

Glass Roses: A Victorian Fairytale

Britain Kalai Soderquist

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It is a truth universally acknowledged that magic is required for any young lady to find her "happily ever after" in a fairytale. This truth is so ingrained in the minds of readers that to suggest its removal is incomprehensible. But what if the magic is removed? Is it possible to find true love when the world is perfectly ordinary?

After Eleanor rescues her stepsister Fanny from an attempted elopement, their father decides to remove the family to the Continent before Fanny's indiscretion can be discovered. Eleanor finds the opportunity a welcome relief after a disastrous London Season, and is determined to set herself apart from her vain and scheming stepfamily. A chance meeting at a ball earns her the attentions of the handsome Baron Rupert von Schönfeld, a cousin to the Imperial Family of Austria. He is enchanted by Eleanor's beauty, talent, and kindness, and Eleanor feels certain that she will soon leave her stepfamily behind for good. But Fanny is angry over Eleanor's interference in her elopement, and gossip is a powerful engine for revenge. As rumors begin to fly, Eleanor's only comfort is writing about her troubles to her cousin, Isabella.

Isabella, meanwhile, has an adventure of her own to share. Her father has formed a friendship with the surly Duke William of Stirling. His rough manners and intentional slights are irritating, especially to a proper young lady, but Isabella is more than a match with a fiery wit of her own. Then the Duke invites her father to visit his castle in the wilds of the Scottish countryside, and Isabella soon realizes that the Duke's prickly demeanor hides a kind heart and a mysterious accident from his past. Her heart tells her to let the past rest, but her mind is not ready to give up on discovering the Duke's secrets, and her curiosity might keep her from the happy ending she desires.

In a world where etiquette reigns and fairy godmothers are noticeably absent, Eleanor and Isabella are left to sort out their own "happily ever after" endings with only their wits, good manners, and accomplishments. Set in Victorian England and beyond, this retelling combines two beloved fairytales with the literary style made popular by authors such as Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë.



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