PRINCESS OLIVIA INVESTIGATES: THE WRONG WEATHER



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PROLOGUE

From the top of the lookout tower, Princess Olivia could see for miles across the mountainous landscape of the kingdom that would one day be hers. It was just before her third birthday and she was so small that her father, King Tolemy the Thirty-Second, had

to lift her up to see over the old stone wall of the rampart. Peering over the edge, firmly held by her dad, she could see the wooded darkness of the quiet mountains, broken in places by yellowy green spring leaves and rushing torrents of pale blue water from the distant glacier. Mist hung low across the quiet landscape.

'**Look**,' said her father, the king, as he pointed down below the ancient lookout tower to a huge tree. It had spreading branches covered in delicate pale pink flowers whose petals curled upwards to greet the morning sunlight. 'Do you remember the story of that tree?'

Princess Olivia smiled and shook her head, even though she did. She wanted to hear her father tell her again about the special tree, the emblem of the kingdom of Alez. She sighed happily as he began the tale.

'A thousand years ago,' he said, his breath

softly tickling the back of her ear, 'our ancestors came across the glacier from the other side. Back then, no one knew what lay beyond those mountains.' In the distance, Olivia could see the jagged rocky edges of the grey peaks that lay in a semi-circle round the kingdom.

'It was **a huge adventure**,' said her father. 'People came here to escape. A horde of terrifying horseback warriors had swept across the continent on the other side of the mountains, seizing control of everywhere they passed through. Only by climbing over the glacier, where they knew the invaders wouldn't follow them, did our ancestors get to safety. They followed the honey scent of this land across the ice to find the valley. Do you know who led them?'

He smiled down at his bright-eyed, clever daughter who, even at the age of nearly three,

he sometimes felt had already sorted her world into better order than he had managed to as an adult.

'Yes!' said Olivia. 'But **tell me again, Papa!**'

'King Tolemy the First!' said her dad.

'The same as you!' Olivia joined in.

'Exactly! The great king I'm named after! He founded Alez. When he saw that tree –' he pointed – 'which is called . . .?'

He gave his daughter a quizzical look and she giggled, a sound he loved more than anything in the world.

'**The angel tree!**' burst out Olivia. 'The angel tree breathes on the kingdom, and that keeps it safe!'

'Clever girl! When Tolemy the First saw the angel tree, he stuck his sword into the earth beneath it and said that, from now on, Alez would be a kingdom of peace and beauty where everyone could live safely and **be happy!**'

'Everyone be happy,' echoed Olivia, twisting round to beam up at her dad. 'With our angel tree!'

'While the angel tree flowers, no harm can come to Alez or any of the subjects who live here,' said her dad. 'And it's our job, as the royal family, to keep it that way.'