Market Day

Silvervine was bored.

That was always how trouble began—quietly, innocently, like a single spark drifting toward something flammable.

She lay sprawled across the rafters of the old market hall, one leg dangling, amber eyes half-lidded as she watched the slow shuffle of merchants below. Nothing interesting was happening. No arguments. No secret deals. No shiny objects left temptingly unattended.

Her fingers twitched with restless energy she didn't know how to spend.



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Then she saw it: a glint of silver near the spice vendor's stall. A tiny metal charm, no bigger than a thumbnail, hanging from a string. It wasn't valuable. It wasn't magical. It wasn't even pretty.

But it was new. And new meant interesting.

Silvervine dropped from the rafters without a sound, landing lightly behind a stack of crates. She peeked around them, eyes brightening. The vendor was busy arguing with a customer. Perfect.



She slipped forward, fingers deft and quick, and plucked the charm from its hook. It was cool against her skin, smooth, pleasantly weightless. She didn't even know why she wanted it—she just did.

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She turned to leave.

And walked straight into a wall of muscle.

“Princess,” said the guard captain, folding his arms. “What did we say about touching things that aren’t yours?”

Silvervine smiled, all innocence and sunshine. “That I should only take the ones no one will miss.”

“That is not what we said.”

She shrugged, already bored with the conversation. “It’s practically abandoned. Look, no one even noticed.”



As if summoned by her words, the spice vendor turned, saw the empty hook, and let out a dramatic gasp. “Thief! A thief in the hall!”

Silvervine winced. “Well. Now they noticed.”

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The guard captain pinched the bridge of his nose. “Give it back.”

“But I like it.”

“Silvervine.”



She sighed, dramatically, as though returning the charm were a tragic sacrifice. She placed it gently into the captain’s palm, then leaned sideways to peer around him at the vendor.

He was still ranting.

She frowned. “He’s loud.”

“He’s upset.”

“He’s loud.”

The captain gave her a look that suggested he was reconsidering every life choice that had led him to this moment. “Go apologize.”

Silvervine blinked. “Why?”

“Because you stole from him.”

“I borrowed.”

“You stole.”

She crossed her arms. “Borrowed with intent to return.”

“You weren’t going to return it.”

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She tilted her head. “You don’t know that.”

He stared.

She stared back.
Finally, she huffed and stomped toward the vendor, muttering under her breath. “Fine. Apologize. But he’s still loud.”

The vendor saw her approach and puffed up like a startled bird. “You! You took—”

Silvervine held up a hand. “Yes, yes, I borrowed your shiny thing. I’m sorry. Truly. Deeply. Profoundly.”

The vendor blinked. “Oh.”

She leaned in. “Also, you should keep your shiny things somewhere safer. They’re very tempting.”

The vendor blinked again. “Oh.”

Silvervine patted his arm, then turned and sauntered back toward the captain, who was trying very hard not to laugh.



“See?” she said. “Handled.”

“You’re impossible.”

“I’m delightful.”

“You’re exhausting.”

She grinned. “And yet you adore me.”

He didn’t deny it.

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Later, when the hall had quieted and the sun dipped low, Silvervine perched once more in the rafters. Her fingers toyed with something small and silver.



The captain hadn't noticed her slip the charm back out of his hand during their conversation.

She smiled to herself, warm and smug.

She would return it.

Eventually.

Probably.

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