

The Passenger

By Marcin Wojdyna

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The Passenger

The Moon Prince Carteni stepped from the silver fog, shirt clinging to his chest like a prophecy no one had authorised.

“Romona,” he murmured, “you are my forbidden fate.”

Her breath caught. The stars trembled. Destiny quivered above them, because of course it did.

She turned the page.

The train rocked gently, carrying its cargo of commuters who all looked like they were trying not to think too hard. The book felt ridiculous in her hands, but it was the only thing that quietened the static in her head. Three stops left. Enough time for another chapter.

Romona gazed up at the prince, her violet eyes shimmering with the weight of longing she had discovered twelve pages ago.

“My lord,” she whispered, “I cannot love you.”

“You already do,” he said, with the confidence of a man who had never lacked confidence.

She smirked despite herself. Nobody talked like this. Nobody behaved like this. And yet here she was, swallowing it like warm anaesthetic.

A woman across the aisle wiped her eyes with a sleeve. Someone’s phone buzzed with a message that made their shoulders drop. She pretended not to notice any of it.

The prince reached out and touched Romona's face, even though he had spent the last three chapters insisting he could not.

"Our love," he said, "is the magic this world has been waiting for."

The mountains sighed. The sky blushed. Everything agreed with him because nothing in this world ever told him no.

She flipped the page harder than she needed to.

At the next stop, a man boarded with supermarket flowers. The cheap ones. Red dye leaking onto the wrapping. He held them too tightly, like he was bracing for someone not to be home. She lowered her eyes to avoid the awkward hope of it.

Romona and Carteni stood atop a moonlit cliff, arguing about the prophecy that both united and separated them. Mostly separated them. Mostly due to his shirtlessness.

"I would die for you," he vowed.

"You must not," she said.

"Then I will live for you."

"That is worse," she whispered, and the story treated this as romantic.

She checked the board. Two stops left. Enough for the climax. Enough for the kiss. Enough for the part where love saved the world with the precision of a tax exemption.

The train slowed. Lights flickered. Her reflection stared back at her in the window. Tired. Hollow. Older than she should look on a Tuesday.

On the page, the prince finally pulled Romona close. The prophecy dissolved. The sky burst into colour. The world remade itself around their affection, neat and obedient.

She stopped reading.

The man with the flowers got off, still alone. Someone laughed too loudly into a phone. A couple argued under their breath. A child cried without knowing why.

She closed the book. It felt weightless now. Not light. Empty.

Her station approached.

She stood, slotted the book under her arm and walked down the carriage. At the doors, she hesitated for half a second. Then she stepped off and carried it with her, down the platform, toward the cold metal bin by the exit.

She opened the lid.

The Moon Prince Carteni was about to confess eternal love. Romona was about to accept it. The universe was about to bend itself into a perfect lie.

She let the book fall.

She had always known the story was nonsense. She read it anyway. Knowing better never stopped anyone.

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