2294 An Eloquent Cavaliere  
  
Despite the fact that Rain's current circumstances were far more unusual than those of her friends, unlike them, she had actually enjoyed a more normal childhood. Apart from that, she had more worldly experience - Telle and Tamar might have known how to navigate high society better, but for this elegant outing, Rain was their guide.  
  
…And her guide was the Bastion Gazette.  
  
Following the plan she had been meticulously researching since the last time Telle visited Bastion, they enjoyed a walk of the Lakefront Promenade, went on a humble shopping spree on the Fashion Street, and ended up in a park with her purchases safely stored in the Bag of Withholding.  
  
Rain's mood was bright, and the weather was warm. The three of them rested on a bench and basked in the sunlight, enjoying the breeze.  
  
Telle sighed.  
  
'Why don't we go to a beach and swim a little?'  
  
Tamar looked at her, then shook her head.  
  
'We can't go to a public beach. More precisely, we can't allow anyone to see Rain in a swimsuit - otherwise, we'll have to fend off a frenzied crowd of admirers. It'll be worse than Godgrave.'  
  
Rain laughed.  
  
Tamar might have been joking, but she was also somewhat correct. If the three of them donned swimwear and appeared on a public beach, it would probably cause quite a stir - after all, most people there were mundane.  
  
Telle looked Rain up and down and sighed.  
  
',True.'  
  
Rain grinned.  
  
'You two aren't so bad yourself. In fact, a couple of guys have been staring at us for the last ten minutes.'  
  
Tamar raised an eyebrow.  
  
'Huh? Where?'  
  
She seemed a little embarrassed - aftеr all, she was supposed to be the bodyguard, and yet Rain noticed that someone had been watching them first.  
  
There were indeed two young men not too far away, seemingly enjoying a picnic. They were not very obvious about it, but Rain had not missed the intense gazes the young men were throwing in their direction from time to time.  
  
Telle looked around, then frowned, Her expression darkened a little.  
  
'Oh. I think I know one of them. Let's… go somewhere else. Please?'  
  
Neither Rain nor Tamar had any objections, so they left their bench and headed for the park exit.  
  
The two young men just happened to catch up with them a minute later, though.  
  
Rain glanced at them with curiosity.  
  
They were a little older than the three girls and seemed earnest enough. They were quite handsome, too… too handsome to be mundane or merely Awakened, even. Their figures were lean and athletic, and their light summer clothes did nothing to hide the defined lines of their sculpted muscles.  
  
She would not have minded sparing them a little time, but Telle's negative reaction had already created a bad first impression.  
  
'Can this be,'  
  
One of the young men smiled and bowed slightly.  
  
'Greetings, fair ladies. I am deeply sorry if my friend and I are intruding upon your stroll, but we could not help but admire your sublime radiance from afar. Truly, it can only be compared to the alluring wonder of the Mirror Lake glistening under the radiant sun… fresh and vivacious, full of promise so enchanting that no honeyed words can describe…'  
  
Rain blinked and stared at him with wide eyes.  
  
'W - what is he saying?'  
  
The other young man froze, then paled and furtively raised a hand to cover his face.  
  
',and thus, captivated and bewitched by the three breathtaking fairies that must have descended from heaven to illuminate this dolorous world with their youthful charm, we cannot help but hope that you would join us for a humble picnic. Pleаse, I beg of you… will you bestow the precious gift of your sweet company upon us? My heart is like a bird trapped in a cage, beating wildly in anticipation!'  
  
The peculiar guy finally finished speaking, glanced at their startled expressions, and then added hurriedly:  
  
'Oh! Forgive my lack of manners… I was so enamored by your spectacular beauty that I forgot to introduce myself. I am Master Tristan, and this is my friend, Master Mercy.'  
  
'Argh… now, how do I refuse them politely?'  
  
Rain blinked a couple of times, Telle shifted slightly, and Tamar just stared at the two young men with a deadpan expression.  
  
A few seconds later, she said dully:  
  
'Tristan? You're Tristan of Aegis Rose?'  
  
The young man beamed.  
  
'So you've heard of me. Well, I can't say I'm surprised. The stories of my martial prowess have spread far and wide, after all!'  
  
Tamar nodded.  
  
'Oh, I think I killed a cousin of yours at Godheart.'  
  
The young man froze.  
  
'P - pardon?'  
  
Tamar studied him for a few seconds, then shrugged.  
  
'Well, who knows? I might have. I am Lady Tamar of Sorrow, formerly a centurion of the Seventh Royal Legion. And these are my friends…'  
  
Tristan's expression changed.  
  
'Seventh Royal Legion? Seven Royal Legion?!'  
  
The other young man opened his eyes wide and reached for his friend.  
  
'Tristan, wait!'  
  
But Tristan did not wait.  
  
'The army of that dishonorable, diabolical wench, Seishan of Song? Bah! I take it back, then. I have to! My honor will not allow me to stay quiet! You are no fairy, my lady. You must be an evil seductress, instead!'  
  
But he could say anything else…  
  
There was a loud sound, and Master Tristan was suddenly facing the other away, the silhouette of a delicate palm clearly imprinted on his cheek.  
  
Rain shook her hand in the air with a pained expression.  
  
'Ouch!'  
  
Her hand hurt, but she was satisfied. This was a full outing experience now!  
  
Granted, it would have been better if the person she slapped was not a Master. Masters really had hard jaws.  
  
Looking at the stunned Ascended, Rain smiled.  
  
'That was not very chivalrous of you, don't you think, Master Tristan? After all, you approached us first… how can you call my friend a seductress?'  
  
She shook her head.  
  
'I am sorry, but we will have to refuse your invitation for a picnic. Now, if you'll excuse us…'  
  
Giving the other Master a slight bow, she grabbed Telle and Tamar and dragged them away.  
  
Rain waited until they were far enough away before exploding into laughter.  
  
…Tristan and Mercy, meanwhile, were left behind to their own devices.  
  
Tristan massaged his cheek, a confused expression on his face.  
  
Did this slap, feel peculiarly familiar?  
  
Eventually, he sighed and glanced at Mercy with reproach.  
  
',The worst thing they can say is no, huh?'  
  
Mercy took a deep breath, shook his head, and walked away in dejected silence.'