

# Waves of Gold

Von abgemeldet

## Kapitel 5:

Waves of Gold

Based on: The Asterix comics

Creators: Goscinny & Uderzo

Part 5

Panacea's resolution to wait and see lasted for several weeks. She threw herself into the old familiar work of her childhood – spinning, carding wool, weaving, taking care of the livestock and working in the fields with the rest of the village women. At the end of the day, she was often too tired to worry about anything but her aching arms and back; after years of easy living in Condatum, she had grown soft. The potion, of course, was being kept for emergencies and Getafix refused to tell her where it was. The day before the equinox, Panacea found herself lost in the forest, trying not to panic. Or think wicked thoughts about Getafix. After all, it wasn't his fault that he was laid up rheumatism and couldn't climb trees to cut mistletoe anymore, requiring someone younger to take his sickle and do it for him. Mistletoe was an essential ingredient in several druidic recipes. Unfortunately, looking for it had led her deeper into the forest than she'd ever gone before, and the clumps of bushes, gnarled old trees and carpet of rotting leaves all looked the same to her.

I've turned into a city girl after all, she thought ruefully, looking around at the tall dark shadows of trees all around her. Every step of hers made a loud crunch, alerting all the wildlife around for miles. The forest did not welcome her, that was clear. How did hunters spend so much time in here without going mad?

The clearing where she stood was small, but the drops of sunlight gathered in it were a relief after so much brown and grey. One enormous oak stood in the middle of it, spreading its branches like an old grandmother spreading out her arms. The patch of ground in front of it was bare and dry now, but somehow it looked familiar.

Is this...the violet patch? It can't be. That was much closer to the village...or have I found my way back without realizing it?

She sat down at the foot of the oak tree and looked up through the branches to see how it would look from there; yes, this had to be it. Her favorite spot from childhood, where she used to sit among the sweet blue flowers and watch the wind dancing through them. She used to pretend it was an enchanted place where no worries could enter.

Well, I know my way back now...but I'm just so tired, surely a few moments sitting down will do me good...

She closed her eyes. The wind whispered through the trees, laughing dryly; somewhere a woodpecker was hammering with all its strength. An ant crawled over her shoe; she ignored it. Just a few moments of peace...if only the violets were still blooming.

Violets. Now why did she have to think of Obelix, silently handing her a bouquet and letting Asterix do all the talking? Had he picked them here or somewhere else? Had Tragicomix known she liked violets? Probably not; all she could remember him giving her was jewelry, because flowers didn't last. But then, a glittery pendant was not alive; it could never grow or change.

She was so lost in thought, sitting curled up with her head on her knees and staring at the ground, that she never noticed the footsteps approaching until they were right in front of her. The first thing she noticed was another voice breathing; she looked up...and up. Scuffed leather shoes, blue and white striped pants, a broad bare chest and arms. Warm brown eyes that, for a moment, met her glance with undisguised love.

Obelix shook his head and the look was gone. He stepped back, like a little boy caught with his hand in the cookie jar, and waved his hands in front of him.

"Uh, hello," he muttered. "Excuse me, am I interrupting...?"

"Oh, no! I was just...thinking."

"That's what I was going to do here," said Obelix, nodding seriously. "Do you mind?"

She smiled. He could be so cute sometimes. "Go right ahead, I don't bite."

He sat down next to her, somewhat to her surprise, and they both said nothing for a while. She stole sideways looks at him as he frowned fiercely at the air – whatever he was thinking about couldn't be pleasant. The sun picked up golden highlights in his auburn hair; she'd never noticed that before. It was funny; he was not handsome, but the more she looked, the more small charms and quirks she found to like.

There were so many things she wanted to ask: When did you fall in love with me? And why? Is it just because of how I look, like Impedimenta says? I'm just an ordinary girl – what is it about me that makes you so shy and nervous?

The silence became tense, reminding her of the last time she had visited. Sitting with Obelix in front of her house, sniffing his flowers, impatiently waiting for him to come to the point of his sudden visit. And then the postman coming with his note...Tragicomix, drafted into Caesar's army. Sailing to Africa to meet death. Her perfect world crashing and tumbling around her...and in the middle of it all, a kind, gruff voice anchoring her to the ground. "Don't cry, Panacea...we'll find him."

