

A Thousand Battles, short ficlit by Viki Lyn, copyright 2009

Commander Váli briskly entered the Magic Haunt muttering under his breath. Muttering obscenities of why on earth's good land did he waste an evening coming here. Nothing ever good came of attending one of the Haunt's absurd masquerade celebrations. As soon as he entered the crowded room the unmistakable smell of male sweat and musk hit him full in the face. He scanned the room taking in every single occupant. His training required it.

The bar was full of perverts, every one of them. Thieves, drunken priests, warriors, wizards; gypsies of all kinds. And here for one reason alone. He sensed the burning need and it shamed him.

So why did he come?

Scanning the room of costumed freaks it wasn't difficult to find the reason. Váli glared at the tall blond minstrel who gracefully pranced around the dance floor in all his glory. Gold curls cascaded down slender shoulders, a supple body swathed in gauzy sheer harem pants, and a sheer blouse made of peacock feathers. The top barely covered his pale, unblemished skin, his pierced belly button winking suggestively. Oh, and the slender waist and hips sashayed across the room refusing the pedestrian sway of ordinary hips. Lior didn't walk on solid ground, the deviant walked on water, floating around the dance floor, talking and gesturing with his artistic fingers beckoning, inviting anyone who cared to notice. And they all noticed him.

How could you not?

Váli thought him the most beautiful, irritating, compassionate, generous, good-hearted, perverted creature on Earth. And that was what had Váli stymied. Not the irritating part, of course, but the beautiful compassionate part. What the hell was he thinking, taking leave to come here? These feelings so longed suppressed now dangerously rising to the surface. Sexual urges for his own kind. Ever since the age of twelve moons he had known. He also had known it would never be accepted by his family. All sons, all warriors. A duty he had always been proud of and never questioned.

The musicians begin its final set. The instruments sparkled from the candle light. The melody was a sensuous layer of sultry notes. The rhythm entered deep within and caught his heart. And if he was honest with himself, so had Lior. Really, the first moment they had met.

How long had he loved Lior? And, he did love him. Had always loved him. Since the fateful day when Lior had shown his guileless face at the shores of the lake with an offering. A magic ring he had stolen from a magician just for a lark. A lark! The black magician could have blasted Lior into oblivion if he had been caught.

Always playing games, that one. Too wild, open and well... Váli couldn't trust Lior and therefore he couldn't trust the man with his secret.

Váli refused to acknowledge the anxious emotions fluttering in his chest. He didn't want to acknowledge them. Couldn't acknowledge them. If he did, he'd lose everything. His honor, his duty to his lord, and his promise to his father.

Love wasn't supposed to happen to a hard-headed, heartless killer like himself. Emotions had to be kept securely locked behind iron doors. One chink in his armor, and his whole world would collapse, worse than a house of tarot cards.

Váli pulled at his tunic, although there wasn't one wrinkle or crease to mar his uniform. He moved into the shadows of the bar and watched the bevy of costumed dancers. Men kissed men, held hands, heads close together, whispering their secrets into each other's ears. The openness they shared settled a persistent ache in his gut. He had so many secrets, so many regrets.

Váli growled at his sentimentality, and the absurdity of attending a costume affair. Such frippery beyond his comprehension. Only Lior would have the audacity to send him an invitation. If the coquettish twirling dervish spied him now, he'd be at a loss to explain himself. And Hell, he didn't want to explain why he chose to travel half way across the land just to attend this absurd affair.

The drums reverberated, awaking Váli attention toward the dance floor. Lior's arms and legs twined around his dance partner, a handsome dark haired youth. Even from where Váli stood, he noticed the boy's bright eyes flashing with lust. Graceful pale arms curved around the boy's shoulders, elongated, deft hands gliding down the tight back, and further. Lior's own smooth creamy back glistened under the soft lights. His rose tattoo peeked from the waistband invited all sorts of promises.

Váli inhaled too fast, almost choking. He caught his breath, barely, and gritted his teeth until his jaw ached. The pain felt good. It's what he understood.

The poor boy looked besotted and bewitched and god knows, Váli longed to be in that urchin's place; Lior's lithe, graceful body rubbing against him, turning him into smoldering ash. Lior was like staring at the sun. Váli knew if he dared, it would blind him forever. Forever besotted like a boy hanging on to his first crush.

