In Love and In War

Chapter 1

Jane looked out her bedroom window. The large home in which she lived was terribly drafty, and the fact that winter was moving in was not helping. She shivered before pulling the curtains back.

With very little to do other than get ready that morning, she began the laborious task of bathing. A domestic had already warmed her bath, so she walked to the tub. The large structure was of porcelain, and her father had spent good money to get it for her. In a way, she was a spoiled child. After all, she was the heir to her father’s throne.

 She took no heed of the maid standing near with towels as she closed her eyes and dunked her head under the warm water. Maybe if she had gotten up on time, her water would be boiling hot, but she did not care. ‘Twas warm enough for her.

 Bringing her head out of the water, she pushed her hair back. Her long, curly brown hair was one of the reasons everyone recognized her in town. “There goes Jane Rosario,” they’d say. “Her family recently installed wallpaper of Scheele’s green, and no one has gotten sick.” The rumors were rampant, at the least, of her family and the powers they seemed to possess in the night seasons. Of course, as they were always up to date on the latest fashions and the latest styles, it did seem certain that they would be that rampant.

 She put a good dollop of perfumed liquid on her hands. The scent of peppermint filled the air. Her clan’s signature scent was peppermint, and as ‘twas incredibly expensive for even a single bottle of peppermint oil, her father would only buy it for her one bottle at a time. The bottles were small, but the oil was potent enough she only needed one or two drops for each bottle of perfumed hair soap.

 Working the liquid into her hair, she felt the familiar tingle of the oil cleaning on her head. It sent a second shiver down her spine, a visible thing as she sat in the water.

 “Are you cold, ma’am?” The maid in the corner spoke up. She shook her head.

 “No.” Her simple verbal answer reaffirmed what she had meant. ‘Twas simply the peppermint. The maid returned to being, in effect, invisible in the corner of the bathing room as she started to work the soapy bubbles towards the ends of her hair. She needed so much to wash all of her hair that she applied generously enough that a bottle of hair soap only lasted her a month – if she was lucky, that was.

 Her mind wondered to the ball that her father was holding that night. Even now, the smells of the food for the event were wafting up to her bathing room, which was a good thirty or forty feet above the kitchens. The cause of this ball was well known throughout the land – she was turning sixteen, and even the rivaling clans had been invited for this masquerade. At her behest, of course, her father had decided to let it be a masquerade ball.

 Her dress was almost ready at last she had heard. The dress was to be a wonderful splendor of her father’s wealth. The skirt was of finest silk, with five or six petticoats of linen cloth to keep her cool underneath. The bodice of the dress was of finest silk as well, with lace lining the neckline and the cuffs of her large trumpet sleeves. Her mask, which was to hide the area around her eyes and part of her nose, was on a large wooden dowel. It matched the color of the dress, but was of stiffer fabric underneath with a layer of silk on top for effect.

In all, her father had spent over 100 pounds on the outfit, and had gotten her new shoes and a new corset to top it all off. The new corset had the new eyelets to allow her to tie it that little bit tighter that she wanted to.

She dunked her head under the water again and began to rinse out her hair. After her hair was washed, she simply had to pick a scented lotion to apply to and rinse off of her body. This gave her great comfort as she furiously scrubbed at her scalp and hair to get the oil out. Peppermint began to fill the tub and the air of the room.

After some length of time, she finally had all the oil rinsed out of her hair. She quickly washed her body and rinsed it off after a few moments. Then she motioned for a towel from the maid. She quickly obeyed and held the towel up.

Jane grabbed it and began to dry off her hair. The other maid had brought her the robe already. Made of silk with towels inside, her body was drying off.

“Shall I grab your crinoline?” The second maid posed the question. Jane nodded as she toweled off her hair.

“Yes. And my newest corset, if you please.” With her instructions, the maid nodded her head, gave a curtsey, and left the bathing room. Jane followed, the other maid close behind.

