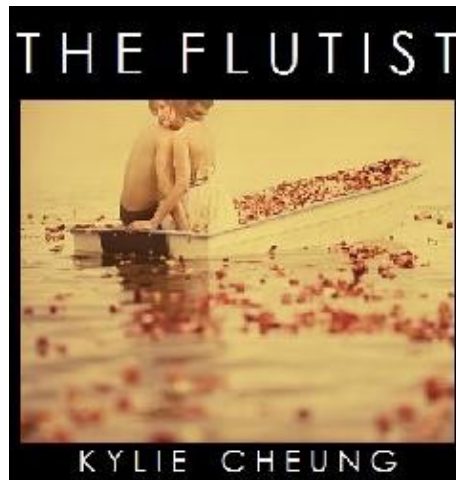


The Flutist

By : xVenus

Wren has always known she possessed extraordinary musical talent, but she never imagined that this gift would take her far as the king's bed. One night, by pure chance, she is summoned to the palace to perform amongst other musicians at the royal court, where she instantly not only catches King Finian's eye - but his ear. In a short time, Wren goes from being the king's personal flutist, to his mistress in spite of his envious wife, beginning a romance so scandalous the whole kingdom and beyond is shaken. But when Wren is captured by the enemy as a ransom for surrender, the roguish, rebellious, and rather charming prince that acts as her warden soon, very much against her will, steals her heart. However, to truly let herself fall in love with her captor would mean to give up everything.



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Table of Contents

The Flutist Chapter 1

Author's Note: At the moment, I'm focusing my time on the novel *Myuriik* and so I probably won't add the next installment of this until a little bit. Feel free to read this and tell me what you think/some ideas!

[illegible]

The Flutist

And then, on the night of their wedding, Finian had her another time; June began to count down the days to her next course - which she expected, and hoped, she would miss.

*

"Lady Kathryn, you've a visitor."

Kathryn set her flute to her lap and gazed up at the maid in her doorway. "Yes? Oh! A visitor? Might it be the Lord James?"

"Yes, Milady."

"Leave me, then. Bring him here, to me, now!"

She smoothed the dress about her plump body and brushed her graying hair, and then took her seat again, folded her hands primly in her lap, and lifted her chin. How could any man resist her, like this?

James entered meekly; he seated himself about the chair of her desk.

"You look particularly handsome, today," Kathryn greeted him, warmly.

"Thank you." He shifted uncomfortably, under her unwavering gaze.

"Have you come so that we may discuss our engagement? Oh! A court wedding, how lovely! We will be newly-weds fine as the king and queen!"

James was a handsome boy of eighteen; he had hair fair as the queen's, and skin to match. He was a champion of the joust, the royal Lord of the Music Hall; he was a wealthy landowner fancied by every woman at court. He could not have this woman, eight years his senior and nearing thirty with colorless hair and crows feet. She had little more than apartments in the music hall, and a small ensemble of lady flutists under her instruction.

He had alas come to his senses and realized that this woman called bitter and terribly jealous by her pretty little underlings, could not be his wife. They could not be a powerful couple of the Music Hall; she hadn't a cent to her name, and no beauty to her face.

"Yes, actually."

"What news do you bring? Good, I should hope!" She smiled like a happy little girl, far as she was from being one.

"Milady. It was a very tough decision, but I have decided to dissolve our betrothal."

The smile vanished from her face. She cleared her throat. "Um. What?"

The Flutist

“We are no longer engaged, Kathryn. I am sorry if I offend.”

“Oh, you do offend! It is our age difference, is it not? I once respected you!”

“And you should, still. Don't speak to me, that way.”

James stood, turned on his heel, and then he was gone. The door clicked shut behind him.

*

“A fine flute. I am a flutist, myself.”

Wren looked up from the linen she was examining. Over the sound of the busy marketplace around her, she did not at first take notice of the girl before her. “Thank you. And are you one? There are few musicians around here.”

“I shouldn't think so. I am of the palace.”

Wren gasped. “Are you?”

“I am. I am a musician of His Majesty's music hall, a flutist of Lady Kathryn's ensemble.”

“Do you play for His Majesty? Whatever are you called?” Wren demanded. She enjoyed to play the flute. She had always been too clumsy to be a dancer; but song came naturally, to her, naturally as breathing. She had a sweet enough face, but she knew she could never be called beautiful. Not by the standards of Myuri, at any rate. She did not have pretty golden hair, eyes green as holly, or peach skin; she had black hair and black eyes and skin pale as skim milk.

“I do - but not alone, of course. I am called Eriph.” Eriph reached for the flute in Wren's hand, and examined it. “Play me a tune. Any tune.”

Wren was obedient to her betters; she brought the wooden flute to her lips, and blew a pretty rain-calling song.

By the end of it, she hadn't at all noticed that the marketplace had silenced, and around her a crowd had gathered. She only noticed upon finishing the song that her dress was soaked; she was drenched in rain falling heavily about.

And then the crowd dispersed; tents were being set up, and canopies to protect from the summer storm.

“Very nice. Better than I could play it, at any rate. And your name is?”

“Wren, Mistress Eriph. Wren.”

The Flutist

“You have talent, Madam. I should think even beyond my Lady Kathryn. A fine future awaits you.”

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