

Author Interview Questions on *A New Dawn*

ELLEN HOPKINS

Q: Since we're talking about the Twilight series, we have to ask the obvious question: Edward or Jacob?

A: Definitely Jacob. I was never really attracted to pretty boys, and the whole idea of climbing into bed with somebody who's stone cold is . . . let's just say sometimes I make my husband wear socks to bed.

Q: Do you have a favorite character or moment in the Twilight series?

A: I am rather fascinated by Carlisle. To be a vampire, and yet choose to practice medicine, where every moment is temptation, embodied? And for him to find the necessary self-control over the blood lust central to what he *is*? All men, alive or undead, should be so strong, and so noble!

Q: You were hesitant to read the Twilight series at first. Was there anything you found in the book that you didn't expect?

A: Relationships, and uneasy ones at that, yet relationships that mean more than instinct. The Cullen family, helping each other beyond their most basic need. Ditto the Quileute werewolves, whose pack means more than the hunt.

Q: A few of the essays in *A New Dawn* talk about why vampires are so popular. Ellen Steiber talks about them as a metaphor for what scares us as a society; Rachel Caine talks about Twilight's vampires in particular as appealing because they represent everything our society is not. What do you think is so appealing—or so frightening—about vampires?

A: Well, as a woman, there's something very appealing about being the object of lust. Lust for blood or lust for body is less important than being so desired. I imagine it is no different for men. And for a good number of people, experiencing fear seems to titillate. Why else the preponderance of hardcore adventure seekers?

Q: How do you think Kristina (from your books *Crank* and *Glass*) would get along with Bella, were they to meet?

A: Kristina would probably like Bella. Bree, however, would totally disdain Bella's passivity. Bella, conversely, would probably think Kristina was just another face. And she'd probably be a little intrigued by Bree, who also chooses a monster (although a totally different kind) over just getting by.

SUSAN VAUGHT

Q. Your *A New Dawn* essay suggests that Edward might actually be a sociopath. Have you made sure your number is unlisted?

A: I have gotten plenty of angry email about that one, mostly from young women who got ticked and didn't read the piece through to see the other side of the argument. Once they do, they usually retract the death threats and at least half the nasty insults about my jealousy and crappy writing ability, etc., etc. In my opinion, though, anything of great worth brings with it great risk- there's a lot of risk to Edward, and some ambiguity in his character. Nothing wrong with celebrating that, or poking at it a little bit, right?
But, um, yeah. My number is way unlisted.

Q. We're guessing this essay was at least somewhat influenced by your background in psychology. Do you think your psychology background affects any of your other work?

A: I think that's inevitable, yes. The psychologist in me reacted negatively to the obsessive nature of the relationship between Bella and Edward. If, and I'm just saying if, Edward had really been a sociopath or even just a selfish or bad-tempered guy, Bella might have opened herself up to significant emotional if not physical abuse. In the best of circumstances, obsessive relationships are not safe, though deep, wild first love is always a bit obsessive, no matter how healthy we try to be. I think my profession leads me to be more aware of character composition and dynamics, and how trauma plays out (or should play out) emotionally. I also want to scream incredibly loud when I run across inaccurate depictions of psychological issues, illnesses, or conditions-which is, unfortunately, more often than I'd like!

Q. And of course, the question we're asking all our *New Dawn* contributors: Edward or Jacob?

A: I had a soft spot for Jacob all along, but in the end, I probably would have picked Edward, too.

ROSEMARY CLEMENT-MOORE

Q: In "Romeo, Ripley, and Bella Swan," your essay in *A New Dawn*, you characterize Bella as a classic tragic heroine. Does she have any differences from her predecessors (Juliet, Antigone, and company) that give us hope she might survive the Twilight series?

A: Bella has a self-awareness that could save her, if she would let it. She recognizes her similarities to these heroines, so theoretically, she could learn by their example. But in *New Moon*, five minutes after deciding that Juliet (she) could be happy with Paris (Jacob) and not have to commit suicide, she hears about Edward and it's all "screw Paris, I'm going to Romeo even if it kills me." Obviously we can't rely on rational behavior to save her, bless her heart.

It cracks me up that Bella comes up with these elaborate rationalizations, but again and again proves she's entirely governed by whim and emotion. But then, we don't read about Bella to see her be all logical, do we? That's sort of the opposite of the point of these books.

Plus, survival is relative when you're dealing with the undead, isn't it.

Q: Do you think there's a reason vampire tales work well with a tragic storyline (other than the whole them-being-dead thing, of course)?

A: Sure. With the supernatural element, you have different kinds of death, and different kinds of survival. There's death of the body, death of the soul, and death of one's plans and dreams. Edward believes his soul is gone. Rosalie saw the death of her hopes to have babies. Bella would have to die to her family and friends if she becomes a vampire. And if she doesn't turn, then part of her heart will die, because she will either have to give up Edward, or deal with growing old while he doesn't, and the distance that would put between them.

So even if there's a happily ever after for Bella and Edward (or Jacob, if you're in that camp), there's also going to be some kind of irredeemable loss.

