

APART FROM  
THE CROWD

BEHIND  
*the*  
SCENES

JEN TURANO



BETHANYHOUSE

*a division of Baker Publishing Group*  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Jen Turano, *Behind the Scenes*  
Bethany House, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 2017. Used by permission.

(Unpublished manuscript—copyright protected Baker Publishing Group)

© 2017 by Jennifer L. Turano

Published by Bethany House Publishers  
11400 Hampshire Avenue South  
Bloomington, Minnesota 55438  
www.bethanyhouse.com

Bethany House Publishers is a division of  
Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Turano, Jen, author.

Title: Behind the scenes / Jen Turano.

Description: Minneapolis, Minnesota : Bethany House, a division of Baker

Publishing Group, [2017] | Series: Apart from the crowd

Identifiers: LCCN 2016037746 | ISBN 9780764230103 (cloth) | ISBN 9780764217944  
(trade paper)

Subjects: | GSAFD: Love stories. | Christian fiction.

Classification: LCC PS3620.U7455 B48 2017 | DDC 813/.6—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016037746>

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, incidents, and dialogues are products of the author's imagination and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible.

Cover design by Jennifer Parker

Cover photography by Mike Habermann Photography, LLC

Author is represented by Natasha Kern Literary Agency

17 18 19 20 21 22 23      7 6 5 4 3 2 1

For Dr. Robert Turner  
Because every big brother needs  
to have a romance novel dedicated  
to him from his adorable,  
yet occasionally annoying, little sister.

*Love you!*

Jennifer

# CHAPTER ONE



MARCH 1883—NEW YORK CITY

Pressing her nose against the glass of the carriage window, Miss Permilia Griswold felt her stomach begin to churn as she took note of the throngs of people lining Fifth Avenue. Even though darkness had descended over the city hours before, the lure of witnessing New York society trundling down the street in their fancy carriages, on their way to Mr. and Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt's costume ball, was apparently enough of a spectacle to keep people out and about on a chilly spring night.

That her father's carriage was still blocks away from their destination of 660 Fifth Avenue and yet crowds were pressed three deep in and around the sidewalk, gave clear testimony to the importance of this particular ball and to the interest New Yorkers had for its highest society members.

Even though Permilia was included on the invitation list for the most important societal events in the city, she'd not grown up within the cosseted inner circles of society, which exactly explained why her stomach was churning.

She was uncomfortable in social situations, had yet to master

all the rules that went with being a member of New York society, and . . .

“You’re fogging up the window, Permilia, which is obscuring my view and making all the people outside our carriage appear to be little more than ghosts wobbling about. It’s a most unnerving sight.”

Tearing her attention away from a crowd she could see perfectly fine through the merest trace of fog on the window, Permilia settled it on her stepmother, Ida Griswold. “Forgive me, stepmother. That was most inconsiderate of me.” Turning back to the window, Permilia began swiping at the mist with a gloved hand, stopping midswipe when Ida suddenly took to *tsking*.

“A lady must never use her glove in such a common fashion,” Ida said, her words having Permilia’s hand dropping into her lap. “And”—Ida’s gaze swept over Permilia’s form—“you’ve taken to slouching again. On my word, if you’d simply remember to maintain a proper posture at all times, I’m quite certain you wouldn’t find yourself cast in the troubling role of wallflower season after season.”

Swallowing the sigh she longed to emit, Permilia forced a smile instead. “Contrary to the prevalent thought of the day, I’m not a lady who feels as if my life has been ruined simply because I’ve obtained the somewhat undesirable label of wallflower.”

“Of course your life has been ruined,” Ida countered. “You’re twenty-something years old, have never taken within society, nor have you ever attracted the devotion of a gentleman. Why, even your own stepsister doesn’t care to spend time in your company.”

“I believe that has more to do with the fact that Lucy and I have nothing in common than my tendency to slouch upon occasion.” Permilia switched her gaze to her stepsister, Miss Lucy Webster, who was sitting ramrod straight on the seat opposite her, staunchly ignoring the conversation as she waved to the crowds gathered along the street.

Leaning forward, Permilia looked out the window Lucy sat beside. The crowd on Lucy's side of the street was obviously enjoying Lucy's waves, given the cheers they were sending her stepsister's way. Permilia couldn't say she blamed them for their enthusiasm.

