

Waves of Gold

Von abgemeldet

Kapitel 1:

Waves of Gold

By Maerad

Based on: Asterix & Obelix

Creators: Goscinny & Uderzo

The morning sunlight lit up the plain wooden beams and floorboards of Asterix and Obelix's hut, glancing off the leftovers of a hearty boar breakfast

"Have you heard?" inquired Asterix, casually adjusting his helmet. "Panacea's come. Visiting her parents for the harvest season. The carriage came last night when you were sleeping."

Obelix looked down at the pitcher of goat's milk he was drinking and gripped it with both hands so as not to drop it. He squeezed so hard that the pitcher broke and milk exploded all over the floor, the table and his striped pants. So much for pretending indifference. He tried anyway.

"Oh? That's...nice."

His deep rough voice came out as a squeak. He cleared his throat. "Tragicomix, too?" That wimp, was on the tip of his tongue, but he did not say it.

Asterix said it instead, smirking. "That wimp, is what you're thinking. Don't tell me you're still hung up on her, you big marshmallow!"

Ever since that day on Panacea's front steps, when she got the letter from her handsome fiancé, Asterix had found a gold mine of joke material to tease his friend with. Sometimes it took enormous control for Obelix to stop himself from picking up the smaller man by the collar and tossing him right over the village wall.

"I'll just clean this up," he mumbled instead, his fingers itching to do some damage rather than sopping up the spilled milk with an old rag. Where was a company of Roman soldiers when you needed one?

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Later that day, hammering, chopping and chiseling away in the menhir quarry, Obelix did his best to ignore that queasy, almost-but-not-quite hungry feeling in his stomach. Handling huge blocks of stone was something he was good at, something no one else could do. Even if there was no practical use for them. He sighed and coughed as the quarry dust flew around his face.

Of course there was that one time he carved an enormous heart out of stone, put a red ribbon on it, and almost got to Panacea's house with it before Asterix, know-it-all that he was, stopped him. "What kind of a gift is that for a young lady?"

Silly Obelix who couldn't do anything right.

Now even his stone sanctuary reminded him of her.

He remembered her as far back as their childhood. Unlike some of their schoolmates, who first bullied him and then became afraid of him after the potion incident, Panacea had always been polite. He had a vague impression of hip-length golden braids with violets woven into them; a perfect silver voice rising above the others as they chanted the multiplication table; a bowlful of strawberries from her father's garden. ("Don't give them to him, he'll eat the whole bowl!" "I said everybody and I meant it. Hey, Obelix! Would you like some strawberries?" He only took a handful after all; he had lost his appetite.)

Then she had gone away to Condatum (leaving behind an uneasy feeling for Obelix, like a persistent headache) and come back looking...impossible. If she had been pretty before, now she was a vision. A mirage shimmering through the dappled green of the forest, with hair like a fountain of gold and eyes like the clearest summer sky.

Obelix had turned to watch her walk away, to see her long white skirt swirl around her trim ankles, to watch her light steps that barely made an imprint on the grass.

Then he'd walked into a tree and knocked it over. Without even noticing Getafix harvesting mistletoe up there. Not to mention Dogmatix mourning the tree with one of his ear-piercing howls.

It was a bad beginning. He should have realized it would only end badly.

"Don't cry, Panacea. We'll get your Tragicomix back for you."

Never mind that all his instincts cried out to leave the pretty-boy in Caesar's army to fend for himself. Never mind that his heart broke like a menhir hit with a well-placed hammer blow and he fell to pieces as soon as she was out of sight. For once, tactless Obelix had said and done exactly the right thing.

Small comfort, that.

He was so lost in thought that he had dropped his tools without realizing it and was simply staring at his half-finished menhir without seeing it. He did not hear the slight crackling of pebbles under light footsteps or smell the familiar scent of violets. So when Panacea touched him lightly on the shoulder and asked, "Are you all right?", he jumped and whirled around as fast as his bulk would permit, fists raised.

Then he recognized her, dropped his hands, and froze.

It was as if she'd materialized right out of his thoughts.

"Sorry," she said, giggling. "I didn't mean to startle you. It's just, you were kind of spacing out so..."

"I'm fine," he rasped. The place on his bare shoulder where her fingers had been was still tingling. Just how dusty and sweaty am I? he thought, beginning to panic. And what do I say to her?

"So...how are you, Panacea?" That was okay. A little bland, but polite. Maybe some of Asterix's social skills had rubbed off on him over the years after all.

But instead of replying "Fine" as people usually do, she dropped her eyes to the pebbles on the ground and sighed.

"Not so good, actually," she said, leaning against the menhir and running her fingers over it. "Tragicomix and I broke up, you see. I thought it'd be all over the village by now." She looked away from Obelix; was she about to cry? No. She took a deep breath and looked up at him with a shrug. "You know what they say about first loves, right?"

"I'm so sorry," he blurted out. "If there's anything I...we... can do..."

His arms wanted to wrap around her, pick her up and carry her away somewhere beautiful, like that meadow in the forest with all the violets. She was so small and delicate, he could carry her in one hand. Instead he locked his hands behind his back

and just looked at her, like a thirsty man looking at a clear stream of water just beyond his reach.

"That's sweet of you," she said quietly. "But don't worry. I'll be fine."

She walked away, with a final nod and goodbye. He raised his hand to wave just a second too late – her golden head was already turned.

Dogmatix whined and tugged on Obelix's pant leg, startling him again. He'd completely forgotten that the dog was there.

"No need to be jealous, little one," he murmured, his big hands ruffling Dogmatix's fur with the gentleness he showed to no one else. "She doesn't...she wouldn't...anyway, let's get back to work. Fetch me that mallet, will you?"

Dogmatix, happy to have his master's attention back, set off with perked ears and a wagging tail.