

GENTLE



A thin layer of clouds masked the full moon as Druig and Gabriella made their way into the clearing, snow falling lightly to show that spring was on its way. Placing her hands together before her face, Gabriella rubs them so ly as she blows, the night sky dark to show it was much later. Although the weather was changing, it was still cold and Druig couldn't help but to chuckle as she silently complained.

"Is it to cold?" Druig questions as he moves to stand beside her, Gabriella turning to face him, "we can wait for the morning, though it's so much prettier at night."

"No, I'm fine." She mutters out quickly with a slight tone of annoyance, Druig chuckling again as he continues to watch her.

"Are you sure?"

Frowning slightly Gabriella ignores his question as she turns to look towards the forest in the distance. Placing her hands into the pockets of the coat she was given, she can't help but to smile as he moves to stand in front of her.

"Forgive me," Druig continues as he reaches his hand out towards her, a slight mock in his tone, "I forget humans have a lower tolerance to the changes in temperature."

Smacking away his hand and crossing her arms, Gabriella fakes frustration as she turns her head slightly to hide her growing smile. Feeling Druig bend himself to follow her, he returns her smile as he pokes her nose.

"How cute," Druig whispers once again leaving his hand stretched towards her as Gabriella leans back on her heels, "shall we?"

"Do you think Tomas and the others caught any fish?" Gabriella questions as she takes his hand gently, forgiving him easily.

"I'm sure they did," Druig says pulling her towards the hut where the cooking was prepared for the compound, "it would be a nice treat, since we couldn't catch any ourselves."

"Yeah, my bad."

"Yeah, next time don't fall into the river," Druig comments loudly glancing over his shoulder with a smile as he squeezed her hand.

Shoving him forward so ly as a reaction to his teasing, Gabriella finds herself stopping suddenly as an enticing smell wa s gently with the breeze. Closing her eyes as if to help support her sense of smell, Druig chuckles as he halts before tapping her forehead.

"Can you smell that?" Gabriella says excitedly opening her eyes and wrinkling her nose, Druig mimicking her, "I don't know what it is, but it smells amazing!"

"I believe it's grilled Tambaqui," Druig a irms as he smiles watching Gabriella clap her hands in excitement.

"How can you tell?"

"I'm just too good," he declares flexing his arms as his smile turns to a smirk, Gabriella laughing as she fakes a gasp of bewitchment while placing the back of her hand to her forehead dramatically.

"The mighty Druig," Gabriella mocks as Druig smiles at her, "the history books will write stories of his charm!"

"Don't forget his good looks!"

Placing her hand over her mouth to hide her laughter, Gabriella moves to wrap the other arm around his as Druig finds himself laughing with her. He was memorized by her and each new moment they created together, only showed him how much he cared for her.

"Do you think they will have any le ?" Gabriella suddenly questions as she calms herself before wiping the tears of her laughter from her eyes. Druig places a hand on her arm that wrapped around his with a smile, making her look at him with fondness.

"Only one way to find out, my dear."

Returning to their mission for something to eat, they both continued to the hut before the scent of grilled fish and sprigs of fresh herbs overwhelmed them. Removing herself from Druig, Gabriella rushes towards the open window which allowed the aroma to enchant the clearing before placing her hands on its ledge. As her chin rested on her hands, a woman tending the fire gasps in surprise as she finally notices Gabriella just before watching the hut door rattle with a quiet knock.

"Gabriella!" The woman hu s as she flicks a hand towel towards the window, Gabriella mouthing a sorry before removing herself to stand with Druig.

"How cruel pretty lady," Druig says with a grin looking at Gabriella as the door opens, "you almost caused the poor woman a heart attack."

"You almost certainly did," the woman adds as she bows, clearly still flustered and slightly embarrassed, "What brings you two here so late? Supper was long ago, where were you both?"

"Gabriella fell into the river, so I took her to my home and she fell asleep."

"Oh my," the woman utters quietly looking at Gabriella, a smile pulling at her lips.

