

THE STORY BEGINS:

Walking beneath the olive trees, I could hear tension in the two voices before I could even make out the words.

Seeking out the source, I happened upon a young man with hands extended palm side up as he spoke with a tone of frustration.

“Prima, what can I do? I have said ‘forgive me’ a hundred times and will say it a hundred more. Please, do not let this linger!”

The woman I presumed to be Prima stood with her hands firmly pressed together in front of her.

“You have to discuss these things with me Sergio! We cannot afford to be foolish with the means we have. How will you put food on the table when you’re--” She stopped abruptly when she realized my presence and hesitation to continue on my way.

“Madam, I do apologize for the intrusion into a personal matter.” I, Valentine, reassured her.

I reached into my basket under four inquisitive eyes and cautiously revealed a small token intended to dissolve their anger. My token of kindness was met with looks of bewilderment.

“May I have but a moment of your time?” I asked them.

Prima looked with raised eyebrows at her husband. Sergio gave a slight shrug in reply and they both turned their eyes back to me... and the rose I held precariously with my thumb and forefinger.

I extended it within their reach, with a broad smile.

“Please, take this rose in your hands.”

Again, a look of bewilderment came over them both.

“It has thorns!” Prima pulled her hand away from the rose with rejection.

“Yes, it does.” I extended my other hand to gesture for Prima’s. With some reluctance she put her hand in mine. Sergio stepped toward me preparing for whatever he may have to do.



LEGEND #2 (LESSON 1)

LEGEND #2 CONTINUED (LESSON 1)

Realizing I was going to upset them if I didn't explain myself, I continued quickly.

"If you are careful, you can hold this rose—both of you—without a single prick from a thorn. Please..." I gestured for Sergio to join in, once Prima successfully gripped the rose.

Sergio carefully wrapped his fingers around the small sections of smooth stem, at the same time intertwining his hand into his wife's. Once again, their eyes were on me.

"Now," I said, "love each other as if you have but one heart, just as you have this one rose. Do not let your anger tear you apart and snag you, as a thorn snags flesh. Be gentle with your beloved and you can work together through all life brings into your path."

Now the couple finally focused on each other. In a moment they seemed to understand my intentions.

...The next moment they retreated, hand in hand, Prima smelling the rose and Sergio looking over his shoulder with a slight nod of gratitude.

HE CONTINUED COUNSELING

"Valentine! Please, may we have a moment of your time?" I stopped under a low fig tree and shifted my basket to the other arm, nearly displacing the loaf of bread I just purchased. I was curious about the stranger who called to me... it was a woman's voice.

LEGEND #2 CONTINUED (LESSON 1)

“We have heard you offer a blessing to couples, counseling even...” the eager woman locked eyes with the young man beside her momentarily before looking back at me, “and we are hoping you can give us this same blessing. We were unable to get to you on the 14th, when you customarily give your blessings, but we are to wed tomorrow and covet your kind words!”

I was stunned to realize just how far word had traveled since the day I gave my first rose away.

As the couple proceeded to tell me of the plans for their future, I offered my blessing with gladness in my heart. Soon they were on their way, holding a red rose between them, to last them to eternity.

WHO HE WAS:

This St. Valentine is said to have been a random counselor of couples, giving away a rose to them and reminding them to love, above all else. Some legends indicate he did his “blessings” on the 14th, and they also indicate he died on the 14th. This “tradition” is what has carried down into the “holiday of love” that we now celebrate!

But wait... what are the arguments against this theory?



GO BACK TO LESSON #1 AND PICK UP WHERE YOU LEFT OFF!