He did it for me, she realized. Because he loves me.

She felt that if she didn't say something right now – anything – she would burst. Something harmless, relaxing. Something far away from love and heartache.

"I've really missed this place," she said.

He turned to look at her.

"It's different in Condatum. Paved roads, stone buildings and everything, like a mini-Rome. You can walk in the streets all day without seeing anyone you know. It gets a little...lonely."

"I don't like cities," he said. "They're too crowded. How can people stand to live on top of each other like that? And it's so easy to get lost."

"Condatum's not all bad. I like the university. And shopping, too – all the latest fashions from Rome and Lutecia. And I have plenty of friends there. But this will always be my home."

Obelix's eyes and lips crinkled into a tiny smile. He loves this place too, she

remembered. That's why he always protects it.

"You know," he began. "This is one of my favorite places in the whole forest. Did you know there's a whole bunch of violets that come up in the summer?"

She laughed. "Don't !! I used to come here every day when I was little. Anytime something upset me, I used to sit right here and cry."

"And you came back with violets in your hair...I remember."

"Yes. I thought they could make me prettier."

He snorted in disbelief.

"What?" she snapped, unexpectedly hurt. I know I was a homely child, but that's so rude!

"You? But that's just..." A rush of color flooded his face; he looked away, then back at her with glowing eyes. "You were the prettiest girl in the village already," he said, all in a rush. "Flowers or no flowers. You didn't need them."

It was not an elegant compliment, but its glowing, open sincerity took her breath away. He was such a sweet man...there had to be some mistake.

"No, no, that was Veruca. Big green eyes, gorgeous reddish-blond hair, dimples...I was the skinny one, remember? My figure didn't fill out 'till I went to Condatum."

Obelix shrugged dismissively at the mention of the girl who had horrified the village by marrying the ninety-three-year-old Geriatrix. "Veruca never shared sweets," was all he said.

Ah. Now I get it. Her lips twitched into a smile. He really does love his food.

"What happened with the strawberries that time, anyway? I thought you were going to eat the whole bowl, but you only took a handful. Was there something wrong with them? The others didn't notice."

"You remember that?" He smiled. "Gosh, that was so long ago...no, there was nothing wrong. Best strawberries I ever ate. I wasn't really hungry, that was all."

"Were you upset because Fulliautomatix and Veruca didn't want you to share? It was so unfair, I know."

"It's not that. You see...I've always been hungry. Ever since I can remember. Maybe it's the potion, or maybe I was born that way. But no matter how much I eat, it doesn't go away. So maybe it's not hunger, but something else, I don't know what." He shrugged and shook his head.

"But you...when I saw you that day, holding out your strawberries – not scared or disgusted at all – that hungry feeling went away. It was like... I'd eaten the sun and it was shining inside of me."

No one had ever spoken to her like this before. She could almost hear her own heart pounding; she blinked, and though the clearing had not changed, it was suddenly charged with clarity and meaning. Everything was precious: the squirrel shimmying up a tree; the shape of a golden poplar leaf on the ground; Obelix's voice and eyes and solid, unshakeable presence next to her.

"Why would I be scared or disgusted by you?" she whispered. "You're a good man, Obelix."

Any loud sound now might disturb the beautiful, breathless hush of the moment. Just as softly and carefully as she spoke, she placed her hand on his in the grass.

A small shudder ran through him as soon as they touched; he looked down at her hand, so small and white on top of his broad, fleshy one, and abruptly pulled away.

"Oh, Panacea. You don't have to feel sorry for me," he said hoarsely, getting to his feet with great care as if he felt dizzy. "I need to go now. Bye."

Bye, she tried to say, but no words came out. She lifted her hand to wave, but he

trudged away with his head down and did not look back.

Panacea's hand was tingling; she could still feel that brief, innocent touch. She felt empty inside – hungry, as Obelix had said – without even knowing why.

She wanted to jump up and run after him, but it was as if she were tied to the tree with spiderwebs, powerless to move or speak.