

Waves of Gold

Von abgemeldet

Kapitel 3:

Waves of Gold

Based on: Asterix & Obelix

Creators: Goscinny & Uderzo

Part 3

It was late afternoon; Panacea and Impedimenta were taking a walk along the borders of the forest, picking herbs and berries, chatting about the upcoming harvest dance. It was the middle of October and the leaves were tinted red and yellow, spiraling down on the wind like birds in free flight. Panacea wrapped her long blue cloak tightly around herself, trying to keep out the autumn wind.

"The men should be coming back soon," Impedimenta remarked, squinting into the shadowy forest. It was a dangerous place, easy to get lost in, with deep, faraway places where only the most skilled hunters of the village went. Like Asterix and Obelix, for instance. Speaking of which...

"There they are. Hey, you two!" Impedimenta spotted the returning hunters first and waved them over imperiously. "Have you seen Piggywiggy? If he stays in the forest overnight again I swear I'll..."

At first, Asterix and Obelix wore matching looks of annoyance as they listened to Impedimenta's harangue about her good-for-nothing husband. But as soon as they spotted Panacea – very soon, because of her height and distinctive hair – Asterix's mustache began to twitch with mischief. I know something you don't know, his eyes said, darting between Obelix and the women. As for Obelix himself, he stopped in his tracks, flushed scarlet, and said nothing.

"No, I'm afraid we don't know where the Chief is," said Asterix. "Don't worry, he'll turn up. Hello, Panacea," he added, doffing his helmet. "Nice to see you. You remember Obelix, right?"

"Of course. I just saw him working on a menhir this morning," said Panacea. She could see him carving the stone column in her mind's eye, the muscles in his arms bunching up, sweat gleaming on his skin. He was such a big, powerful man; looking at him made her feel tiny and fragile. He could lift you up bridal-style as if you weighed no more than a feather...

Wait, no! What am I thinking? She could feel the blood rushing to her own cheeks. Since when was Obelix, the shy, chubby boy who once smashed his abacus in school because he couldn't get the sums right, fantasy material? She made herself look away, focusing instead on the small, scruffy, black-and-white dog next to the two men.

"Hi there, Dogmatix! Come here – you remember me, don't you?"

She dropped to her knees and held out one hand; Dogmatix approached, sniffed the hand and, apparently remembering her, made no protest as she scratched behind his floppy ears. His tail began to wag; this, after all, was the girl who had looked after him for several months while his master was away in Africa.

"Aww, you're so cute. Good boy."

Dogmatix licked her hand and attempted to jump up into her arms, but due to his small size, only left two muddy paw marks on her cloak at knee level.

Obelix gave a sharp whistle, the first sound he had made during this meeting. "Back, Dogmatix!" he ordered. "You're getting the lady's dress dirty. Sorry, Panacea. He's too excitable."

The dog scurried back to his master, looking contrite. Panacea laughed.

"Oh, I don't mind. He likes me. Father used to have a dog – remember, Impedimenta?" The First Lady wrinkled her nose. "Oh yes. That big, hairy brute who used to ruin my linens."

"Oh, I know! But he was the sweetest thing, our Lupus. When I came home, he'd always run up to me like he was so happy to see me. And he was a great guard dog – when that fox was sneaking around the village, our chicken coop was the only one he didn't get to."

Obelix nodded, taking a small step closer. "Lupus? That was your dog? I remember. They're so loyal, aren't they? A dog will love you no matter what happens, as long as you treat them right."

"Just like your Dogmatix. He missed you so much when you were away that time... he used to sit by the gates every day, waiting for you to come home."

She did not say how often she had joined the dog in his vigil, looking down the road until her eyes strained. Waiting for Tragicomix, of course, but also for the two brave men who would risk their lives for a stranger. Dark days, wondering if the three of them would survive. Hating herself for being too afraid to join them.

Don't think about that now.

"I left him in good hands," said Obelix. "I knew you'd look after him."

He had an interesting face, she decided. Not as perfect as Tragicomix's, but likeable – bright red plaits of hair, a round knobby nose, jaunty mustache, and black eyes with crinkly lines around them, as if he laughed often and spent lots of time in the sun. Kind, warm eyes.

"Well, it's cold out," said Asterix abruptly. "We'd best be getting home, right, Obelix? Aren't you hungry?"

"Huh? No, not really."

Impedimenta's eyebrows shot up in disbelief. This from the man who could polish off three or four roasted boars in one sitting?

"Well, I am. Come on, Obelix, we're wasting the ladies' time."

"Oh. Right. Good night, ladies."

Obelix lifted his helmet, put it on backwards, and hurried away with surprising speed, Asterix trudging after him with an irritated sigh.

The women, following them to the village at a slower pace, exchanged looks. Impedimenta was scowling.

"What's up with Obelix?" Panacea asked. "He was so...polite. This morning, too. He never used to talk to me before."

"You don't know?" Impedimenta rolled her eyes. "Oh, my dear, how dense can you get? Obviously he's in love with you."

Her face burst into flame again; a fluttery feeling rose in her stomach. After her plain and gawky teenage years, it was still hard to get used to people finding her beautiful. It was always a shock when she heard things like this, whether they were true or not.

"Me? Oh, come on. He's just shy around women, that's all."

"Shy, eh? Well, let me tell you, no other woman we know of has ever distracted him from eating. Not even Cleopatra herself. Idiot. As if he could ever stand a chance with a girl like you."

"What do you mean?" Panacea found herself bristling like a hedgehog, hardly knowing why.

"I mean that with your beauty, you could have any man you wanted. Someone rich, handsome, clever..."

"...Like Tragicomix?"

"Well, yes. You have to admit he was a good match. Aside from, you know..."

"The little fact that I was miserable with him. All I want is a man who will love me, not just my body."

"Well, that rules out Obelix for sure. He's like an animal; he only cares about one thing. Well, three. There's also food and fighting." Impedimenta snorted.

"You're being cruel, Impedimenta." Panacea increased her pace so the older woman had to jog to keep up. "Obelix is the kindest, bravest, most honorable man I know. Without him and Asterix, the Romans would have crushed us dozens of times. Your husband would be Chief of nowhere and walking everywhere by himself!"

They had reached Panacea's house; she paused with her hand on the door and shot a scathing look in Impedimenta's direction.

"And besides, if all he cared about were physical things, he'd have fallen for Cleopatra - the most beautiful woman in the world. Good night, Impedimenta."

She slammed the door.