

The Continued Observations of Sir Kay By K. M. Shea

Kay stood in the shadows, quiet and unobtrusive, and watched Britt Arthurs—King of England known to most of the Knights of the Round Table to be a girl—with two of her knights.

Britt was smiling—her controlled one, not her brilliant and lethal grin—and attempting to engage her quiet knights. “She *still* hasn’t acknowledged you? Are you sure she’s not playing hard to get?”

“I beg your pardon, My Lord?” Griflet said, his forehead wrinkling in confusion.

“Er...do you think she is ignoring you on purpose?” Britt asked.

Griflet blinked in confusion. “Why would she do that?”

“To drive you mad with passion,” Britt suggested. “What do you think, Ywain?”

“I would not presume to understand the mind of a lady, My Lord,” Ywain said, his words chosen with an unusual amount of care.

Britt’s smile dimmed for a moment, and Kay saw the flicker of pain in her eyes.

It was only four days ago that the knights had reaffirmed their loyalty to her, even though she was a woman. Their new relationship with their monarch was as shaky as a newborn fawn—which was to be expected. Still, the new degree of uncertainty brought much pain to Britt, and it seemed her men suffered nearly as much.

It is better if the knights keep a distance, but I wish their reaction would not cause her grief. Kay thought.

“I apologize, I wish I could be of more use to you, Sir Griflet, but I don’t know Lady Blanchflor well enough to guess if she would do something like that,” Britt said, turning her attention back to the flowery and loquacious knight. “Tonight, when we dine, I could watch your interactions with her.”

“If you would not mind terribly, My Lord,” Sir Griflet said with an eager smile.

“Of course not,” Britt said, turning to walk up the garden path, her knights trailing her.

“I think the lady finds Griflet an utter fop and is too kind to tell him to leave her be,” Ywain muttered under his breath.

A hearty laughter burst from Britt’s lips, drawing a smile from everyone present, and softening the moment. Griflet beamed, and Ywain relaxed, tension leaving his shoulders and neck as he ducked his head and smiled in pleasure.

Kay narrowed his eyes and leaned forward, watching Ywain and Griflet with careful scrutiny. Griflet looked both offended and pleased, and wore a silly grin. His eyes were lit with happiness as he watched Britt laugh. There was not a trace of anything besides pleasure in his eyes—which was not surprising considering his devotion to his temperamental Lady Blancheflor.

Ywain, however, was Kay’s foremost concern.

Kay watched with a hawk-like focus, looking for any hint of love. There was—there was so much that Ywain’s eyes were practically wells of love. Thankfully, it was the sort of love a man had for his King, and for a highly esteemed mentor, not the romantic love Griflet had for Lady Blancheflor.

Kay rocked back on his heels—assured for the moment. *As long as they continue like this, she will be safe.* Most of Britt’s close knights were older, married men, who posed no threat. However, three young knights were known to be Britt’s favorites: Gawain, Griflet, and Ywain. Gawain had always known of Britt’s feminine nature and seemed to view his King as not only

his ruler, but almost like a stand-in-parent. Griflet's admiration was the deeply rooted respect a soldier has for his leader—which made sense as Britt had won him over with her battle prowess. Ywain, however, was the dangerous one. He had parents who loved him, and in his first meeting with Britt, she had proven to him she was superior in the ways of the sword and his loyalties hadn't budged. It was with words that Britt had won Ywain to her side, words that pulled at the young knight's heartstrings. Thankfully, the young prince did not look upon Britt Arthurs with admiration.

Good.

Still, Kay needed to remain on his guard. The Knights of the Round Table were cautious and formal with their woman-king, but he doubted it would remain that way for long. *My Lord Britt Arthurs is too charismatic to allow formalities for long. And that smile.*

Britt's true smile—her lethal one that could steal a man's breath—was going to become the bane of Kay's existence.

As if God was aware of Kay's sour thoughts and sought to play a joke on him, Sir Percival entered the gardens. Sir Percival was the oldest son of King Pellinore—a man Britt called her friend. "Forgive me, My Lord, for my intrusion?"

"Don't be silly, Sir Percival, join us! The more the merrier," Britt said, offering the knight a smile.

Sir Percival looked down at his feet, which sent another bolt of regret through Britt's eyes.

Kay was glad Britt couldn't see what he could—that Sir Percival was smiling at the ground like an idiot.

Kay scowled, his mustache bristling.

"What brings you to the gardens?" Britt asked Sir Percival.

"I was seeking you out," Sir Percival admitted.

"Did you need something?"

"No," Sir Percival said.

"Oh. Say, Percival, what is your impression of Lady Blancheflor?" Britt asked.

"Lady Blancheflor?" Percival said, finally wiping his shy smile from his face and looking up. "Isn't she one of Sir Lancelot's admirers—or not," he quickly amended when he caught sight of Britt shaking her head behind a downtrodden Griflet.

"She isn't really. She does not fawn over him like many females," Britt said, soothing him.

"But she still admires him, and I am not yet on the same level as Sir Lancelot," Sir Griflet said, his voice heavy with sadness.

Sir Ywain snorted. "I'll say."

"You could concentrate on training—though he is the second best swordsman after My Lord, and he is equally as skilled at jousting," Sir Percival said.

"No, if Blancheflor ends up liking you only because you're strong, she's not the right lady for you. Why don't you try speaking to her—*without* reciting poetry?" Britt suggested.

"But she is so beautiful! I cannot help but speak verses of praises whenever I see her," Griflet said, gaping at Britt in bafflement.

"You would," Britt said, drawing a snort of laughter from Sir Ywain. "You could try getting a puppy. It seems the ladies of Camelot are much less impressed with a dog than they are where I come from, but you could borrow Cavall and see if Lady Blancheflor shows any interest at all."

The idea made Kay scowl. Cavall was Brit Arthur's meticulously trained guard dog. He was supposed to be with her at all times—not being lent out to knights with poor romantic judgment.

He wouldn't dare agree to it. Kay thought as he fixed his gaze on the younger knight.

“Hahah, I believe that will be unnecessary,” Griflet said, quaking under Kay's scrutiny.

“Very well. I'm starved. I'm going to plunder the kitchens for some lunch. Does anyone wish to join me?” Britt asked, rubbing her injured shoulder.

“I'm always in the mood for a spot of food,” Griflet said, leading the way.

Ywain swaggered after him. “Perhaps that is why Blancheflor won't speak to you—you're worse than a dog begging for scraps.”

Britt moved to trail after her men when she realized Sir Percival was hesitating. “Are you coming, Sir Percival?”

Sir Percival scratched the back of his neck. “Oh, I don't wish to interrupt your conversation.”

“Nonsense, we would love to have you with us,” Britt said. She threw her good arm over Percival's shoulders and towed him towards the exit.

Sir Percival smiled...until he caught sight of Kay glowering at him. “Ah, yes, thank you, My Lord,” Sir Percival said, bowing to Britt to squirm away from her.

Britt winked at the knight before calling out. “Kay—are you coming with, or will you keep lurking there?”

Kay's scowl cleared from his face and he pushed away from the wall he was tucked against. “I suppose I shall join you.”

“Great. Come on!”

Kay smoothed his mustache and trailed after Britt. *I recognize this is a painful time for her. All the same, I am glad for it. It gives me time to assure that no one begins entertaining... ideas.*

“My Lord!”

“Lancelot,” Britt said, sounding less-than-thrilled. “Greetings, Sir Mordred.”

“My Lord.”

Although I may already be too late.