

ALEC & JANE

The little twits. Twin twits. Aro found them when they were still babies. I gleaned the story from Aro while Jane was torturing me in Volterra (the mind never stops) and it is rather dramatic.

Aro found them by reading the thoughts of a nomad who passed through Volterra. Even as infants in Britannia (later called Great Britain) twelve centuries ago, they had noticeable psychic powers. When a parent, sibling, or other adult denied either of them something they wanted, that person had a sudden tendency to stub their toe or trip and bang their head. If it was something one of the babies really wanted, like a shiny toy in another child's hand, the person denying them might suffer a seizure and fall down, conveniently relinquishing the object in question.

Once, when Jane was hungry and her mother—who had four other children besides the twins—didn't produce a breast quickly enough, the poor woman took a nasty tumble down a flight of stairs, hit her head on the stone floor, and was blinded in one eye. (Carlisle says she likely suffered a subdural hematoma that pressed on her brain.) After that, the family hired two wet nurses, one for each child, to be available twenty-four hours a day in order to avoid another "accident."

The family's response to the incident was based on superstition mostly, because such tiny, charming creatures could hardly be evil—could they? Regardless, the entire family began catering to their every whim just in case the frequent accidents that occurred when the infants were displeased weren't so accidental.

As the babies grew from toddlerhood to childhood, they were seen more in public and the public did not like what it saw. Children who were allowed to play with Alec and Jane invariably suffered one injury or another if the youngsters had a spat, or when one of the twins grew envious of a toy or other object. Children in their village learned to

accommodate whatever demands Alec and Jane might make. Though Alec's nature made him more inclined to cooperate with other children and make friends, Jane's temper generally got the better of her in any conflict, so both of the twins came to be regarded as equally suspect.

Nobody could prove that Alec and Jane were the direct cause of the misfortunes of those around them and because their father was a well-regarded merchant, the other villagers kept their suspicions mostly to themselves. But as years of experience piled up, the whispers of "witches" became a little louder and more frequent. No one dared speak of their suspicions directly for fear of retribution, but over time, the twins' reputations began to precede them wherever they went and they were politely, but firmly, shunned.

The twins learned to trust and rely only on one another and viewed their peers with deep suspicions of their own. Their parents wondered aloud why the children had no friends and why, over the years, friends and relatives gradually distanced themselves from the family. They probably knew, of course, but acknowledging that their children had psychic powers was tantamount to blasphemy. Whole families could be destroyed over allegations of such and there was plenty of evidence that the twins were "unnatural" for the family to fear for their safety at times.

When Aro first encountered the strange stories about the babies, he grew curious and made a trek to Britannia to see them for himself. He found some excuse as a foreign visitor to meet the most prosperous citizens of the village and got himself invited to the twins' home for a meal. During the evening, he concocted an excuse to hold each of them for a short time—not something high-ranking local men generally did—but Aro was Italian and, as a foreigner, was expected to have strange customs and idiosyncrasies.

Aro found that, though they were still toddlers when he met them, the twins had learned by experience enough about their effects on others to control them to a certain degree. They knew, for example, that if they

were denied something they wanted, they would generally be obliged if they threw a tantrum.

Aro grew quite excited at the vague, but real, revelations he gained from reading the babies' minds and promised himself to keep an eye on them as they grew. As he saw it, they could become powerful vampires someday. I can see Aro rubbing his hands together in evil delight at his discovery.

This was not so long after the Volturi's great purge of the immortal children and their caretakers, though, and Aro could not blatantly flout his own edict against creating vampire children. He schemed about how he would snatch them when they were older, change them, and bring them into the Volturi guard. Age sixteen was his target, when children of that era were considered grown. Girls, especially, were married off even younger than that.

Alas, Aro's plans were thwarted by the Briton villagers who had finally seen and experienced enough tragedy at the hands of the young twins. After one gentleman, who had made what Alec considered to be inappropriate advances toward his lovely sister, fell into a pond and drowned, the villagers revolted. A mob formed outside the twins' home in the middle of the night and then burst in and seized the twelve-year-old children, hauling them off to be locked away in the castle dungeon of the feudal lord who controlled the village.

In their shared cell, the tormented children wished ill will on all of those around them and the slaves who kept them alive were constantly being injured. A burning torch lit one slave's hair and he barely survived, while another was badly injured when the cell grate slammed unexpectedly, smashing his hand in the latch and rendering it forever lame.

"Witches!"

"Witchcraft!"

“Satan’s devils!”

Everyone claimed it openly after that and it wasn’t long before another angry mob demanded that the witches be burned at the stake. Aro heard of the verdict from a court visitor just in time to rush to Mercia on the Isle of Britannia and rescue the badly burned children from the fire. In so doing, he had exposed his true nature to an entire village and was forced by the Volturi’s own rules to destroy every witness. The decimation of the village was blamed on plague. Only those unfortunates who were charged with burying the bodies knew that the marks on the bloodless corpses were not caused by plague. They kept their mouths shut for fear of being accused of witchcraft themselves.

In order to save their lives, Aro changed Alec and Jane immediately, though they were only twelve or thirteen. He was undeniably pushing the boundary of the Volturi’s edict against creating vampire children. Alec and Jane could be considered “old enough” by Aro’s estimation, though having won his prizes, he would have done anything to keep them.

After twelve centuries, the entire vampire population is still stuck dealing with these two spoiled children in positions of considerable power. The suffering they endured in the village fire focused their talents, making the two of them deadly dangerous as vampires. Alec, in trying to defend himself against the pain of burning, became able to produce an anesthetic cloud that as a vampire he uses to render others helpless. Jane, who directed her anger at everyone around her as she burned, developed the ability to make others feel as if they are burning like she was.

The twins trust and rely only on one another and, because they were catered to their entire human lives, they expect to get their way as a matter of course. They learned no capacity for empathy or kindness. Childish dispositions living in supernatural bodies...they are an utter nightmare.

There is one way in which I do relate to the twins, though—they were changed before they were fully mature. They were just reaching puberty

when their human lives ended and so, like me, were set in stone before they developed certain adult capacities. Unlike myself, who became a man when I found my true love, Alec and Jane are stunted, not only in their ability to love, but in their ability to direct that love outward to anyone besides each other. Jane had developed nearly to marriageable age for her era and was on the cusp of being initiated into that adult world when she was changed. (Not that anyone would have accepted her as a spouse happily.)

I have never divulged this information to anyone, though I know Aro is fully aware of it...

The twins were nearly to the age of sexual maturity when Aro changed them, but their unusual circumstances caused them to direct those feelings toward each other. To this day, many centuries hence, they maintain an incestuous sexual relationship, which they are virtually certain never to grow beyond. In their day, such a relationship was a criminal offense and would have won them death on the gallows had they not been accused of witchcraft first.

I doubt whether brother/sister incest is illegal in Italy in this modern time, but at the very least it would be regarded as scandalous if publicly known. But Alec and Jane, powerful creatures that they are—and absolutely indispensable to Aro—no doubt will go on forever as they do now.

I find it a little sad, actually, though knowing the tragedy of their lives doesn't make me hate them any less. And that is where I am truly different from my father...I'm sure that he doesn't hate the evil little weasels, even after everything they have helped put us through over the years.

Edward

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