

Title: Mending a Prince's Pride
Major pairing: 6 x 9 (Zechs x Noin)
Author: The Fables spinner
Rating: PG-13 (Tasteful Lime)
Genre: Romance

Disclaimer: The characters in this yarn sadly do not belong to me. I wish they did but they belong in total to Sotsu/Sunrise and Bandai entertainment. I am only borrowing their colorful personalities for the sake of this story. I promise to return them, only slightly rumbled when I'm finished with them so the next writer can use them as their muse.

~ December 24, AC 195 ~

Noin watched in silent horror as the remnants of Libra exploded. The Flames engulfing the Gundams and obscuring them from her view. All the while, she fed her view to Lady Une and the rest of the world. As the flash dimmed, she began pin-pointing the location of the Gundams. All but one she could see. "Oh Zechs, please." she said softly, almost in prayer as her eyes scanned the heavens for Epyon. A deep burning pain began to grip her chest, the worst pain she could conceive began robbing her of breath. She beat it down, and buried it deep within. "No, he's stronger than that. He's Alive! I know he's alive." She sobbed pounding the arm rests of her Taurus suit as she stifled the tears welling up in her eyes. Zechs had planned this all along, and never told her. He had planned to die from the beginning!

Anger replaced her sorrow. She knew how deeply Zechs believed in his father's ideals, and how devoted he was to his little sister. He had orchestrated this whole disastrous war with Trieze in order to show the people the ultimate futility of War. She never knew both men had been willing martyrs. Now she understood why such kind men could seem so villainous. It had all been an act. She cursed him for his bravery and for leaving her bereft of heart. "Noin, it was as they wanted." Lady Une's voice came over the com. "The road to peace has at last been paved. Don't let their sacrifice be in vain." Une said, tears in her eyes as she looked at Noin on the vid screen. Noin faced her, the tears burning in her eyes. "I refuse to believe Zechs is gone!" Noin said blanking the vidscreen link. Une closed her eyes and sighed. "I know how you feel Noin." Une said to the blank screen then turning her eyes heavenward. "Mr. Treize will forever live on in my heart too."

~ Three Weeks Later: January 14, AC 196 ~

Noin approached the grave markers, her offering clutched tightly in her hand. Dorothy Catalonia stood there, her large brimmed hat shading her eyes from the brilliant sunlight. They spoke briefly, and Dorothy questioned Noin about her offering. "Why is it you never pay your respects to Mr. Milliardo's grave?" She asked and Noin fought the lump in her throat. She put on a brave face and smile. "Because, I don't have too. He's Alive, out there, somewhere." Noin said looking up into the blue sky, a sky that resembled those eyes. She was beginning to doubt her own words now. The black pit in her chest, growing larger day by day. Soon, she would be an empty shell. Dorothy grimly nodded, then excused herself. Noin stood alone, staring down at the white marble headstone. It read:

H.R.H.

Milliardo Peacecraft

Beloved Brother of Relena.

Born January 14, AC 176 ~ Died December 24, AC 195.

He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression.

Noin ran her fingers along the psalms inscribed and chiseled into the alabaster stone. She sank to her knees and laid her brow against the sun headed marble. She was shaking as the tears began to splash against the smooth surface of his tombstone. Marking an empty grave. "You didn't even leave me ashes to weep over. Zechs, why didn't you tell me?" she asked the stone as her eyes burned hotly with tears. She sniffed and once again traced the lettering on the marker. "Happy Birthday." She added kissing the stone before standing and dusting off her skirt. She quickly wiped the tears from her eyes as she saw Lady Une approaching. "Noin, It's all right to cry." Une said laying a hand on her shoulder. "No, it's not. If I cry, I admit defeat. I never admit defeat. He taught me that." Noin said turning to walk away. Une shook her head. Yes, she held onto Treize's memory, but she knew it was just a memory. The Man was gone. Noin had to accept that, it was eating her alive. Une turned to the Grave Markers, "Mr. Treize, please help me to help Lucrezia. How do I bring her out of the denial?" Une asked laying her flowers upon the earth. She then turned to the second headstone. "Wherever you are, I hope you realize how much she loves you." Une said to Zech's grave before returning her attention back to her fallen lover's grave.

Noin fumbled with the keys to her small apartment. It wasn't much, but she just couldn't bring herself to live in the palace with Relena. Too many memories of Zechs lay strewn about. Not to mention facing his sister regularly was a chore to endure. Not that she didn't adore Relena, quite the contrary. It was just sometimes, she'd gesture or adopt a mannerism that reminded Noin of Zechs. Noin went to place her key in the keyhole, when she noticed, it wasn't locked. 'That's Odd. I'm sure I locked it when I left.' She thought to herself as she crept inside. She turned out the lights and nothing appeared out of place. Then from her bedroom a tall figure emerged. Her heart stopped, then began again at double, nay, triple it's normal pulse. He looked haunted and his eyes held a longing to them that begged her forgiveness. "I'll go, if you wish." He said as he dropped his gaze from hers.

