

PRINCESS BEATRICE

THE DAYS BETWEEN



TARFANTIA
AT DAWN

Copyright Page

Princess Beatrice: The Days Between

Copyright © 2026 by Brian BJ Hsll OneKindScience.com

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the author, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

First Edition

Printed in Orlando, FL - USA

Princess Beatrice: The Days Between

(Story Three)

Character List

Princess Beatrice of Nooaje

Princess of the floating city. She has stayed longer than she meant to. Every extra day makes the sky both heavier and harder to answer.

Zephyrus

Winged lion and silent witness. He has watched her leave a hundred places. This time, even he seems reluctant.

Prince Willip of Tarfantia

Ruler of the emerald valley. He asked only for a little longer. He is learning how dangerous “a little longer” can become.

Cassian

Eldest advisor. He has stopped pretending he does not hope.

Chapter 1

The Extra Days

Beatrice stayed.

At first it was the border that held her — signal towers still unfinished, villages still jumpy, raiders still testing the line. Then it was the wounded who needed the gentler side of her magic. Then it was the simple fact that Willip never asked her to stay longer than she offered, and somehow that made leaving feel like a betrayal of something unnamed.

A week became ten days.

Ten days became two weeks.

She told herself she would leave when the northern watch could stand without her.

She told Zephyrus the same thing every evening on the east terrace.

Zephyrus only rumbled and watched her with eyes that had seen too many goodbyes.

Willip never pressed. He simply made room — in the council discussions, on the morning rides, at the small table on the terrace where they ate when the day's work was done. He gave her silence when she needed it and conversation when she did not. He never touched her without reason. He never looked at her as if she already belonged to him.

That, more than anything, made the days dangerous.

Chapter 2

Small Things

They fell into a rhythm that felt older than it was.

At dawn Beatrice and Zephyrus flew the northern ridges while Willip rode the lower roads with a small troop. At midday they compared what they had seen. In the afternoons she sometimes sat in the high library while he dealt with petitions, the staff leaning against her chair, Zephyrus dozing in a patch of sun like an overgrown housecat. In the evenings they returned to the terrace.

One night she found him struggling again with the old lute.

"You are still terrible," she observed, settling onto the stone bench beside him.

"I am aware." He plucked a string that protested. "The song deserves better fingers than mine."

"Then stop trying to make it perfect."

He glanced at her. "That is not how I was taught to do things."

"I know." She took the lute from him, tested the tuning, and played the simple melody cleanly once through. The notes drifted out over the dark valley. "Some things are meant to be a little uneven. That is how you know a person made them."

Willip watched her hands. When she finished he did not take the lute back immediately.

"Play it again," he said quietly.

She did.

When the last note faded he said, "I wrote it so the children would have something to sing when they saw you. I did not expect to need it myself."

Beatrice set the lute aside. The night air moved between them, cool and honest.

"I hear them sometimes," she admitted. "When I fly over the villages. They do not always get the words right."

“Good,” Willip said. “That means it belongs to them now.”

He did not say the rest: that the song had also begun to belong to the quiet space between the two of them. He did not need to.

Chapter 3

The Summons

The message from Nooaje arrived on the sixteenth day.

It came on the wind itself — a thread of high, cold magic that only Beatrice and Zephyrus could feel. She was standing on the east terrace at dusk when it touched her. The staff in her hand flared once, soft and urgent.

Willip saw her go still.

“What is it?”

“Home,” she said. The word felt strange in her mouth. “There is trouble in the lower sky-roads. Something is hunting the smaller floating isles. The wardens are calling every rider who can still answer.”

He absorbed it without flinching. “How soon?”

“Tonight. Or at latest tomorrow’s first light.”

Silence stretched. Below them the valley lights began to appear, one by one, like answers to a question no one had spoken aloud.

“I will not ask you to ignore it,” Willip said at last. “I only ask that you tell me if you plan to return when it is done... or if this is the kind of leaving that does not come back.”

Beatrice turned to him fully. The last light caught the storm-grey of her eyes.

“I do not know yet,” she said. Honesty was the only gift she had left to give. “That is the truth.”

Willip nodded once, as if he had expected nothing less. “Then we will use the hours we still have.”

Chapter 4

The Last Ride

They did not sleep.

Instead they rode out under a sky thick with stars, just the two of them and Zephyrus pacing the dark fields like a moving piece of night. No guards. No titles. Only the soft sound of hooves and the occasional low breath of the winged lion.

