Muse

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Muse

by SilverInk

Summary

“Let me come with you.”

Iona blinked, the side of her mouth twitching up in faint, surprised amusement. “Come with me?”

“Yes,” Sira said, as boldly and decisively as she could. She realized she had no explanation for this change of mind, and she thought frantically. “I — I have a new song idea. About bravery and adventure. But I need to experience adventure to write it. And you do adventurous things as a knight, so I want to come with you.”

Sira, a bard, convinces Iona, the knight she is in love with, to let her join her in a knightly quest. Ostensibly because she wants to experience adventure, but really she just to spend more time with Iona...

Notes

Originally written for Chocolate Box on AO3 in 2024! Another favorite original work of mine <3

“You were amazing, let me buy you a drink.”

Sira looked to see Iona standing next to her with her own drink in hand, grinning widely, and she felt her heart melt a little.

“Alright, go on,” Sira grinned back, and then Iona was turning to the bartender to ask for the spiced, hot cider that Sira loved. This was how it had been for the past week: Sira had been traveling from town to town performing in different taverns each night, singing beloved well-known songs and sometimes making up new ones. That was what had happened tonight — she had come up with a song that had been in her mind for some time, the words coming to her right there and then, and the people seemed to love it. Already many of them were offering to buy her drinks and food, but she wanted her first drink of the night to be from Iona. The song was inspired by her, after all.

Iona handed her a large clay mug, and Sira savored the warmth of it in her hands and the smell of the spices, before clinking her mug with Iona’s and drinking deeply.

“Truly, you were amazing, Sira. I haven’t heard that one before. Did you make that one up just now?”

She was leaning back in her chair, stretched out and relaxed, and Sira suddenly felt shy at the words of praise.

“I did. But, it was easy since I’ve been thinking of it for a long time.” She looked at Iona meaningfully, hoping this time she would understand that the spontaneous songs of love and longing and admiration for a courageous, noble female knight with dark hair and intense green eyes were meant for her.

“It’s very impressive,” Iona murmured, still smiling, and bumped her shoulder against Sira’s. “You’re a genius,” she laughed. Sira sighed inwardly, because still, Iona didn’t understand. Maybe she did understand but didn’t feel the same. That didn’t seem like something Iona would do, though; she would at least tell Sira if her feelings were misplaced, not leave her wondering.

The evening wore on, and Sira and Iona continued to eat and drink and laugh until Iona stood and said she was going to bed. Sira was pleasantly drunk by now, with just enough of a buzz to loosen her inhibitions a bit and make her laugh at things that weren’t very funny.

“What? Why so early?” she protested, grabbing the sleeve of Iona’s shirt and pouting.

“I have to make an early start in the morning.” Iona wrapped her much larger hand around Sira’s, and it took a second for the words to sink in. Her eyes were so intensely green and glittering…

Right. Yes. One of the reasons Iona had come with her so long was that she had business of her own to do near one of the towns Sira had planned to go to.

She felt much more sober suddenly, and she stood up from her seat.

“Let me come with you.”

Iona blinked, the side of her mouth twitching up in faint, surprised amusement. “Come with me?”

“Yes,” Sira said, as boldly and decisively as she could. She realized she had no explanation for this change of mind, and she thought frantically. “I — I have a new song idea. About bravery and adventure. But I need to experience adventure to write it. And you do adventurous things as a knight, so I want to come with you.”

She looked into Iona’s face, hoping the explanation sounded convincing. There was a long pause, and Iona was still looking at her in amusement, her eyebrows raised.

“Alright,” she said slowly after a moment. “You can come with me. For song research.”

Sira wasn’t sure Iona believed her.

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In the morning, Iona looked a little surprised when Sira got up with her to leave. She raised an eyebrow as Sira yawned and stretched before getting out of bed.

“I wasn’t sure if you were serious, last night,” Iona murmured, half-laughing.

“I was very serious,” Sira grinned, and Iona grinned back at her. She tossed a tunic to Sira, and when they were both dressed and had finished eating, they started their journey in earnest.

The first few days went well. Nothing much happened that first day, or the day after, and although Sira had said she wanted to come to experience adventure, she was enjoying the quietness with Iona. Adventure could wait for now.

On the third day, they were attacked.

It was the end of the day, in the golden light before sunset, and they had stopped to eat and make camp for the night. They were talking like usual, finishing their food and starting to get ready to sleep, and when Sira’s back was turned, there was a loud crash and then shouting.

She whirled around and saw Iona fighting with another knight, who was in full armor while Iona was only wearing a mail shirt.

Then before she could think, another knight wearing lighter armor, knocked her to the ground. She was frozen for a second, then reached for the small, light sword Iona had given her and blindly slicing with it. The fight seemed to go on for a long time before Sira found herself pinned down and unable to move. The knight drew a sword, and she was sure this was it, and she squeezed her eyes shut —

There was a shout behind them that she barely registered, and then an even heavier weight on top of her. When no killing blow came, Sira slowly opened her eyes to see the knight slumped, dead, on top of her, and in the next instant Iona kneeling above her, her face full of worry and tears in her eyes.

“Oh, thank god, Sira — ”

Iona pushed the body off of her and Sira sat up and clung onto her desperately. Her thoughts were swirling, but she knew Iona would help her and protect her. Sira realized she was crying too when Iona wiped the tears off her cheek, very gently.

“Are you alright? Please, talk to me,” Iona murmured, her hand still on Sira’s cheek.

She didn’t think she was hurt, and her panicked thoughts were already starting to slow, along with her breathing. She nodded, and then since Iona seemed to need to hear her say it, she said roughly, “Yes. I’m alright now.”

Then she pressed closer, grabbing the collar of Iona’s shirt, and kissed her hard and a little clumsily, suddenly feeling the soaring, almost terrifying realization that she was *alive*, and Iona was alive.

“You saved me,” she said in the tiny space between their lips, “thank you, you noble and courageous, beautiful — ”

She was interrupted as Iona kissed her back, just as hard, and Sira shuddered quietly. When they broke apart, they just looked into each other’s eyes for a long moment before laughing softly.

“Have you truly felt the same, all this time?” Sira whispered, looking so deeply into Iona’s stunning green eyes that she could almost get lost in them.

“For a long time, yes.” When Iona wouldn’t meet her eyes, Sira touched her chin and made her look up.

“I love you,” Sira half-laughed. “I’ve been trying to tell you with songs, when I sang at the taverns, and I wondered if you didn’t feel the same or if you just didn’t understand…”

Iona laughed incredulously now too. “I’ve been a fool.” Sira shook her head emphatically, getting ready to deny it, but Iona just kissed her again.

The adventure of battle was not as beautiful and glorious as she had thought, but Sira thought it would surely be better to compose endless odes to Iona’s bravery and beauty. She smiled and smiled as they continued kissing.

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