Lucy had been chosen to perform in one of the many quadrilles Alva Vanderbilt had planned for the evening. And because Lucy was to be in the Mother Goose Quadrille, she was dressed to perfection as Little Bo Peep and looked absolutely delightful. Her honey-colored curls peeked out from under her cap, and her figure was shown to advantage with the low-cut neckline of her gown, her rather bountiful charms accentuated by the diamond necklace she was wearing. That Lucy had perfected a royal wave, moving her hand back and forth exactly so, had the corners of Permilia's lips curving up.

"It is such a shame that your father is still out of the city and couldn't attend this ball, dear," Ida continued. "He would have enjoyed seeing you looking so well turned out tonight."

Permilia's lips stopped curving at once as she settled back against the carriage seat. "I may have a propensity to slouch upon occasion, stepmother, and to not adhere to every society rule, but even you must admit that I'm always well turned out. Modesty aside, I do believe I possess a distinct flair for fashion."

Lucy immediately stopped her waving. Turning a head that sat on a remarkably graceful neck, she pinned Permilia beneath the glare of an emerald-green eye. "How can you make the claim that you're always well turned out? You purchase your clothing from stores that cater to working women and have less than desirable locations."

"True," Permilia said with a nod, the motion setting the large diamond tiara Ida had insisted she wear shifting around on her head. "But there's absolutely nothing wrong with the fashions I find in those shops. I enjoy shopping in out-of-the-way

places, searching for designs that have a unique style. Besides, the owners of those shops need my money far more than the owners of the fashionable shops do. I, for one, am proud of the fact I have an eye for thrift.”

She gestured to the sparkling white gown she was wearing, one that had tiny paste jewels sewn throughout the folds of the fabric, lending the garment an icy appearance. “My snow-queen ensemble was designed by an innovative woman who works in a little shop in a slightly questionable part of the city. And while I did pay Miss Betsy Miller a rather dear amount for my gown, as well as for the fur muff I had her design to complement the gown, the price I paid would have doubled if I’d sought out the services of a more esteemed establishment.”

“Not patronizing the tried-and-true establishments of society is considered beyond peculiar, and that right there is exactly why you haven’t taken with the fashionable set,” Lucy argued. “Your father, my stepfather, is one of the wealthiest gentlemen in the country, which means you have absolutely no reason to be frugal. It’s downright embarrassing when you’re seen lurking around the poorer sections of town, and it lends clear credence to the idea that you’re undeniably odd.”

Permilia lifted her chin. “Simply because one comes from wealth does not mean one should abandon one’s thrifty principles. Besides, Miss Miller, the woman I hired to create my costume, needed the funds she earned from me because her rent was past due and she was worried about being kicked out on the street.”

Lucy’s mouth gaped. “You had a *conversation* with this woman?”

“Of course I did. It’s always seemed rather silly to me to be standing around having your measurements taken while not enjoying the company of the woman taking those measurements.”

Permilia lifted her chin another notch. “And before you dis-

solve into a fit of hysterics—something your expression clearly suggests you're about to do—know that I have no intention of abandoning my habit of speaking with whomever I choose. Furthermore, I also have no intention of abandoning my frugal ways, even if those ways embarrass you upon occasion.”

Lucy's forehead puckered. “Your oddness is exactly why I have yet to acquire a suitable offer of marriage. I have no idea why you have to continue on with your stingy and peculiar attitude when that attitude is ruining my life.”

“You've been extended five completely acceptable offers since you made your debut two years ago,” Permilia shot back. “And since you and I barely acknowledge one another when we're out and about in society, I really don't understand how you can claim that I'm the one ruining your life. If you ask me, your disenchantment with the gentlemen who've cast their attention your way has more to do with your air of displeasure toward life in general, which, in my humble opinion, is a direct result of your unfortunate sense of entitlement and a condescending attitude—”

“That will be quite enough, Permilia,” Ida interrupted. “As is so often the case when we're trying to gently point out some of your more glaring faults, you immediately try to misdirect the conversation by throwing nasty accusations Lucy's way. She, I must say, has just made a most valid point regarding your position on wealth.”

Ida began fiddling with a diamond bracelet that encircled her gloved wrist. “Possessing abundant wealth is not meant to be a burden, but meant to be fully enjoyed. Surely you must realize that by clinging to your parsimonious ways, while doing absolutely nothing to hide those ways, you're sabotaging any slight chance you may still have to take within society. You also diminish the chances of attracting the notice of a suitable gentleman, something your father hopes may still happen.”