Q: We're taking an informal poll in our interviews with *A New Dawn* contributors: Edward or Jacob?

A: Edward. It's clear he's the one for Bella and vice versa. Loving Jacob is one of her rationalizations. And I think loving her is one of his. He hasn't imprinted on her-- what if he later meets HIS one and only? Which will be freaking awesome, and I hope Meyer writes about that.

Q: Do you have a favorite character in the Twilight series (presuming it isn't Edward or Jacob, of course)?

A: Alice, hands down the most awesome character in the books.

CASSANDRA CLARE

Q. In your essay in *A New Dawn*, you weigh the benefits (and pitfalls) of dating a werewolf versus dating a vampire. Which of the two would you pick?

A. Well, in the essay Aunt Charlotte says that Bella ought to pick a nice safe human boy to date, but of course Aunt Charlotte is just being stuffy. In real life I would of course eschew the nice human boy for the sexy vampire or werewolf. And I'd have to say I'd go for the vampire-the immortal life thing is too good to pass up.

Q. Along those same lines: Edward or Jacob?

A. Aieek! Who can choose? Edward, I suppose. I am a sucker for a tragic backstory.

Q. You describe your novels as "urban fantasy"-a genre everybody seems to have a different definition for. What do you mean when you use the term? And do you think the *Twilight* series falls under that category too?

A. When I use the term I mean a subgenre of contemporary fantasy in which the urbanity of the setting is important. The city itself can come to be almost a character in the plot. Urban spaces take the place of what used to be the dark forest of fairy tales-full of violence, magic and intrigue. I would call *Twilight* contemporary fantasy, but perhaps not urban fantasy, because it's small-town, rainy, naturalistic setting is so important.

JAMES A. OWEN

Q: You also wrote an essay for our anthology on Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series, *A New Dawn*. You were our only male contributor, and we're lucky to have you, because I feel like we girls could use a male perspective on this particular question: Edward, or Jacob?

A: *Blink blink* I just realized that I was the only male in that group. Suddenly I feel like I'm in Eighth-Grade Orchestra all over again-- surrounded by a bunch of pretty, talented women who are all shorter than I am.

Between the two (Edward and Jacob) I prefer Edward. Jacob has appealing traits that are subtle, but end up outshining his obvious flaws; Edward is appealing from the start, and then Bella has to reconcile the flaws that appear. But he is always the hero of the story-- and every guy wants to be the hero in his girl's eyes.

Q: Your *A New Dawn* essay is partly about the undervalued genre of romance. Will you tell us a little bit here about what "romance" used to mean, and what it has in common with stories about dragons?

A: Romance (with a capital R) used to be the genre of possibility: anything could happen in a Romance, and usually did. It's only been in recent decades that Romance has been overtaken by (little r) romance and straitjacketed into one narrow category of story. Romance used to be the province of writers like Shelley and Keats: it's these people writers like Stephenie and (I hope) myself are following after, learning from as we blaze our own trails. And regarding dragons: what could be more romantic than discovering a great adventure, than finding lost maps, or learning that one is the lost heir to a magnificent legacy? What's more romantic than believing-- even if only for a brief moment-- that dragons might really exist? That sense of wonder, and the flame it fans within each of us is literally what good Romance-- and stories about dragons-- are all about.

RACHEL CAINE

Q: It's pretty obvious from your piece in *A New Dawn*, "The Great Debate," that you're a member of the pro-Edward camp. Why do you prefer Edward over Jacob? And does that mean you think Bella should, too?

A: Oh, y'know, I'm pretty easy. Stephenie is in the driver's seat, and justifiably so; she's written incredibly engaging characters who have formed passionate fan followings-- not an easy thing to do. I think I like Edward partly because of his hidden depths; one of the attractive thing about vampires for me is the breadth of their experience. They've been there, done that, and so when something sparks a reaction in them, it seems more powerful to me. Not that I don't think Jacob is also awesome. I do. But Bella's mind (and Stephenie's) must be her own.

Q: Who is your favorite Twilight series character (presuming, of course, it's not Edward)?

A: Probably Bella. I think she's incredibly well written-- a real, live person who is trying so hard to be responsible and good. She's insecure and uncertain, and she comes across to me as absolutely someone I'd like to spend time with in real life.

Q: So okay, you write in "The Great Debate" that the Twilight series's vampires appeal to us because they represent "sexual fulfillment, the lure of social power, and the romance of adulthood and immortality, as well as the hidden power of the outcast." But what about Twilight's werewolves? Do they stand for the same thing, or do they represent something a little different?

A: Werewolves, to me, have always represented not so much the outcast-- although they are-- as the power of the wild. Vampires, no matter how vicious, come in human form, and can be dealt with mentally as at least having human touch-points. Werewolves are something else again, at least part of the time, and anybody who's experienced being attacked by an animal, particularly a large canine, knows that you just can't tell *what* they're thinking. There's an overwhelming sense of beauty, loneliness, rage and tragedy to werewolves for me, partly because we're losing so much of our natural world.