Ace of Hearts

“Ah, Maria, looking lovely as usual.”

I was sitting in an oversized chair in the mansion’s library, reading, when I heard the voice. I didn’t need to look up to know who it was. Besides, it was about the time of the day when this guy showed up anyway. William, one of the princes of this country, seemed to be quite enamoured of me and I couldn’t tell you why. Well, I had an idea. Saving his life probably has something to do with it.

“A good day to you as well, your grace.” I responded, not even looking up from the book.

“Ah, such coldness. I love how you play hard to get.” He saunters into the room, offering a rose that I figure he probably plucked on the way in. I don’t mind this part, the roses here are lovely, though also quite different from the ones I’m used to. You know how roses are this lovely flower with thorns all across the stem? For some reason, the ones here are a large thorn that has blooms up the sides.

Oh, right. I guess that’s something important I should mention. I’m not on Earth right now. I don’t want to go into details, but I got sent to some other world for no good reason. I’m not really bothered, though. But that’s a story I’ll tell at another time.

Getting back to the present, I take the rose and place it in a vase I brought with me. These vases are pretty neat, actually. They have some kind of magic that keeps circulating water and nutrients for the flowers in them, and when they finally wilt it basically “eats” the flower and cleans itself up for the next one. I’ve always been bad at remembering to water and feed my plants, so I appreciate that these things automate the process for me. Thankfully, the roses die quickly when removed from the rest of the plant, even in one of these vases, so my room isn’t just filled with the things, even if I do like how they smell.

Reaching the end of the chapter I was in, I place a bookmark and close the cover, looking up at William. He was dressed in his normal regal tunic and pants, both a lovely shade of yellow with light blue highlights, and a white blouse and cravat under it. He usually made sure to dress his best every time he came to visit. I know he was trying to woo me, but instead I just felt impressed and embarrassed at the effort he goes through.

“Would you care to join me for a walk in the garden?” he asked, offering his hand to me.

“Eh, sorry your grace. I actually already have plans to go into town with Yen. Didn’t she tell you?” Yen, short for Yennifer, was William’s actual fiancé, which made his efforts all the cringier. That said, Yen seemed to be ok with it, and in fact would seem to find reasons to leave the two of us alone. I know it’s not because she doesn’t like me, or him, so I can’t fully understand what her goal is.

Actually, no, I think I have an idea, but that can’t be true…

Anyway, we had made plans to go into town and meet with Clarisse and Robert. As much as I try to keep away from Clarisse because of how much of a creepy stalker she acts around me, she and her brother Robert are the best merchants I know, and I’ve been waiting on them to procure a rare component for a project I had been working on. It sounded like they had finally found it, and Yen offered to come and help keep Clarisse at bay.

The frustrating thing is that Clarisse is otherwise a really nice person. Sometimes, when she can control how weirdly horny she is for me, we can manage to have some really fun times out. She is also a kindred spirit, and helps me find some, uh. Let’s just say “rare ladies romance” novels. We don’t talk about them too much, though, because they inevitably end up with her coming on to me.

Ugh, if only I felt even close to the same way about her. Though it’s not that I’m opposed to the idea, I just don’t feel that “spark” you hear so much about, you know? Honestly, I’d probably rather be with Yen, but I can tell she doesn’t feel that way. I don’t, either, but if you had to put a gun to my head and tell me to choose, that’d probably be my answer.

Meanwhile, Robert is almost a non-entity. I know he’s a master businessman, but he just never seems to have any real presence around me. I don’t know if he’s shy or just bad around women, or just doesn’t like me, but every time I come by, he clams up. It’s a shame, because he’s pretty good looking, and I don’t normally think that about a guy.

“Oh, is that so? Well, my schedule for today is wide open, so how about I jo…” William tries to make a grand show of his availability, but before he could finish his sentence, someone’s head pops through the door.

“Your grace, you have a meeting with the Levian dignitaries in 10 minutes, and after that you’re expected to make an appearance as the Guard marches out.” This was William’s head maid and secretary, Julia. She’s an expert at wrangling the prince, and I am thankful for her efforts. Later I’ll have to bake her some more cookies. I know she really likes it when I do that.

“How many times do I need to tell you not to interrupt me when I’m with Maria?” William clearly deflates after having his alibi blown up, and sulks as he walks back out and down the hallway. I guess maybe he was dressed nice for that, today, instead of just for me. It’s a nice thought.

I don’t know. I guess I kind of wish I had someone in my life I had the same kinds of feelings for that William does for me. All my life I’ve seen the people around me fall in and out of love, and yet it never seemed to happen for me. My old friends used to say that I just haven’t found the right guy yet, though I don’t think a guy is who I’m waiting for. Regardless, I know that the new and unknown tends to be pretty attractive, and what’s more new and unknown then an entirely different world? And yet… I have felt nothing. Don’t get me wrong, they’re all my good friends, but that’s all I feel. If this isn’t enough, then where is my “right one”? I’m sure they’re out there somewhere, right?

Eh, in any case, I guess I’ve spent enough time dithering around. I’d better get ready to meet up with Yen. I’m sure she’ll be here soon enough, if William is wandering about.