Julie Fitzpatrick - Man vs. Faery

“Alas, Alain, I love you still,

I always have, and always will.”

He heard her breathy, sing-song voice repeating the ditty again and again as she made her way along the crest of the ancient floodwall, dancing with apparent abandon hundreds of feet above, picking her way daintily along the perilous route. Mist from the crashing waves below added an extra element of danger, making the misshapen rocks too slippery for Alain’s booted feet to follow, even if he tried to pull himself up the vines that were the only way to the top.

A tear welled and fell to his cheek, sliding down past scars and stubble to disappear into his cowl of mail. Still as stone, sword sheathed, only his eyes followed her progress. Swallowing with difficulty and blinking hard a couple of times, he turned abruptly.

“What’s the hold up on that cannon?” he growled at Jacque, his second in command.

“The hill is too steep. The men keep losing their footing and getting crushed as the weight of it falls back upon them.”

“Attach chains and pull it up, then.” Alain put his hands to his ears, but the singing did not abate. Even with his back to the wall, he could still see her dancing. His heart still lurched at each imagined wobble that could lead to the rocks and waves below.

“Sir! What’s wrong?”

Alain looked up to see the cannon appearing over the rise. “Nothing. Position it to take out the gate at the base.” He could just make out her figure, directly above the gate. She turned toward him, paused and beckoned. Her song filled his senses, the roar of the waves drowned out by the rush of blood in his ears. He closed his eyes and willed himself to disobey the panic telling him to run as fast as his legs could carry him to her aid.

“Fire!” he shouted.

The cannon jumped as the ball hit its mark squarely and the gate shattered beneath its force. Water rushed through the opening, tumbling down the embankment toward the forest that hid their foe. The rock facade above the splintered door cracked and crumbled until the breach reached all the way to the crest of the wall, creating a rift in the otherwise uninterrupted baracade.

A scream began as a single voice that pierced Alain’s heart, but soon multiplied into a host of voices so loud the stricken soldiers watching the devastation of the forest below fell to their knees and covered their ears in horror.

It was only a matter of minutes until the genocide was complete. The bodies of the drowned enemy soldiers intermingled in the newly created lake with those of the wood faeries, who died trying to protect their friends and homes – the trees. Sparkling faery dust rose slowly above their watery grave.

“Sir?” Jacque shook his arm, but could not wake him. Choosing the world of men over the world of faeries had cost Alain his life.