She stopped in front of the hanger that now held her masquerade dress. The bright green hue of the silk was sure to stand out on her petite frame with brown hair and deep blue eyes. Whatever the night held for her, she was sure to be the most beautiful woman in attendance thither, and her father had assured her that no one would be getting in without an invitation.

She took the robe off and pulled the crinoline over her head. The light cotton fabric had worn to a light blue with age, but she didn’t care. No one would see it tonight.

“Jane? Are you dressed?” Her father’s voice boomed out in the drafty home. He was right outside her door.

“No, father. I just barely put on my crinoline!” She was shocked he would ask her such a thing. He had promised her that she could sleep until a later time today, and she had done so blissfully.

“Don’t put on your masquerade dress yet. ‘tis still much too early for that.” Her father’s voice came again. “I trust that you will not put on a fancy dress yet either. Put on something simpler for while you’re biding time.” With that, her father’s footsteps moved away. Her maid brought out the box with her newest corset, and she lifted her arms up to allow her to put it on her.

“How tightly laced do you want it, ma’am?” A maid spoke up.

“I will tell you when to stop.” Her answer was new this time. Usually she wanted it as far as it would go but with the new eyelets, she was a little afraid of how it would impact her masquerade dress.

The maids nodded and began to lace her up. The corset squeezed her chest and abdomen together.

“Stop.” She stopped them about halfway through the tightening. That was as tight as she could handle it. The maids backed off, and got her one of her hoop skirts. Another grabbed a simple dress for everyday wear.

The third maid brought her three petticoats. Her hoop skirt slid nicely over her head, and she let a domestic fasten it onto her hips. The three petticoats followed next, in obvious fashion. The black skirt followed, resting nicely on her petticoats and hoop skirt. The bodice of her dress came next, fastening together at either side of the sleeves and top skirt. This was her simplest dress, a black skirt with a black top skirt, black bodice, and fitted sleeves to her elbows.

She slipped her feet into a pair of black flats and opened the large door. With this wonderful start to her birthday celebration, there wasn’t anything that could cause her to feel as if she had been cheated of something that day.

As she walked downstairs, she could hear the bustling activities that were necessary and practical for day to day life. Her father and mother – George and Caroline Rosario – were conversing at the bottom of the stairs, and stopped when they saw her.

“You look beautiful, darling.” Her mother spoke. “Even if it’s only a simple black dress.” She embraced her mother, and then her father. Her father echoed the sentiments of her mother, and in such a way that made it sound as if he was still surprised she could look so young. She understood that he was joking, of course.

“Shall we eat?” Her father now spoke the invitation for her to sit down at the table. Her siblings were already there. Jane was the eldest, and was followed by Rebecca, then Lorenzo, Jerome, and Paul. She took her seat at the left of her father, and her mother sat across from her father. There was always an empty seat next to her father, but no one much cared that day.

“Happy birthday Jane!” Her siblings said this in unison as a large bowl of soup was brought out. Jams, jellies, and biscuits also were brought in, and in all, a large buffet of breakfast foods.

They were silent as they ate. Jane enjoyed the large range of jams, particularly because they didn’t go all out like this for birthdays most years. Since she was now a woman, it made sense that her family would make a show for it. She is also the eldest, and as such, she had the right to be treated a little more extravagantly on this day.

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Matthias II sat in his room. His parents had given him the choice to attend the Rosario ball that night. ‘Twas that of a masquerade party for their eldest princess, Jane. The eldest was something of a regal beauty – brown hair that went to her waist in lovely, tight curls and eyes as blue as the sky.

If he did choose to go to the masquerade party, his parents had given him a suit and mask. He also had the night off from his clan duties, which he was planning to enjoy even if he didn’t go to the party. Yet there was something that enticed him to the party.

So he stood up and walked to the window. He could see Rosario Hall from here in its entire splendor. There were maids and men domestics running around the grounds as they prepared for that night’s festivities. The young Jane Rosario snuck out of her home, in a simple black dress and a black hooded cloak.

This intrigued Matthias. He grabbed his cloak and pulled his hood up. He too snuck out, but he was more intrigued by what she planned to do than her as a person. She could, after all, be out to find out the secrets of the Tinaidus clan.