She released a breathy sigh. “Your father isn’t growing any younger, Permilia. His hard work will be for naught if you don’t find a worthy gentleman to bring into the family who has the business mentality needed to take over your father’s many endeavors.”

As Ida launched into another lecture, this one concerning the sad state of Permilia’s social ambitions, Permilia shifted against the seat, being careful to maintain her posture as she did so. A second later, her thoughts began to wander, a direct result of having heard the lecture Ida was in the midst of delivering numerous times in the past.

It wasn’t as if she’d intended to land herself on the fringes of society, but in all honesty, she’d never aspired to travel within society in the first place. She’d always believed she’d walk through life at her father’s side, helping him run his many mining ventures and eventually taking over that running in the end, even though she was a woman.

Being a member of the fairer sex had never been an obstacle for her growing up, probably because she’d not been exposed to women much in her youth, her mother having died of a horrible fever when Permilia had been only two years old. That unfortunate death had left her with only a father to care for her. Since George Griswold had never wanted to leave Permilia in the charge of a nanny or female relative while he’d traveled to grow his investment opportunities, he’d taken her along with him. That had provided Permilia with a vagabond lifestyle, filled with adventures, wonders, and a great deal of dirt, especially when she’d spent time in the mines.

Her schooling had come at the hands of a tutor, not a governess. And, while learning the feminine graces had been woefully neglected, she’d received an education worthy of any man, something she’d always assumed she’d put to good use when she was given the honor of managing the family business.

That assumption had come to a rather abrupt end when her father met, and then married, within a remarkably short period of time, the widowed Mrs. Ida Webster, a formidable lady one learned rather quickly not to cross—and a lady who staunchly believed a woman’s place was in the home, not traveling around the country participating in . . . business.

From the moment Ida had exchanged vows with Permilia’s father, Permilia had found herself taken firmly in hand and taken firmly out of the mining world by her new stepmother—a circumstance her father, traitor that he’d apparently turned, heartily approved.

Ida, regrettably, came from a long line of Old New Yorkers, fondly referred to as the Knickerbocker set, and as such, she was accustomed to traveling in the highest society circles. That meant that the idea of her acquiring a stepdaughter with no societal interests was not to be tolerated, hence the reason Permilia was introduced to society at the ripe old age of nineteen.

That introduction had not seen Permilia gliding across the ballroom on the arm of one gentleman after another, but had, instead, seen her banished—and banished rather quickly, at that—to the wallflower section.

Her stepmother had not been pleased with what she proclaimed was a very sad state of affairs and had spent the ensuing years—of which there’d been quite a few—pondering the reason Permilia had not taken within the fashionable set. Ida had come up with a remarkably extensive list to explain Permilia’s deficiencies, including Permilia’s age, her intellect, her height, her unusual red hair, her lack of social graces, and . . . well, the list went on and on.

Since Permilia preferred to maintain a cheerful attitude, at least most of the time, and since contemplating the many deficiencies Ida kept compiling became somewhat depressing after a while, she’d taken to skulking around the edges of ballrooms,

far away from her stepmother's caustic tongue. That skulking had, surprisingly enough, led to a most intriguing opportunity and had provided Permilia with a much-needed distraction as she was forced to attend one society event after another.

She had great hopes, though, that she'd someday be able to abandon her distraction—once her father came to his senses and allowed her to return to the mining life she'd been intending to live, not the fluffy world of—

“What about Mr. Rutherford?” Ida asked, the question effectively pushing any other thoughts Permilia might have had straight out of her head.

“Are we speaking of Mr. Asher Rutherford, the owner of Rutherford & Company department store?” she asked.

“Indeed we are.” Ida gave a single nod. “I heard from none other than Mrs. Templeton that you've been seen speaking with that particular gentleman . . . twice.”

Lucy let out a hiss of obvious outrage, a sound Permilia was fairly certain young ladies were not actually supposed to make—and that Ida unfairly ignored. “You've held conversations with Mr. Asher Rutherford?”

Permilia shrugged. “I'm not entirely certain haggling with the gentleman over the price he was trying to extort for ice skates at the impromptu booth he'd erected in Central Park can truly be considered holding a conversation with the man.”

Two bright spots of color darkened Lucy's pale cheeks. “You *haggled* with Mr. Rutherford—one of the most eligible gentlemen in society?”

