

Ivaldi Book 1 Chapter 6

Carilla and the Long Arm of the Law

It was quite by accident that I became acquainted with Janse, a policeman with a reputation as a man devoted above all to duty and the law. In fact, it was peculiar that I made friends with any policeman at all, let alone this one; I had had unpleasant experiences with the breed in other ports, where sailors were rarely the most welcome sort of visitor.

That I met Janse was Carilla's unwitting and unwilling doing. While patrolling the ferry dock one afternoon, he had taken her into custody because she was too young to work legally under the guide license she wore. Rilla refused to tell him where her parents lived, but grudgingly gave my name and address as a reference. Luckily for her, I was actually in the neighborhood, relaxing at my favorite soma shop on Elephant Square. I was startled out of a pleasant reverie by the entrance of little Rilla, fast in the grip of a stony-faced cop. He wore the standard police uniform of neatly starched, dust-colored trousers and tunic. An even starchier turban was wound carefully round his head, with a sort of fan of material sticking up like a crest, which added to his imposing height.

"Inspector Janse, City Police," he said, displaying his engraved brass bracelet while maintaining a firm hold on Rilla with the other hand. "Do you know this person?" He gestured at her.

I nodded. "Carilla is a good friend of mine," I chose my words carefully. "What is the trouble?"

"She was soliciting work as a guide at the ferry dock. With this license." He removed it from his pocket and showed it to me briefly. "This is the license of a fully-qualified adult guide. She is not old enough to work under this type of license. Therefore she has committed two infringements of the law: soliciting work for which she is not properly licensed, and theft of this license from the rightful licensee." He uttered this very solemnly. Carilla blanched.

"I didn't steal it!" she said vehemently.

"Then where did it come from?" It seemed as if Janse might be more interested in that information than in accusing her of theft. Carilla looked from him to me.

"I can't tell *you*," she said to him.

"Why not?" asked Janse.

Rilla looked at the ground. "He'll beat me."

“Who? Your friend here?”

“No, not him. My — the man who gave me the license.”

“I can find out easily enough whose license it is,” Janse said more gently. “The number will be registered with the Guild. But I’d like to hear it from you. This person who beats you might say you had stolen it, even if you hadn’t. It’s better if you tell me now.”

Rilla looked at me again, and I nodded. There seemed no way around the policeman. She glared up at him.

“It’s my father’s. He gave it to me to make money for him. And now he’ll beat me because I won’t be able to, and for getting him in trouble.”

Janse nodded thoughtfully. “I see. And why can’t he earn his own money with his own license?”

Rilla shrugged. “He’s lazy. He drinks.”

“Do you have a mother?”

“She died.”

“And your clan?”

Shrug. “They threw Dad out a long time ago. They don’t want me.”

“I see.” Janse pondered, but his grip on Carilla’s wrist never loosened. Finally he said to me, “You vouch for her character?”

I hastened to do so: “I met her as a guide; being a foreigner, I wasn’t aware till now that she was underage, that is, that one had to be a certain age to be a guide. Even so, she is an excellent guide, and a good friend to me, and she never cheated or profited excessively from me. Her father does beat her,” I added. “I’ve seen bruises.” Carilla glared at me as if betrayed.

Janse nodded. “Since he drinks, it will probably be hard to persuade him to stop beating her, short of locking him away forever.”

I favored that option, myself, but Janse did not seem to consider it a serious possibility.

“Can she stay with you for a few days?” he asked.

“Certainly.”

“I cannot wink at an abuse of licensing such as this. But neither do I want the child to be hurt. I think that I will go see this father myself, and tell him why his license is revoked. Carilla, you should stay out of his way until his temper cools. In two days I will be on duty at the central police station. You know where that is?” Rilla nodded fearfully.

“Come to me there, and I will arrange work for you. It may not be as exciting or lucrative as guiding, but it will be legal, and will pay enough for you to live on.” He awaited Rilla’s response. She only nodded again, downcast. He bent to look in her face, and said sternly, “Be sure to come, or I will come to find you, and you will not like that at all.”

“Yes, sir,” she murmured.

“Very good. Thank you, sir, for your help, and good afternoon.” Janse finally released Carilla, turned, and strode off smartly, his back ramrod straight and his uniform neat.

Carilla didn’t say much about the incident, beyond thanks for the meals and bed I gave her (I slept most nights in Chitra’s bed anyway). Two days later I went with Carilla to the police station, in case further proof of character was needed.

Carilla was pleasantly surprised to learn that she was to work for her Aunt Mora at the inn. Washing dishes and cleaning rooms was not exactly exciting, but at least she liked and trusted Mora, and could stay there rather than going back to her father — who was, predictably, furious with Rilla for getting caught.

I was surprised that Mora had suddenly offered this opportunity, solely at Janse’s suggestion. Though she did well enough out of the inn, she was far from wealthy, and already supported most of her own husband’s family. She wasn’t even really Carilla’s aunt, but some more distant relation of the girl’s dead mother. Not wanting to embarrass Mora by inquiring into her finances, I took Janse aside privately.

“This is a fine idea, but how is Mora going to pay for it?” I asked him.

He looked away with a little cough. “Oh, well, we have a special police fund for cases like this. We prefer to spend a little money early on to help a child get a good start at an honest living, rather than have to contend with them later when they fall into... bad ways.”

I saw less of Carilla after that, she being busy earning her honest pay, but I dropped by for afternoon soma now and then. She complained that the work was boring, but she seemed happier and healthier under Mora’s cheerful influence. She lived at the inn with Mora’s children, and had filled out a little from eating more regularly.

I occasionally encountered Janse on the streets, he on his rounds and I on mine. He must have been one of those lawmen who never forgets a face, for he never failed to greet me by name, asking after my work, and after Carilla. In his stern fashion, he seemed pleased that she was doing well.

He greeted me once when I was sitting at the Cat and Cream, whiling away the afternoon in conversation with Ozin. I introduced them, and after a brief chat Janse moved on. Ozin let out his breath with a whistle.

“How ever did you make friends with *that* one?” It was one of the few times I’d seen him surprised. I told him the story.

“Well, it fits,” he said, shaking his head wonderingly, “Though I would not have thought he had a heart in him at all. There’s more to him than meets the eye.”

“I should hope *not*.” I said fervently. “He’s imposing enough at surface view; more of him would be positively terrifying.”

Ozin laughed. “Yes, and you don’t know the half of it. Janse is the most law-abiding and law-enforcing person in Ivaldi. Most of the police would have let Carilla go with a warning, if they’d even bothered to grab her in the first place. Some would have squeezed her or you or her father for a bribe. Janse is one of few who would actually care whether she was a licensed guide. He is a passionate believer, as far as he can be said to be passionate at all, in law and order. I am glad to learn from your story that there’s a human side to him as well.”

Ozin went on to tell me other stories about Janse. He did his job well, and was usually occupied with more sensational crimes than unlicensed guiding. His resolution of several difficult cases had brought him City-wide attention, though he seemed not to care about that. For him the capture and punishment of the criminal was reward enough. Which was fortunate, for he had not received the promotions he clearly deserved, and was still low in police ranks. Ozin, and much of the city, speculated that this was because some highly-placed officials did not want him empowered to investigate certain matters in which they had interests.