- Velen, a day later -

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 The Bard had been talking about something for three hours now, but after the first fifteen minutes of listening, I lost track of what he was actually telling me.
 "And you know what, Geralt? And you know what?" The troubadour continued his monologue, finally asking me a question to which he wanted no answer anyway." And she said never again! Terrible woman! I almost went out of my way there, and she talked to me ..."

 I stopped listening again. Roach shook her head.
I looked around suddenly; the silence around us struck me as deeply disturbing. The rustle of leaves, grass, the sounds of birds ... It all fell silent immediately, as if due to some spell; or maybe it was just all in my mind, caused by utter mental exhaustion. My tail twitched nervously.
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 "And then this surprised castellan dared to say that ..." Dandelion was unstoppable when it came to parables from life; although I did not ask him about it even once, he regaled me with every little detail of these completely uninteresting situations. His chatter was exhausting me terribly. He probably did it on purpose, maybe he was trying to fill the silence ... But for my taste, all he actually did was attract new monsters to us. And it distracted me with full effectiveness.

 Roach snorted and looked from side to side as well.
I squinted in search of danger, trying to ignore Dandelion's high voice, fully absorbed by the story, which was drilling into my ears and making them almost bleed - I wanted to target him with a right hook, as long as he would just shut up for a moment.

 And finally, he shut up. Suddenly I felt a blissful peace. I sighed in relief, a little for show. I rode forwards a few meters before the unnatural situation lifted the hair on my neck.
 Dandelion, who was awake and was saying nothing … This was impossible for him.
I turned, looked back.
There was nothing there except an empty road.

 "Dandelion!" I growled, urging my horse backwards. I thought he was trying to scare me. That he's hiding somewhere. Maybe he was checking again to see if I was listening to him. Was I paying adequate attention to him. " Dandelion, it's not funny, get out here, damn it!"
Silence answered me.
"Damn it."

I strained all my senses, trying to find him by smell or hearing. With no result. This worried me more.

"Dandelion, if this is another joke, I'll tear your legs out of your ass, you hear me?" I got off my horse, looking for his traces. Instead of the bard's shoe prints, there were bare female feet.

Maybe it's a bruxa or alp.

I was pretty sure some sort of vampire had kidnapped him. This unnatural silence ... How could I have missed it? I lead the horse, following the tracks. One thing was for sure. Troubadour could not evaporate into the air. If no one pushed him into a teleport, he couldn't be far from me. But who would kidnap him and why?

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The witcher found the bard in the middle of the clearing, chatting, safe and sound - talking to the red-haired fox woman who was crouching by the roots.

So bruxa or alp, as Geralt predicted.

" Step back!" The white-haired man growled at the poet, drawing his weapon swiftly.

"Geralt, take it easy!" Dandelion turned, stepping between him and the red-haired girl. - Can't you see this lady needs help?

The witcher, not listening to him completely, pushed him out of his way.

" Geralt! By Melitele, what are you doing!" the troubadour was frightened.

Geralt could not stand it. He pivoted to him on his heel.

"This is a vampire, idiot," growled Geralt furiously. " What did she say to you? That she is alone in the woods and needs help? And maybe she also told you this with her mind?"

"Well ... Yes ... Exactly." Muttered Dandelion, rubbing his face. "Perhaps she is a sorceress, and mute?"

"You're a complete fool." growled the witcher and turned to the vampire to shorten her by a head ...

But the girl was no longer there. She disappeared, as if by a spell, as if she were only a delusion. The White Wolf took a defensive position and began to withdraw towards Dandelion, legs slightly bent. He walked lightly, with feline steps, prepared for any attack. And the bard, who was unaware of the gravity of the situation, didn't even begin to worry.

"Geralt, you scared her ..." muttered the poet, frowning. " She said she needed help urgently. That she wants to lead me somewhere. I was supposed to go alone ..."

"She wanted to drain you of your blood, Dandelion!" The witcher was as angry as ever. "Are you really such a naive fool, or are you just doing everything you can to make me think you are?"

The bard's eyes widened, and then, after a moment, he frowned.

"She really asked for help ..." he sighed. " How could I say no to a lady in need?"

"It's a pity that some dead man didn't ask for your help" hissed the witcher. "He might, for example, immediately ask you to kill yourself." Dandelion, damn it. Have you completely lost your mind? Geralt continued to yell. "You have to go into the bushes for every girl you meet? Do you have to think with your dick all the time, can't you try with your head at least once?"

"Uhh, I'm sorry, Geralt," muttered the troubadour poutingly. He was really upset. "I didn't know it was a trap ..."

 The witcher shook his head and gritted his teeth. He was still alert, but as the singing of the birds had returned to normal and nature seemed to come alive again, he grabbed Dandelion's arm and led him to the road ahead of him. Like a baby. And he is an extremely unruly child.

"If you go somewhere in the bushes again without my knowledge, I won't look back. Is that clear to you?" The monster killer muttered irritably. " I'll leave you alone with your stupidity. And I will not regret it at all. I hope you understand that."

 Dandelion muttered something under his breath.

" Did you say something?" Geralt paused, frowned. He turned towards him, exasperated.

The poet sighed theatrically. He folded his ears as a sign that he was worried at the words of the wolf warrior.

 "I think you would regret it after all, Geralt." The bard announced, giving him a hesitant smile. He smiled at him as if he was about to pick him up.

"You're not as bad as you're trying to pretend. So I think you'd regret it. Because in the end… " He hesitated, scratched his neck. "We're friends, aren't we?"

 The witcher looked away. He tugged on his arm further.

"I'd have to fall on my head" The white-haired man snorted irritably. " From very high."

And he smiled at the corner of his lips, knowing that the troubadour could not see it.

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