

## CHAPTER TWO OF CANCER

IN WHICH

*The events of the Veranda  
are told to Aries  
in the Ladies Deluxe Restroom*

\*\*\*

Pisces and I were on the veranda.

(My cheeks hadn't flushed yet. They were still pinkly primrose.)

I was comforting Pisces so I was preoccupied and didn't notice the first brick fly-past us. Pisces didn't notice it either because the poor girl was sobbing. Then, I heard a swoosh as if I'd wrapped my shawl too quickly. I turned to investigate the sound and that's when I saw it: a woman lying senseless on the Veranda.

(I still hadn't flushed yet. I was still quaintly primrose.)

I supposed this senseless woman to be an immoral inebriate. I wanted to comfort her, but, as I was already comforting Pisces, and, since,

Hark!

*Comfort two-pronged is Comfort two-wronged*, as Quinn Nookie Teet was wont to say, I confined my attentions to Pisces.

Then, a third brick flew past us. Pisces wrenched herself from my tender embrace and disappeared into the palm fronds. I wanted to follow her, but, alas, I gathered my strength and let her go, as all mothers inevitably have to do.

My attentions then turned to the senseless inebriate. She had been bricked. Her face was mashed like a poorly decorated tart. I began to cry in empathetic conveyance when, suddenly, a Crazy Woman sprang from the palm fronds.

(It was then that I flushed: Vermillion.)

"You!" the Crazy Woman harangued, "I can hear you from all the way inside the garden! And I cannot cope with your crying, so stop it! Stop crying!"

I instinctively cradled the inebriate's head.

"Is this your doing?" I asked.

"What? Oh. Maybe."

“Excuse ME,” I chastised, “But we do not throw bricks. No, we do not. That’s dangerous and this is a veranda.”

“Well, do you know what else we don’t do? We don’t cry before a wedding, so stop it. Stop crying! It is too early to cry!”

I was aghast at her forceful manner.

“Excuse me,” I imbued, “but it is not too early to cry and could you please restrain yourself to an inside voice?”

“But we’re not inside!”

“We are on a veranda!”

“No. No. No. And stop it! Stop crying! Guests aren’t supposed to cry until the ceremony!”

“That’s Taurus Poo. Everyone cries at weddings.”

“So wait until the wedding!”

“This is the wedding.”

“No, it isn’t!”

Of course, I couldn’t respond to such barbaric treatment. (I could only deepen my flush from vermilion to crimson.) Had I had my shawl I wouldn’t have needed to say anything further; my matronly mastery would have been all too apparent, but, hence, shawlless as I was, I spoke up:

“Madam, your behavior is uncalled for,” I said, “This is not how we cope. No, it is not!”

Her face contorted violently. I thought, perchance, I had struck a softer chord.

“What the struck do you know about coping?” she breathed, and she tore down an upraised hand as if ending a salute.

I flinched but nothing happened. We merely stared at one another. She seemed as surprised as I. Then, she raised her hand again, and tore it down again, but, lo, still, nothing happened. She cursed foully and disappeared into the palm fronds.

I immediately began slapping the inebriate to awaken her.

“Wake up, my child,” I beseeched, “Let’s run away from here.”

And, verily, I was slapping her when the miracle occurred:

*She gurgled.*

(My flush plummeted into the sanguine.)

“What? What?” I quipped, “A gurgle? Speak again, dear child! What! What!”

“...ting...”

Indeed! 'Twas a gurgle! A woman child! My woman child without need of dimplification!

I enveloped her into my bosom, euphoric, until that Crazy Woman reappeared and shattered the moment.

“Shut up!” she screamed, “Stop crying! You are crying too early!”

“Hush, ye!” I seethed, now fully intent upon protecting my ward, “This is not how we cope!”

“Stop telling me how to cope!”

The Crazy Woman raised her hand again, and tore it down again, and this time a fourth brick flew from the palm fronds and crashed mere inches from my ward’s foot.

“Stop it!” I beseeched, “You’re going to brick my woman-child!”

But she was cruel.

She repeated the arm motion and a fifth brick flew from the palm fronds. I did everything I could to protect my woman-child but 'twas useless. The brick met its bait. It smashed my ward’s face into drop-kicked jelly. She gurgled her last phrase and, lo, she bricked-out.

I tried to revive her to no avail.

When I finally turned to confront the Crazy Woman, she had gone, her exit into the palm fronds having been as ghostly as my newly blossomed pallor.