

## A walk on a beautiful day

Alessandro had a splitting headache. He had always hated meetings with the nobles, but today had been worse than usual. He already had enough on his plate with one wife, taking another

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was unthinkable.

Alexander was furious and said to himself, "As if one wasn't enough, now they want me to take another wife, are they mad?"

Alessandro was still fuming when Sirius arrived

and asked, "What is Your Majesty complaining about?"

"Those damned nobles keep pressuring me about having an heir. Today, they even dared to suggest I take a second wife, as if having one wasn't troublesome enough."

"I thought Your Majesty had begun to enjoy married life a little more, but I suppose I was mistaken."

"What makes you think I'm enjoying my marriage?"

"Perhaps Your Majesty hasn't noticed, but lately you've been retiring to your chambers early. It's as if you were eagerly awaiting the chance to be with the princess."

"It's not what you're thinking. I just want her to recover quickly and return to her magic lessons."

"By the way, how is it going, I mean, making the princess fall in love?"

"I'm working on it."

"May I ask what Your Majesty has done to win the princess's heart?"

Alessandro hadn't actually done anything. He only kissed the princess when he felt like it and held her in his arms. He looked away and changed the subject.

"I've heard there are new apprentices in the mage tower. Anyone outstanding?"

"Your Majesty has never cared about new recruits. You're only asking me to change the subject, aren't you?"

"Not at all." Alessandro lied.

"It's more than obvious that you're lying. If you don't know what to do to win the princess's heart, I can help. I have a lot of experience with women."

"You've never even been married."

"That's because I haven't found the right woman yet. But I know how to treat a woman. I could tell you what someone like the princess desires most."

"And what do you think she desires most?"

"To be loved. She's been alone her whole life. She's never had the warmth of a family, nor friends. If you want to win her over, you just have to be a loving man."

"I'm already doing that, I hold her at night and I kiss her often."

"I don't think she sees that as affection, but rather as your possessive desires. A kiss from someone you don't love can be unpleasant. Has the princess ever enjoyed a kiss or an embrace from you? Have you ever given her a gift?" Sirius asked, watching Alessandro's face. "From the look on your face, I'd



say no."

"I'm busy Sirius, what have you really come for? I doubt if it was to give me advice on my marriage."

"You're right about that, Your Majesty. I'm not here for that."

"What's going on?"

"I've sensed a surge of magic in the kingdom of Laios."

"Really, that implies that King Venobich has made his move in preparation for war."

"I believe it's a barrier. He's protecting his kingdom from possible attacks."

"He's preparing for war against us," he replied.

"Indeed. What I'm about to say may sound cruel, but Your Majesty must ensure that the princess is on our side in this war, that she will fight for this kingdom and for you."

"We must also prepare for war. I want you to gather the mages and erect a barrier around the kingdom."

"I'll see to it, Your Majesty."

"I believe this war is imminent, so we must be ready. This time we will not bow to the kingdom of Laios."

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As evening approached, Abril asked the servants to dress her in a light, cool dress for a walk. They chose a pale pink and white gauze gown and a broad-brimmed white hat to protect her skin from the sun, as she hadn't been outside in a long time. Two maids accompanied her as she strolled among the flowers. Abril felt as if she was coming back to life, as if she had finally been released from her decorated cage.

Alessandro spotted the princess strolling through the gardens from his office window. He had a pounding headache and couldn't concentrate on his work, so he decided to get some fresh air and clear his head. He made his way to the garden where he found the princess smelling the flowers. She looked beautiful, her red hair shimmering in the sunlight, a smile gracing her lips.

"Enjoying yourself?"

Abril turned around at the sound of the king's voice and said,

"Yes, it's a beautiful day for a walk in the garden, to smell the flowers and appreciate their beauty."

"I suppose you're right."

Alessandro offered her his arm.

"Let me accompany you for a while."



"Isn't Your Majesty busy?"

"I needed a break, so a short walk will do me good."

Abril took his arm and they began to walk.

Alessandro's strides were longer than hers, forcing her to walk faster than was comfortable. It caused her pain, and she winced, clutching her stomach.

"Don't walk so fast, Your Majesty. I can't keep up."

"Are you alright? Are you in pain?"

"A little," she replied.

Alessandro swept her up in his arms.

"We should go back to my chambers. Perhaps it was too soon for a walk."

"I'm fine. If you walk slower, there won't be a problem. I don't want to go back to the room, please," Abril pleaded, her eyes wide and beseeching.

"Very well, just a little further then?" Alexander replied.

Alessandro set her down and offered his arm again. He walked slowly, taking small steps so she wouldn't strain herself. The maids stared at them, astonished. They couldn't believe the king was taking a leisurely stroll with the princess and, above all, that he was being so kind to her.

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Abril felt uncomfortable with their gazes. Alessandro noticed and ordered the maids to withdraw. As they continued their walk, Alessandro realized that the pounding headache he'd had

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moments before had vanished the instant he had touched her. He glanced down at her and she noticed.

"Is something wrong?" She asked.

"No, I was just admiring your beautiful appearance.

Abril's cheeks flushed pink. "Thank you."

A gust of wind swept through the garden,

scattering flower petals and carrying Abril's hat away.

"My hat!" She exclaimed.

"I'll get it for you. Wait here."

Alessandro retrieved the hat. As he made his way back, he paused, admiring Abril. She was truly a beautiful woman, and if she hadn't been the enemy's daughter, she would undoubtedly have had a long line of admirers. He walked towards her, hat in hand, closed the distance between them, and placed it on her head. Then, he leaned in and kissed her and said, "My reward for returning your hat,"

Alessandro spotted a nearby bench.

"Let's rest for a bit. You mustn't overdo it."

After they sat down, Abril took off her hat and placed it on her lap. She gazed up at the beautiful blue sky. Today had been more than she'd hoped for.

"Thank you for letting me go outside." She said with a smile, looking at Alessandro.

"I've told you before, you're not a prisoner. I only kept you inside because you were injured. Now that you're better, you can take short walks in the garden."

"Really?" Abril asked.



"Yes, but you must promise to be careful."

"I will." She replied.

Abril slipped off her shoes and settled onto the soft grass.

"What are you doing?"

"I want to feel the grass under my feet."

"You've sat on the ground too. It's not proper, especially in your condition."

"But I've barely moved," she said.

Alessandro sighed, smiled and said, "You're a nuisance, you know that?"

Despite his rough words, he settled down on the grass beside her, much to Abril's delight, though she couldn't quite understand why.

She leaned back on the grass and watched the clouds drift by, some taking on odd and fanciful shapes. She pointed to a few, as Alessandro laid beside her, gazing up as well and said,

"This is the first time in my life I've done something like this."

"But it's nice. You can feel closer to nature this way, don't you think so?"

Alessandro looked at her for a moment, a thoughtful expression on his face. "I suppose

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you're right. It is rather pleasant."



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