

Chapter 5

The Next Day and The Fencing Lesson

Master and Mother Pluvias are seated at their magnificent marble dining room table at breakfast with servants rushing about, but Nicolas hasn't come down for breakfast yet, and Mother Pluvias is becoming concerned.

"Pompas, dear?"

"HMMMM?"

"I'm concerned about Nicolas. He is failing miserably in his botanical studies, mistaking roses for daisies. He is doing well in sciences, social politics, mathematics, languages, naturally swordplay and physical training. All he wants to do is go in his room. And he has even devised a locking device on his door. I wish you could have a talk with him. Pompas? — Dear?" She pulls the top of the papyrus page down. "Huh? Oh, uh, I'm sorry dear, uh, what were you saying?"

"Sigh. Oh, never mind. I should know better than to try to talk with you when you're reading the Daily Decree."

That afternoon, Master Pluvias introduces Nicolas to his new tutor out on the castle grounds as they prepare for the day's sword lesson. "Son, there is someone I want you to meet." Nicolas is in awe as he looks up at this red haired and bearded 250-pound giant from the land of Scotts, whom his father met when they were young, during his early travels while souvenir hunting. They became the best of friends as teens and fought as comrades together. During the Roman conflict at the river Orentes, he fought alongside his mother, Queen Zenobia. Wide eyed, Nicolas asks, "Is that my tutor and fencing instructor?"

"Master Pluvias, it's an honor to train your young son in the art of swordplay, sir."

"No, Crusty, it is an honor to have you teach my boy. Son, watch and learn. Crusty Mac Scratchy, on guard!" The swords clank together as they cross. "Master Pluvias, on guard, sir!" The swords clash! They demonstrate amazing skills, leaping and doing acrobatic routines, learned over many years of practice. Nicolas is amazed with his skill.

"Wow, father he's amazing! Wow!"

"Whoops! Try that again, Crusty!"

“Master Pluvias, you’ve improved, sir.”

“You’re not so bad yourself, Crusty.” They finish the form, and Master Pluvias steps away from Crusty, handing Nicolas his sword. “There now son, you try.” Crusty gets into starting position and says, “Young Master Nicolas, on guard, sir.” The swords cross, ching, ching. “Crusty Mac Scratchy, on guard!” They commence into a simpler beginning form.

Four years go by. Nicolas continues his training with Crusty and has improved significantly, graduating into higher sword and self defense forms, science, math, history, literature, languages and wood crafting hobbies but still is lacking in horticulture studies. He has grown a little bit taller, with broadening shoulders and good looks. The women housekeepers are always teasing him, and he loves the attention.

He sneaks through the kitchen to sample some of the dessert and gets a surprise wet-towel pop in the right hindquarter. “Ow!” As he bolts out of the kitchen, rubbing the swat mark, he winks at the ladies and runs out of the kitchen. The maidservants get a titillated-thrill and a good hearty laugh.