He walked quietly through the forest. As this was now the tenth month of the year, ‘twas getting colder. ‘Twas cause for celebration and for cloaks, for fun and for scares. ‘Twas their month: the month of vampires.

Then he landed on his rump in the dirt.

“My apologies.” A sweet voice came from above. A slender hand was offered him in assistance. He took it and she pulled him up.

“No, ‘twas my fault, Miss.” He smiled at the young figure. “My name is Matthias.”

“Jane.” She did a small curtsey. “Do you happen to know where I am?” The fact that she was lost soon became apparent to him. As she took her hood off, he realized ‘twas the same Jane Rosario that he would see that night.

“Tinaidus Clan territory, Miss Rosario.” He stated it calmly and gently. There was no need to be mean to the young girl – after all, she has not meant to trespass.

“Oh my…” Her reaction showed exactly what he had suspected – she had not meant to come to their territory.

“It’s alright. You’re very lucky that I happened upon you first, though. My father would not approve of this. I shall not tell him, if you do not tell your father.” He smiled and offered his hand out for her. “Matthias Tinaidus, the second.”

“Jane Rosario.” She smiled and took his hand. He pressed his lips to her knuckles softly before letting her hand go. “I-I should get home. Thank you, though, Mr. Tinaidus.” She laughed a little before turning back around. “Will you be coming to the ball tonight?” She turned around again, only her head and her locks framed her face.

She looked absolutely stunning.

“I believe I shall be.” He smiled a small half smile. “What shall you be wearing, Miss Rosario?” A small smile sat upon her face, and her fangs glittered in the dazzling sun.

“I shall surprise you if you are thither. I will have a mask on. By mine eyes blue shall you know me.” With that, she turned her head back to the Rosario land and began to walk that way. He watched her disappear out of sight, and began to wonder. What would that evening be like if he didn’t go? Would she notice?

Not one to tempt fate, he went home and began to get ready. He had two hours before the ball was supposed to begin, and it made sense that Miss Rosario would wish to get some fresh air before the ball began. Her home would soon be full of vampires and humans alike, celebrating her birthday.

Then it dawned on him why they were celebrating her tonight. ‘Twas her sixteenth birthday. She is now eligible to attend other balls and be presented to society as an upstanding woman. ‘tis also an age important to vampires due to their natures. Her training fangs would soon come out and she’d be a full vampire.

And once that happened, she could find a mate. A man who would love her and who would cherish her as the woman she is. A Rosario man.

His heart sank. They were of different clans. Never did they mate. The thought of a Tinaidus and a Rosario mating would be scoffed at, scorned. ‘Twas worse than a Rosario and an Upperwood! Though all three were part of the feud, from time to time, the Upperwood and Rosario clans would band together as the Tinaidus clan rose to power due to the shortage of vampires that the Upperwood clan faced. His father was partly to blame for this – no, he was the one to blame.

Twenty years ago, when George and Caroline were newly mated, his father had decided it would be fun to crash the wedding. The Tinaidus clan had been invited, but he had not liked that. Of course, he has cooled off since then, but Matthias I still has quite the temper.

Anyway, the Upperwood clan had been the most powerful clan at the time. They had more than twenty families in the clan. After the large battle that had erupted, the Upperwood clan was left with five families in the clan: the Upperwood family, the Patterson family, the Morris family, the Burns family, and the Wilson family. Fitzwilliam Upperwood was only a baby when the attack happened, and had managed to live through the injuries his father had inflicted.

William and Lucy Upperwood had never forgiven Matthias’ father for what they had done. Neither had George and Caroline Rosario. After all, it had been their wedding day.

He shook the history away from his thoughts. There was no need to be thinking about that as he was getting ready to attend the coming out ball of their eldest daughter.

Instead, he turned his thoughts to young Miss Jane Rosario. There was a lot to find out about her – why she was having a masquerade ball, why she wanted to have it at her clan building, and most importantly, why she was inviting the rival clan. The other two clans were good friends, and they had become even better friends after his father’s incident.

