

Seek Not, Yet You Shall Find

a *Bridgerton* Ficlet

by Rodo

for *DesertVixen*

EDWINA HAD EXPECTED to meet the Queen – she had quite looked forward to it when leaving the house that morning, as a matter of fact. Instead, she found herself alone in the palace gardens, watching the peacocks dance to the song of a swarm of small birds hiding in the hedges. She was sitting under a splendid gazebo, enjoying her tea at a table set for two while servants lingered nearby. The Queen must be running late. It was understandable; she was the Queen, after all.

“Are you my aunt’s lady-in-waiting?” a voice inquired. Edwina couldn’t place the accent, nor could she place the face when she turned. He wore an elaborate blue military uniform with golden buttons and spotless trousers white enough to blind you. A suspicion began to take root in her mind.

“No,” she answered, rising to her feet and bowing. “I’m merely a guest of Her Majesty. Will she be delayed long?”

The Prussian prince – for that was who he had to be – huffed. “I fear we have both been set up,” he confessed. “My aunt loves to play matchmaker, but I do wish she would focus her attention on someone else. My cousins, for example.”

Edwina smiled. It was well known that his cousins, on the whole, were remarkably resistant to joining the institution of marriage, frustrating even someone so adept at playing the game as the Queen. “I’m sure Her Majesty means well, and I cannot fault her for wanting the best for those she cares for. Although I do admit, I am not looking for a husband at present, but rather someone else.”

The prince smiled. He had a nice smile. Not too boisterous, nor supercilious. It conveyed just the right amount of pleasure, and Edwina smiled back gladly. “Shall we enjoy the cake then?” he suggested.

Edwina agreed and sat back down, while the prince claimed the second chair. “I rather like the peacocks as well. Aren’t their trains magnificent?”, she asked.

“Forgive me if I am blunt, but they are originally from your homeland, yes?”

Edwina nodded. “They do remind me of all the things I’ve left behind.”

“It is a feeling I know all too well. It must be all the more oppressing for someone who has come from so far away. But tell me, my lady, what is your name? We haven’t been introduced yet.”

It came as quite a surprise to Edwina that there was a person left in London who did not know her name, after all the scandal. It wasn’t proper to ask for her name directly either, rather than an introduction, but they were quite alone, a circumstance arranged by none other than the Queen herself, so she didn’t see the harm in it.

“Edwina. Edwina Sharma.”

“It is wonderful to make your acquaintance, Miss Edwina. I am Friedrich.”

“I know,” Edwina said, and he laughed again. Something fluttered in her belly then, something she had thought lost among the wreckage of her almost-marriage. It wasn’t love, she knew now. But it did mean she rather enjoyed it when he smiled at her, and maybe this small seed would grow into more if she tended to it. The Queen would certainly be pleased. And yet none of that mattered. Freed from the expectations placed upon her, Edwina was thrilled to face the adventure that was life, wherever it might lead her. There were certainly worse places to end up than a handsome and charming prince’s side.

“And I would like to know who you are searching for if it isn’t a husband.”

“Ah,” Edwina said, blushing slightly, not daring to meet his eyes. It seemed quite stupid to her, now that she was about to tell someone other than Kate. “Myself.”

When she looked at him again, he was staring at nothing in particular in the distance. “I rather like that answer,” he told her after a long lull in the conversation, taking a sip from his teacup. It looked so very delicate in his gloved hands. “We should all strive to do that, shouldn’t we? I must say, I was a little vexed when I realised my aunt had set us up, but I find I enjoy your company.”

“As I enjoy yours, Your Highness.” That he didn’t find her silly at all certainly endeared him to her. Looking at him, she felt that she could see him, all of him, in a way she never could with the viscount. Maybe she had finally grown wise to the ways of men.

“Then we shall meet again, yes? I would like to get to know you better, and I’m sure an opportunity will present itself.”

Of that, the Queen would make sure, Edwina thought, not unkindly. The very idea caused the blood to thrum in her veins. “I would like that very much.”