They spoke of ordinary things at first — a stubborn orchard that had finally taken root, a child in the lower town who had decided the Sky Girl's lion must be fed honey cakes, the way Cassian pretended not to smile when he saw them together.

Then the ordinary things ran out.

At the high ridge overlooking the whole valley, they stopped. Willip dismounted. Beatrice slid down from Zephyrus's back. The three of them stood in the wind, looking at the kingdom spread below like a dark tapestry stitched with light.

"I used to think," Willip said, "that if I ever found the person I had been waiting for, the choice would be simple. That love would arrive like a clear order and I would follow it."

Beatrice almost smiled. "And now?"

"Now I understand that the clearest loves are often the ones that ask the hardest things." He turned to her. "I will not bind you with a crown or a vow you cannot keep. But I will not pretend this is small, either. When you leave tomorrow, something in this valley will go with you. And something of you will remain here, whether you wish it or not."

She stepped closer. The wind moved her hair across her face. She did not push it away.

"I have left a hundred places," she said. "I have never left one that tried so hard not to keep me. That is new. And it is heavier than I expected."

Willip's voice was very quiet. "Then let it be heavy. Some weights are worth carrying."

For the first time she reached for him — not in battle, not in necessity, but because she wanted to. Her fingers brushed the edge of his sleeve, then settled against the back of his hand. He turned his palm and held her fingers carefully, as if they might vanish with the next shift of wind.

They stood that way until the stars began to pale.

Chapter 5

Dawn

Morning came too soon.

Beatrice dressed in the traveling clothes she had arrived in. The stardust gown remained folded in the east-wing wardrobe; she could not bring herself to wear it for leaving. Zephyrus waited in the courtyard, wings half-spread, restless. Cassian stood at a respectful distance with a sealed

letter in his hands — maps, names of trusted captains, everything Willip thought she might need if the trouble in the sky-roads proved larger than expected.

Willip walked her to the open gates himself.

The same gates he had told her would always remain open.

They stopped just inside the threshold. Beyond it the road stretched north and then up, toward cloud and cold air and duty.

"I will not make you promises I cannot keep," Beatrice said. "But I will make you one I can. When the sky-roads are safe again, I will come back to tell you what I found. Whether I can stay longer after that... I do not know. But I will not disappear without a word. Not from you."

Willip's throat moved. He nodded.

"And I will keep the gates open," he answered. "Not as a trap. Not as a claim. Only as a truth. You will always have a place to land."

She looked at him for a long moment, committing the sight to memory the way she committed the shape of storms.

Then she stepped forward and rested her forehead briefly against his — a gesture she had only ever given Zephyrus before. It lasted only a breath. It changed the air between them forever.

"Fly safe, Sky Girl," Willip whispered.

"Rule well, Prince of open gates," she answered.

She mounted. Zephyrus gathered himself. For a heartbeat they remained earthbound, the three of them framed in the great archway of Tarfantia.

Then the winged lion leapt, and the sky took them.

Willip stood in the gateway long after the golden shape had become a distant speck and then nothing at all. Cassian approached only when the wind had grown cold.

"She will return," the advisor said quietly.

Willip's eyes remained on the empty sky. "Yes," he said. "But not unchanged. And neither will we."

He turned back toward the palace. The gates stayed open behind him.

Chapter 6

What the Wind Carries

High above the world, Beatrice flew in silence.

Zephyrus carried her through thinning air and brightening light. The floating city of Nooaje was still a distant gleam on the horizon. The trouble in the sky-roads waited. Duty waited. The version of herself that belonged only to the wind waited.

And yet.

In the pouch at her belt rested a small folded square of parchment Willip had pressed into her hand at the last moment — the lyrics of the song, written in his careful script, slightly uneven where his injured side had made the pen slip. On the back he had written only one line:

Some gates, once opened, remember the shape of the one who walked through them.

Beatrice did not unfold it again. She already knew the words by heart.

She leaned forward against Zephyrus's neck and spoke into the rushing wind.

"We will answer the sky," she said. "And then we will see what the sky allows us to keep."

Zephyrus rumbled — not the old sound of distant thunder, but something lower, almost like agreement.

Below them the world turned. Somewhere in it a valley kingdom kept its gates open and its prince kept watch. Somewhere in it a song was already being hummed by children who had never seen the floating city.

The first descent had begun everything.

The open gate had changed the terms.

These days between had made the leaving cost something real.

Beatrice of Nooaje flew on toward duty, carrying the weight of a choice that was no longer simple.

And for the first time in her life, she did not mind the weight at all.

End of Princess Beatrice: The Days Between