“He wanted over five dollars for a pair of ice skates.” Permilia crossed her arms over her chest. “It was highway robbery.” She smiled. “He eventually took three dollars and some change from me—a sum I felt was more in line with what the skates were worth—which allowed me to enjoy a lovely day on the ice with my very good friend, Miss Wilhelmina Radcliff.”

Ida began mumbling under her breath, something about a *hopeless cause* and she was at her *wit's end*. When her mumbles finally trailed off, she set a determined eye on Permilia. “What was the conversation about the second time you spoke with Mr. Rutherford?”

“I must admit I find the idea that your friends are tattling on me fairly disturbing, but the only other time I can actually recall speaking with Mr. Rutherford was at Wilhelmina’s engagement ball. It was not a conversation that had much meat to it. In fact, if memory serves, I believe we spent some time discussing the weather—a subject that you’ve stressed is a perfectly acceptable topic for polite conversation.”

“You could have brought my name into your conversation,” Lucy chimed in. “Mr. Rutherford is certainly a gentleman I’d *welcome* receiving a proposal from.”

Permilia opened her mouth but was spared a response to that nonsense when the carriage began to slow to a stop.

Ida leaned forward, looked out the window, and drew back. “Smiles at the ready, my dears. We’ve reached Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt’s new home at last. Given that there appears to be an entire swarm of curiosity-seekers waiting to greet us—and take note of what we’re wearing, no doubt—we certainly shouldn’t disappoint them.”

Lucy raised a hand and adjusted her diamond necklace, situating the diamond pendant to better draw attention to her charms right before she lifted her head. “I’ll do my very best not to disappoint them, Mother.” With that, she slid across the seat right as the door opened. Taking the hand a groom extended her, Lucy hitched a charming smile into place and stepped out of the carriage in a flurry of satin and lace.

Holding up a hand that sufficiently stopped Permilia from scooting toward the door, Ida turned a stern eye on her. “I don’t mean to come across as a nag, dear, but do try to be friendly to

the gentlemen tonight, especially Mr. Rutherford, if you happen to cross his path. Although, from the sound of it, you may have burned that particular bridge.”

“I have no interest in Mr. Rutherford, and besides, it sounded to me as if Lucy holds him in great esteem. It would hardly improve our sisterly relationship—or stepsisterly relationship, to be more exact—if I pursued a gentleman she desires.”

“A lady never pursues a gentleman,” Ida countered, her words at complete odds with the advice she’d just given Permia. “As for Lucy and Mr. Rutherford . . . well, he has chosen to dirty his hands in trade, probably horrifying his dear mother in the process. Because of that—and because of the promise I made to my first husband before he died his tragic death concerning Lucy and her future prospects—she will only marry a gentleman who has no scandal tarnishing his name, one who truly upholds the Knickerbocker beliefs Lucy’s father held in such high regard.”

“Does *Lucy* know about that promise you made to your first husband?”

Ida looked a bit disconcerted before she lifted her chin. “As I was saying before we got distracted from the subject at hand, your father is very anxious to see you well settled, and this is the last society event of the season. You won’t have another opportunity to mingle with gentlemen until we travel to our cottage in Newport for the summer, and that’s ages away.”

She waved a hand Permia’s way. “As I mentioned, you’re looking very well turned out tonight, so do try to take advantage of that, if only for your father’s sake. And remember, a smile can be a powerful weapon when it comes to attracting the attention of a gentleman. I suggest you put that advice to good use tonight, and hopefully, we’ll have good news to tell your father when he returns home at the end of the week.” With that, Ida scooted forward on the seat and stepped from the carriage.

Lingering behind, Permilia absently checked her fur muff, making certain the stash of dance cards she'd obtained—covertly, of course—from a Vanderbilt servant a few days before were still firmly tucked inside, along with numerous small pencils. Withdrawing her hand after she'd established that her supplies were in fine order, she began inching ever so slowly toward the door, not exactly certain she was anxious to face the crème of society who'd been invited to Alva Vanderbilt's first society ball.

Her inching came to a stop, though, when Ida's voice drifted through the open door. "Permilia, you're trying my patience. Don't make me come back in there and prod you along."

Shoving aside the thought that her life had been far less complicated before she'd acquired a stepmother, Permilia headed for the door, knowing there was no help for it but to stumble through the evening as best she could.