Her tears burst free as she ran into his arms. Arms that enfolded her tightly in response as they fell to their knees. "Damn you! Damn you all to hell Zechs! Why? How? Where have you been?" The questions spilled out one on top of the other, as Noin wept into his glorious hair. "I've been in a coma Noin. I only woke up a few days ago. I'd be dead had Howard not found me. I should be dead." Zechs said and Noin pushed the hair from his face. "No, you belong right where you are." Noin said pressing her forehead against his. "I'm sorry for the hell I put you through. I couldn't tell you. Relena couldn't know. No one could know, I did it to protect all of you." Zechs said and Noin ran her fingers through his beautiful locks. "I know you did. I do understand you Zechs. I know how you think, even if sometimes I disagree with you." She said kissing his brow. He reluctantly turned from her kiss. "I don't deserve anything but your contempt. I am the ultimate coward." He said lowering his face in shame. "I came here out of weakness Lu. I have no will power against you." He said resting his elbow's on his knees. Noin reached out and laid a hand to his shoulder, brushing the backs of her finger's against his soft cheek. "Nor I, when it comes to you Zechs. We are each other's weakness." Noin said and Zechs placed a kiss to her palm. "I'm a broken Man Lu. I am nothing, I just had to see you." He said looking up into her eyes. She smiled at him tenderly. "The only thing broken Zechs is your Pride. But it's not broken beyond repair. Stay with me, let me help you." She said and Zechs sighed. "All I do is take from you. I can't." Zechs said and Noin cupped his face in her hands. "You have never taken anything from me that was not freely offered. I love you." she said, her eyes misty with tears. Zechs' vision was also blurred as he gazed upon the beautiful raven haired angel beside him. "I have always loved you. At last I can tell you that." He said tucking her long bangs behind her ear. Revealing her face to him. "Yours is a beauty that is not only physical, but soul penetrating. I was lost to you long ago." He added leaning over her. "But as much as I desire it Lu. I cannot stay. It's too soon. I must face my demons on my own. I must make amends and redeem myself." He said and her tears fell silently down her cheeks. He leaned over and kissed the tracks of her tears. She closed her eyes and shuddered as his breath tickled her cheeks. "But I had to see you, if just for a moment. You were my first thought when I awoke, and you will be the last thought on my mind when I cease to be in this life. Know this, and have faith in me. I would die a thousand deaths to finally

be able to be by your side forever." Zechs said, his lips brushing hers as he spoke.

He claimed her lips with his before she could utter a word, her arms encircling his neck as he pulled her into his embrace. After what seemed a lifetime, yet not long enough, he broke the kiss. "I must go Lu." He said, his words betraying the longing in his eyes. "No. Not yet." Noin said this time seizing his lips and kissing him with all the passionate force she could muster. She sat back on her heels a revealed in the look of shock on his handsome face. He smiled at her "You never did that before." He said and Noin laughed. "I have more where that came from. Care to stay and find out what Birthday Boy?" She asked and she would swear Zechs blushed. She wound her fingers into his hair and his slipped his arms around her waist. "I'll let you leave if you wish Zechs." she said as she molded herself against his strong lean form. "But not until the morning." She added and Zechs smiled. A feral, wanton smile. "I love you Lucrezia." He said, a glimmer of hope glistening in his eyes. A piece of the prideful, honorable man she once knew was returning. He had a long road of healing to endure, but these were the first precious steps, and he was taking them with her. Love would lay the foundation of healing. "I love you too Zechs." Noin said as they fell together in a passionate release of emotion.

He carried her back into the bedroom, and together they climbed to the pinnacle of love and compassion. The void in her being was gone, Zechs had come back to her, and though he would leave again, she knew he would also one day return to her. She lay with her cheek against his bare chest, his breathing was slow and even as he slept. She could hear the beat of his fragile heart setting the tempo of his pulse. His arms held her against him. One hand lay atop her head where it rested against his chest. The other hand lay in the groove between her waist and hip. His tenderness towards her was always evident, even in his sleep. She drifted to sleep around midnight, his heartbeat was her lullaby. Their lovemaking, an elixir for a peaceful slumber.

The bed was cold when she awoke the following morning, Zechs was gone. But the warmth he created within her breast kept the emptiness at bay. A single red rose lay on the pillow beside her with an elegant hand written note. It read:

My Dearest Lucrezia,
You have given me a joy in life I cannot describe. Your love is my beacon in this darkness I must face.
You are my Salvation and my hope. My candle against the night.
I will return to you, I must. I am a man without a Soul without you.
Eternally your Servant,
Zechs

Noin clutched the note to her breast as she walked over to the window and watched the sunrise. "I may be your candle Zechs. But it's you who keeps the wick burning, my love." She said to the horizon as she turned to face the new day, with a new hope for the future.

Word of Note: H.R.H.= His Royal Highness and the Passages on the tombstone are actual psalms taken from the Bible. I did not make those up.
