

Carnevale: Rob Simes

He would remember this Carnevale, and the year, 1775. His exile had been bitter, and long, and so he was determined to make the most of this one, in particular.

He looked in the mirror, the patterned black velvet, the white lace shirt, the porcelain mask, golden lips, the golden sweep across his eyes, and the small feathers, harvested from actual hawks, and all the black feathers. A bold statement, and suitably predatory.

He lifted one well-manicured hand, replete with a single expensive ring, to just below his chin. His long fingers enjoying the cool surface, and he nodded his approval.

He swept from the house, into the pulsing crowd. The normally chaotic streets and waterways reached fever pitch at this time of year, an explosion of excess before the dour impositions of Lent began.

The anonymity the masks allowed were a particular joy for him, given his diligently crafted notoriety. He would not be Chevalier de Seingalt tonight. All his aliases would be joyfully discarded.

As he walked, he grew ever happier, with the throbbing noise, the chatter, the confidence, the abandon. But he reminded himself of the maestro, the great Mozart had journeyed here to meet him, and he could not afford to forget.

But then he saw her, from a distance.

Her walk drew him first, the confident and slow pace, the practiced and subtle sway, the tiny and deliberate turn in each step.

And he considered her as he plotted his approach, all the lace and sequins, ruffles and velvet, porcelain mask, that a lady could desire, but hardly of great cost. But the woman

beneath, her walk betrayed her. She came from great wealth. There was an opportunity here, and he hated, perhaps more than anything, to miss such an opportunity.

He crossed the narrow canal, walking as swiftly as was seemly, and then crossed back over.

She must be sure it was a chance encounter.

It was her eyes that would capture him, or not.

He made sure to lightly step before her.

And he saw what he felt sure he would, her eyes almond shaped, small, veiled, but eager, the skin around them blacked with kohl.

He lent forward, lifted her chin, a slight pressure on the soft skin of her throat, and whispered his name, "Casanova."

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