"Don't let your mind wonder Maria!" Gabriella states quickly as the woman's eyebrows furrow in amusement, Druig letting out a small chuckle.

"Not wondering my dear," she replies tossing the hand towel over her shoulder as Gabriella nudges Druig, "but it would make for a fine story."

"Maria, we apologise for the late intrusion," Druig says as he places his arm around Gabriella's shoulders to stop her from shu ling with irritation, "but we will be heading out soon and we have not yet eaten."

"I see, well then, come in, come in."

With a smile, the woman moves from the door to the corner of the room allowing Druig to slightly force a reluctant Gabriella into the small hut as he shut the door behind them. As the smell which enticed them here in the first place overcame all their senses, they noticed large foiled heaps grilling over the fire being poked at by the woman.

Standing silently towards the middle of the hut, Gabriella smiles slightly as she notices the abundance of spices, fruit, vegetables and other ingredients hanging from hooks or wrapped neatly on shelves. The hut was charming, homely and I suppose that's why it felt so alluring.

Observing as the woman removed the foiled heaps from the grill and placing it upon the table before them, Druig and Gabriella happily made their way closer as the scent of the fish and herb mixture pulled them near. Moving back to the corner, the woman returns to o er some cutlery before bowing.

"Please enjoy, but if you will excuse me, I wish to retire for the night."

"Thank you Maria," Druig and Gabriella say almost at the same time as the woman bows again with a smile before putting down the hand towel and heading through a door in the back, the fire slowly weakening.

Little time passed before Druig began to unfold the foil, his fingers delicately peeling it back no notice of the heat. Feeling her stomach growl in anticipation, Druig glances towards Gabriella before smiling as she shrugged and leaned on her elbows to prop herself up. Once the foil was neat, Gabriella looks over to see beautifully grilled fish garnished with multiple herbs and surrounded by colourful vegetables.

"Oh it looks heavenly," Gabriella whispers picking up one of the forks before handing it to Druig and retrieving the other.

"Here," Druig replies so ly, using his fork to compile a mix of fish and vegetable before blowing on it gently and moving it towards her, "be careful, it'll be hot."

Feeling heat rise to her cheeks, Gabriella faces Druig shyly as his hand moved inches away from her. Trying to keep herself from looking at him, she delicately places her mouth over his fork before using her teeth to pull the fish and vegetables from it. Pulling back reaching a hand to cover her mouth as she chewed quietly, Gabriella half smiles as he uses the fork to feed himself not taking his eyes o her.

"What?" She comments as he continues to eat and look at her.

"What?"

"Why are you looking at me," Gabriella replies placing a forkful of fish into her mouth as Druig taps his against his lips. ❧

"No reason," he whispers as he returns to pile his food in he y bites, "I just simply like looking at you."

Looking down towards the meal before them, Gabriella shyly continues to eat as she keeps lingering over what he said, her heart racing.

"Gabriella?" Druig breaks the silence as she looks up awkwardly before smiling, "how are you doing? We're go if we wish to still see my secret."

"I'm ready," Gabriella responds as she places the fork once more towards her mouth to finish her meal o before closing the foil.

Placing her hand out, Druig smiles before giving her his empty foil and fork as Gabriella moved to put them away. Turning back she watches as he reaches the door before stretching his hand towards her, cheekily beckoning her to come to him. Rolling her eyes with a smile, Gabriella walks over before linking her fingers with his and gently squeezing as Druig returns her smile.

Heading back into the clearing, Druig tightens his grip on her hand as he pulls her closer to him. Gabriella could feel her cheeks flush and in that moment was glad the clearing had only little light.

"The hike won't be long," Druig states as Gabriella leans into him, "Are you sure you're up for it?"

"Wouldn't miss this chance for anything," Gabriella replies looking up to him with a smile before pushing him to continue walking as he chuckles.

Proceeding to the edge of the forest, Gabriella feels calm as she felt safe being with Druig. Finally noticing that the snow was even lighter, she smiles once more as Druig turns to her with a playful grin before entering the forest with her in tow.

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