

Between a Queen and Her Colonel

The following is a series of love letters exchanged between the economic-minded and beloved Queen Cinderella of Erlauf and her daring and brave husband Colonel Friedrich.

Dear Friedrich,

Very well, you win. I shall be the first to write and admit how desperately I miss you, even though you've only been gone one week. I know I shouldn't complain. You are only a several days ride away at our southern border, while poor Prince Severin and his men are weeks *and* miles away from their Loire home. But at least I will own up to my selfishness in this one way.

Everything is fine here at home. The flower seedlings you gave me have bloomed into the most magnificent flowers. Thank you. They remind me of you, which is some small comfort.

I'm afraid I must end this letter here—I'm due to preside over a meeting of Trieux and Erlauf merchants. But I am pleased to say I have paid off another large chunk of Erlauf's ridiculous debt, which has freed up some funds since we no longer have payments and compounding interest. As a result, I have approved Commander Lehn's request to increase the military budget at this time.

With love,
Cinderella

To My Darling Cinderella,

Thank you for your letter, Pet. It was a delight to read amongst the weariness of our fighting and allow me to assure you that the feeling is entirely mutual. I miss you just as much as you miss me. (Though it does my heart good to read it, you are so stingy with your love when I am with you!)

The battle goes well—we have managed to keep the goblins from sweeping north and have saved a number of villages. But the sheer quantity of goblins we've seen is staggering, and Father says the increased budget is much appreciated.

I, however, find myself suspicious as to *how* you managed to clear another portion of our country's debt. Unless there's been a sudden demand for historical tours? But you did promise you wouldn't hold those any longer since they're too large of a security risk—and *I know you would keep that promise. Wouldn't you?*

Which leaves me to wonder if, instead, you've plundered my room for things to sell.

With the greatest of love,

Friedrich

PS: I suspect you cannot miss me as much as I miss you. But fret not, Severin and I will route these goblins with all haste so I can return to you with all speed.

Dear Friedrich,

I did, actually, have a man appraise the items in your personal rooms. He informed me there was nothing of value, particularly as besides yourself there is not a great need for life size artwork of *me*. So, rest easy, your room is safe.

I did, however, remove several gold fixtures from your brother's rooms during one of his recent diplomatic trips and sold those. Johann hasn't noticed even though he's been back for a good two weeks, so it is nothing to fret about, unless you want to worry about how wholly unobservant he is. I have changed all castle products to a cheaper soap—a honey and goat milk-based soap made by farmers here in Werra—and he hasn't noticed.

With love,
Cinderella

Dear Prince Cristoph Friedrich VI,

As I directly serve Madame and have sworn my loyalty to her, I am not at liberty to discuss what she does with her freetime, even if you 'will perish if Cinderella risks her foolish neck leading historical tours again.'

Sincerely,
Jeanne
Housekeeper of the Aveyron Duchy

To my darling and beautiful wife: Cinderella,

Hah! It serves Johann right—though a part of me is surprised he's gone with golden fixtures in his room even though we've been married for years. He must be craftier than I believed him to be as I swear you are part bloodhound when it comes to scenting out money.

Though I did notice that you did not confirm or deny my assumption that you have not, in fact, fallen back to holding historical tours. That does worry me.

It worries me so much I'm afraid I might be distracted out here on the battlefield and, as a result, be injured. You wouldn't want that, would you, my love?

So please assure me you have not returned to historical tours!

Missing you more than the air I breathe,
Friedrich

Dear Friedrich,

Stop being dramatic, of course I haven't started up the historical tours again.

I used a new method I've recently learned from one of my advisors and completed a cost/benefit analysis and realized historical tours were not the best usage of my time, so I've resolved not to return to them.

This week I met with some representatives of the blacksmiths' guild to discuss their weapons production. I mentioned that much of the equipment is getting sent to Loire for Craft Mages to enchant for the impending battle.

They were very interested in this process and mentioned when the goblins are handled, perhaps a craft mage could speak to them so they could learn if there were certain characteristics or metals that made weapons better/easier to enchant.

I do so love working with like-minded people. It is probably the most enjoyable thing about being Queen—the worst, of course, being the politics.

Still missing you, and still with love,
Cinderella

To Fred,

Would you stop fretting like a mother hen? No, Cinderella isn't leading historical tours—whatever those are. Though I wish she would—it would keep her busy. She got me to help her pen some diplomatic letters to our allies, and I am certain my hand is going to fall off from all of the writing.

Which, well done, brother. You managed to find the one woman in this country who could be even more intense of a queen than Mother ever was.

Don't get yourself killed,
Johann

PS: What do you mean, my room must be nice?

To my darling, beautiful, and wise wife,

I am pleased to report that we beat a large influx of goblins and eliminated all their numbers, with very few losses on our side.

Severin is heading north to see his fiery wife for several weeks. Once he leaves, Father said I can accompany the next messenger sent back to our palace to communicate official tidings to you, so I hope to begin my trip home within a week or two at the most.

I cannot wait to sit worshipfully at your feet,
Eternally and forever yours,
Friedrich

Dear Friedrich,

Even if you start groveling now, that isn't going to make a difference. Both Jeanne and Johann have spoken of your letters to them. Don't you trust me, *dear* husband of mine?

However, I am a fool for you, and I have missed you dearly, so I imagine you won't need to apologize for long before I forgive you for your unnecessary subterfuge.

I cannot wait for the day I get to see you again—even if you are pushy.

With love,
Cinderella

Dearest Cinderella,

I am only pushy when it comes to *your* safety.

I will see you soon, my love.
Friedrich