

Instant Romance

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Instant Romance

by [Rozzlynn](#)

Summary

Just add water to the desert.

Notes

First posted on [tumblr](#) after I saw Zannen Nagara Chigaimasu recommended as possibly the [worst shoujo romance](#) ever. It's a single chapter manga, and I could see why people were laughing, but it left me full of truthshipping feels, and this is the result.

She glanced back at the Barai Pond as she reached the top of the steps cut into its dry bank. Her eyes widened as someone stepped out of the Temple of Barai. Even at this distance, she could see the mask in his hand. Could it be the luna mask...?

He looked up, and stood rooted to the spot as he met her gaze. She clutched her pail of water, thanking the fates that she'd come here to fetch it at this exact time, and not a minute earlier or later.

He wasn't as handsome as some of her suitors, but she couldn't bring herself to look away. He held her gaze as he lifted the ancient mask in a gesture of greeting, then took a step in her direction.

"Wait for me up there. I will be with you shortly."

"Eighteen? And you are already second in line to the throne?" There was a mildly disbelieving edge to his tone as he questioned her, sitting beside her on the steps of the Alchemy Well.

"My brother is not much older, and he is handling his duties as well as anyone could have expected. If you doubt our ability to lead Ayuthay in the wake of our parents' passing, then I must ask you to keep your opinions to yourself."

"I apologise. I did not intend to insult your abilities." He sighed and let his gaze drift to the fountains lining the walls.

"Apology accepted." She smiled, reminding herself to be grateful for the miracles he had worked, and for the miracle of their meeting. "How old are you, if I might ask?"

"Of course you might." His smile seemed slightly forced.

"Do you intend to answer?"

"Not if you have lost interest in me."

"I am interested in your better qualities. Tell me about yourself."

He laughed under his breath, then hesitated for several long moments. "I am... twenty five?"

"Why do you sound unsure?"

"I suppose I am unsure of my audience. I must apologise again; you have already asked me not to doubt you. In truth, I am twenty nine, and I will be thirty before the month is out. We are twelve years apart. Now tell me, have I held your interest?"

"You do not have enough faith in your appeal." She leaned in, wishing his skewed smile would relax into a more genuine expression of affection. Shouldn't he be flattered by her attention? "Honestly, why are you so hesitant?"

“Why wouldn’t I be? I am in the company of royalty.”

“And I am in the company of a tremendously powerful Adept. Why do you sound so flustered?”

“Why...?” He laughed again, then tilted his head and let his gaze trail across her body. “Because after this, I want to take you to bed.”

“What are you saying?” She jerked back, feeling a deep blush settle across her features.

“Are we not on the same wavelength?” He started to reach out, then returned his hand to his side, letting the intensity of his stare carry his message. “I do not wish to be separated from you until I have given you an heir. Do you not desire a child worthy of the Insight Glass?”

“An Adept of my own bloodline...” She pressed a hand to her chest, feeling her heart beating wildly in response to his forthright suggestion. She slid closer until she could feel his leg pressed against hers. “Well... I also want something to remember you by.”

“As you wish.” He rose to his feet, then offered her his hand. “I will be in trouble with your brother, if he ever finds out.”

She took his hand, pausing for a moment as the warmth of his touch did strange things to her system. “I do not answer to my brother. I do not need his permission to marry.”

“Oh? Do you wish to get married?” He smiled as if in jest.

She held his hand as she considered the question. “...I will take credit for the activation of the Alchemy Well, and explain my child as another feat of Psynergy. Its legitimacy would be called into question if our relationship were discovered. If I were to keep a marriage certificate hidden away, to be brought out as a last resort...”

“You could safeguard the child’s claim to the throne, and to the ancient secrets entrusted to the royal line.” He squeezed her hand, a delighted smile playing on his lips. “Shall we travel to a city where we will not be recognised? Once we have registered our marriage at the Sanctum, I will book a room at the Inn.”

She sat by his side during the flight to Tolbi, watching him work the controls of the Tuaparang’s strange machinery. When they landed in a secluded woodland clearing, she rested her head on his shoulder for a moment, then took his hand and let him lead the way.

They walked into the Sanctum a few hours after sunrise, and quickly caught the attention of the healer on duty.

“You say you wish to be married? Congratulations, congratulations. Might I have your names?” The healer asked, fetching a pile of forms from beneath the altar.

“Alex.” Her soon-to-be husband shared his name, then smirked as he caught sight of the healer’s shaken expression. “Not *that* Alex.”

“I - I see.” The healer offered them a nervous smile, then busied himself with his papers.

“Oh...” Alex turned to her with a smile still on his lips. “Tell me your name.”

“Veriti.” She squeezed his hand, then noticed the healer’s curious stare, and guessed that he’d heard news of Ayuthay’s affairs. “Not *that* Veriti.”

“Ah... yes. I see. When do you wish to hold the wedding?”

“Immediately,” Alex replied.

“We do not wish to invite anyone,” Veriti added.

“I... I will need a few minutes to prepare the paperwork. Please take a seat.”

They retreated to the nearest bench, each still clasping the other’s hand.

Veriti leaned in to whisper in Alex’s ear. “He seems quite glad to be rid of us, for the moment.”

“I do not suppose he is accustomed to performing this ceremony in such haste.”

“I suppose not.” Veriti giggled for a moment, then tried to suppress the noise in case he interpreted it as a nervous reaction.

“Aren’t we adventurous?” Alex asked. “I never imagined I would find myself agreeing to exchange vows before I had even exchanged names with my beloved.”

“If you have questions, ask now,” Veriti offered, trying to preserve the playful mood.

“Very well. I have a question for you. Are you a virgin?”

“Yes, of course. Wouldn’t you expect as much from someone of my age and status?”

“I am not in the habit of making assumptions.”

“I hope you are not disappointed by my lack of experience.”

“You are incapable of disappointing me. If we are to communicate effectively, then we must start somewhere, mustn’t we?”

“I - I suppose so.”

“Besides, I would classify your answer as good news, if I were coarse enough to express an opinion on the matter.”

She pressed a finger to his lips. “Perhaps you should take a short break from expressing your opinions.”

He took hold of her hand, kissed her palm, then leaned in to whisper in her ear. “Well, then, however shall we fill the time?”

She slid her free hand behind his neck and drew him into a kiss. By the time their lips parted, her blush had spread across her face and down her neck. She held herself close to him, breathing in his scent.

“Is this your first kiss?” Alex asked quietly, wrapping an arm round her waist.

She drew back slightly, and treated him to a wistful smile. “Too bad, it isn’t.”

He brushed a wisp of hair back from her face. “Nevermind. I expect our marriage will survive.”

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