Again, he had to force his thoughts to another topic. The different things that he could think of were not helping. All his mind wanted to focus on was *her* – Jane Rosario. Her eyes. Her hair. Everything about her clouded his mind.

That settled it for him. He had to see her tonight, even if ‘twas going to harm his parents’ respect for him.

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Fitzwilliam donned a blue suit. He was going to the Rosario party for young Jane Rosario. She was four years younger than he, but they were betrothed to wed. Tonight would be the night that he revealed that they were so, and hopefully she would accept him for him. After all, they had known each other for years.

The young Upperwood man turned to his window. From here, he could see the famous Tower of London – the White Castle that stood upon the banks of the Thames. Guards were walking around the grounds on patrol. Their official name was yeoman warder, but everyone called them beef eaters. The nickname had been around for at least a century – the Tower for many centuries.

His father worked as the head Yeoman Warder. He would not be able to attend the ball tonight, but had asked that he give his apologies. His mother – Lucy – would be going with him this evening.

He found his mask. ‘Twas blue with gold detailing on the edges. It would cover half his face – his eyes and part of his nose. A large wooden dowel attached to the mask to offer him a place to hold it. He had asked for his mask to have a string to tie around his head, but his parents had insisted he get the dowel.

So he had gotten the dowel. There was no need to argue the point with them. He was simply excited to see Jane again. She was finally an acceptable age for marriage, and was a fully grown woman. Their marriage, however, would unite the two clans under one rule.

That was the crucial piece. After the Tinaidus attack 20 years ago, the Upperwood clan had been weak. They’d never recovered. Whether ‘twas because they simply hadn’t changed more people or because of other reasons, he didn’t know. He did know, however, that they would be going extinct in the near future if they didn’t get more vampires in their clan.

His mother’s voice rushed upstairs. He could not make out the words, but guessing from the clock, ‘twas time to go. So he quickly tied his shoes and ran down the steps as quickly, but properly, as he could.

“I’m ready mother.” He smiled before holding his mask up to his face. “How do I look?”

“You look as handsome as ever, my son.” She smiled at him before he offered her his hand. They walked out to the carriage together. The footman, Willis Lynch, opened the door before he helped his mother up.

“Thank you, Mr. Lynch.” His mother thanked the footman before he nodded to Fitzwilliam.

“Thank you, Willis.” They were good friends, though Mr. Lynch was some 40 years older than he. It did not surprise him that the older gentleman smiled at him before shutting the carriage door.

“Where to, ma’am?” Lynch then addressed his mother.

“Rosario Hall. And quickly, please.” She smiled as the carriage got under way. He began to check his pockets. He had his flask, his snuff box, and his calling cards. His mask was beside him, and he was confident that Jane would not refuse his marriage proposal.

“Mother, I’m nervous. What if Jane doesn’t want to marry me?” The moment he opened his mouth, his confidence disappeared. There was no way to tell what was going to happen at the dance itself, but he could prepare himself for both outcomes.

“Don’t be daft, son. She will say yes.” His mother tried to show her support. “I think she would be daft to pass up this chance. After all, a woman of her status will be griped after if you do not marry her soon.” Her words did bring him some comfort in this matter. Not many would know of Jane’s secret. However, since he knew, it made sense for him to marry her. It made sense to mate with her, as she was a young vampire and hardly even out of her training fangs. In fact, as far as he knew, she had not yet lost her training fangs.

He watched the scenery pass by on the familiar route to the Rosario Hall. The trees were changing colors, and the brook babbled away in the distance. He and Jane would often take walks down by the brook, as if they were courting each other. This did not escape the eye of the press, and often reports of their walks down the brook would make it into the newspaper. Jane came to dislike this press attention early on, so he had often requested that they don’t print these stories.

He watched the trees pass by. Each tree was unique, and each had their own different colors for the fall season. There were stories and memories attached to a few of them for him. Some involved Jane, others his parents, and still others were memories he’d rather not remember as the years passed by.

The rest of the ride went by rather uneventful.