's been fun! See you in the next one! Much love!