Two broad shouldered warriors blocked his path, therefore blocking his view.  
Váli snarled a low warning to get lost, but they ignored him.

"Who is blondie?" The redhead tilted his head toward the other.

"Sweet and juicy, enough for a full meal."

The redhead laughed. "I'd say delicious. Is he alone?"

"I heard he's pining over some stubborn assed warrior who takes a punch at him every now and then."

Váli stiffened, his cheeks growing hot.

The redhead shivered. "He's too beautiful for that kind of abuse."

"Yeah, tell it to that shithole. Instead of a heart is the gate to hell."

Rage suffused Váli's body as he stood stock-still. Didn't they realize his duty prevented him from *feeling*. The reason he was alive was because he put aside happiness, companionship, and all the other luxuries people demanded. Luxuries he protected with his life. His heart had no room for such things as love.

He pivoted around ready to escape this den of depravity when a mass of gold curls slipped over his shoulder. A chin rested on his shoulder. The sultry smell of sweat and rich fragrance startled him into a complete stop.

"How lovely to see you."

Hot breath whispered in his ear, the cultured voice causing a bone-crushing ache in his gut. He felt trapped, and unable to think straight. What on earth made him come here tonight?

Elegant hands rested on his shoulders, and the sleek, hot body pressed into him. He sharply turned to face Lior and at once drowned in violet eyes, the most incredible color.

The broad sexy mouth rounded in a pout. "Oh, but you didn't come in costume," Lior twilled, bright eyes sparkling with mirth.

Váli stepped back from all the silk and feathers. An aura of sensuality clung to Lior. What the hell was he thinking? He was so totally out of his league with this man.

"I'm delighted you're here." Lior tilted his head and smiled. Waiting.

For what?

Only could this beautiful man capture his tongue like this. He could say he was on a mission for his lordship. A lie would taste mighty delicious right now, but Váli wasn't a coward.

"You invited me," he bit out, making his voice harsh. "Now tell me why? Is this some kind of fool's errand asking me here?"

He had received the engraved invitation three weeks ago. He had torn it into tiny pieces. But not before memorizing the time and place.

"I sent it, hoping..." Lior confessed, a beautiful tint of pink highlighting his high cheekbones. "There's no ulterior motive, my warrior. It's my day of birth, and I'm a quarter of a century old." Ever graceful, Lior took two steps forward and poised coquettishly. "Dance with me?"

A slender pale hand held out in front of Váli. He pressed his hand to his head, making sure he still had a mind left to reason. Purple eyes pinned Váli's feet to the floor. He couldn't move, his lust spreading through his body, beads of sweat dripping down his

neck. The music started again and throbbed right through his head. Clearing his throat, he stomped down the idiotic urge to take the slender hand.

"Lior, don't be..."

Fingers pressed into his lips, halting his thought. Lior's lips twitched delightfully. "Come, dance with me. You're my warrior and nobleman, at least for tonight. I've been waiting a lifetime for you."

Lior twirled around, his curls bouncing, silk swooshing seductively around his hips. Váli blustered, his cheeks growing hot. He tried desperately for rage. It flared and sputtered out, leaving him no choice. He caressed his fingers over Lior's hand and pulled him into his chest and turned him around.

The met in a fierce kiss. Váli's body tensed into raging hard muscles. He grabbed Lior's arms and gripped so tight he knew he'd leave bruises. He didn't care. He wanted to mark his prey so nobody dared take Lior away from him.

Heated musk clung to Váli's skin. Feathers tickled his chin, the slender body slithering up and down, arms and limbs snaking around him, teasing and taunting and ravishing. He was being claimed by an expert, and nothing in his defenses could counter the attack.

Everything around him became soft curls, smooth skin, svelte muscles. The heat became almost unbearable. Hands caressed, stroked and bit into Váli's skin. He gasped into the hot mouth. My god, he was losing his composure, his dignity, his command. The world around him blurred, all noise ceased and only the rush of their breaths remained. And those sultry soft lips.

Lior pulled back and set smoldering eyes on Váli. The broken connection was almost unbearable. His lips ached, his cock painfully tight in his breeches. A buzz skimmed over his flesh. He felt like he'd just battled a thousand enemies.

Váli frowned as Lior's seductive grin lit up the space between them.

He had lost the battle.

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