

Finding the root cause of the problem was easy; all because it was an odd root in Prince Hansol's garden.

The royals were uncertain whether it was a good move to touch the garden and possibly ruin its exterior. They knew how much Prince Hansol loved it; he grew, designed, and tended to it everyday.

Without him, the garden wilted slowly. At the back of their minds, they knew that it was because the Chrysanthemums sensed that there was something wrong with their keeper.

Princess Jin Yi stared at Prince Hansol's figure laying on the outdoor bed located at the hidden gazebo in the tower's backyard that was only accessible to the royals.

He was surrounded by the flowers from all the other kingdoms; clasped in his hands was the Myosotis, or commonly known as the Forget-me-nots.

It has been a month since he had fallen into a sleep-like passing. When his helpers found him, they immediately rang the emergency bell; the royals immediately arrived at the Chrysanthemum Kingdom only a few moments after.

#### **[SETTING: Chrysanthemum Kingdom]**

The silver princess saw him first, quickly telling the helpers to have strict security around the castle and for the prince's butler.

She had the butler report about the whereabouts and what the prince had been doing for the day. Upon hearing it, she breathed out a sigh.

While it was a relief to know that no one really attacked or poisoned the prince, it would be a more difficult task to find out exactly what happened.

When the rest of them had arrived, they split up the work. Princess Jin Yi stayed in the castle's library with Prince Jeonghan, Prince Jisoo, Prince Wonwoo, Prince Minghao, Prince Mingyu, and Prince Chan. The other half went with Princess Mei Zhu to the garden; the gold princess stated how they must lock down the part where Prince Hansol had fallen ill and keep it closed until they find more details about their problem.

She looked at Princess Jin Yi, both of them nodding their heads at each other before they parted ways.

In the Chrysanthemum grounds, they kept their eyes peeled for the said "pure white flower".

Prince Seungcheol furrowed his brows when he saw a black Chrysanthemum with a single rainbow petal. In a dazed like manner, he walked to it slowly, a hand reaching out.

He was shaken out of his stupor when Princess Mei Zhu slapped his hand away. She looked troubled, immediately calling the helpers of the castle and relayed to them that no one is allowed to go near the area surrounding the black flower.

“Not one of you must touch that flower... let us go to the library.” She ordered, quickly walking off to the said room.

Prince Seungcheol turned to the others who looked confused; Prince Jihoon and Prince Soonyoung shook their heads, confirming that they did not know what was happening, before speeding after the princess.

“Hyung... what does that black flower mean?” Prince Seungkwan asked. Prince Seokmin looked frozen in place; needing Prince Jun to pull his hand to actually start walking.

“I am unsure but from the look of Princess Mei Zhu’s face, it seems like she already has an idea of what might be the cause of Hansol’s condition.”

At the library, Princess Jin Yi and Prince Wonwoo had splayed out several books about the Chrysanthemum plant. Prince Jeonghan and Prince Minghao were searching through a pile of biology texts; while Prince Mingyu and Prince Chan chose to search through mythologies surrounding illnesses caused by plants.

The heavy doors opened to reveal Princess Mei Zhu who immediately headed for where the silver princess was.

“Jin Yi, we have a Code Black Opal.”

At the mention of it, chills went down the princess’s spine. Her arm prickled with goosebumps as she clutched the book she was holding.

“I did not think that it would happen again.” The gold princess mumbled, turning around to scan through the books on the shelves.

The other royals were dumbfounded; the situation was unclear to them and it had been the first time they heard of that code.

“I apologize but what does Code Black Opal mean?”

“Does it have any relevance to how rare black opals are?”

Prince Jeonghan thought for a moment, “Hold on. If it has a code, then that means that it has happened before?”

That pulled back the attention of the princesses. Princess Mei Zhu looked indifferent, though it hid the immense pain she felt behind the words. Princess Jin Yi’s expression was more solemn; Prince Jun immediately brought a seat for her to which she thanked him softly for.

"We thought that it was over." Princess Jin Yi sighed, eyes glancing at the other princess who looked away.

"What was over?" Prince Seungcheol asked gently, looking back and forth from the princesses.

"Code Black Opal... otherwise known as the rarest type of disease anyone could have for its mythical symptoms and cure."

They still looked confused, only understanding how it would be difficult to get the medicine needed for Prince Hansol. But, they were royals, surely it would be easier for them to obtain what they need.

"Code Black Opal..." Princess Mei Zhu trailed off, gazing out the window with a book cradled in her hands.

"Killed many people from my kingdom in the olden days." She turned back to them, "An illness with only a one percent chance of treatment almost left my kingdom to dust."

Shock was evident on the expressions of the other royals. The room's temperature suddenly dropped, and the ticking of the clock drummed in their ears.

Princess Jin Yi fixed her posture on the seat, "My kingdom helped the Solidago Kingdom in this plague. At that time, it was difficult to figure out where the disease came from but it was obvious that it was not contagious."

"And we did find the root of the problem."

Princess Mei Zhu's butler handed her a blueprint of the Chrysanthemum garden. "It, my friends, is an actual root, or a lack of it."

She laid out the map on a desk and pointed at where they found the black flower, "When a flower is planted, it needs its roots to survive. However, the flower that Prince Hansol held had no roots."

The royals tensed, an eerie feeling suddenly reverberated around the room.

"If it has no roots... then that means?"

"It means that it is not a real plant. It needs to be terminated immediately." Prince Mingyu spoke strongly; Prince Jisoo held his shoulder.

"We cannot engage in action without any plans. First, we must find a way to safely remove it from the garden so that none of us experience the same condition as Hansol."

Princess Jin Yi stood up from her seat and stood next to the gold princess.

"The Chrysanthemum has sixteen petals. It has already taken Hansol's soul in one of its petals." She started, "The rainbow streak that you have seen is his life force. Now that the flower has gotten royal blood, each one of us is susceptible to touch it."

Prince Seungcheol looked ashamed, Princess Mei Zhu immediately patted his back. "It is alright, Cheollie. You did not know about its danger."

She then opened the book she was holding to a photograph of a black sky with streaks of rainbow painted on it. At the side was a black canyon surrounded by waters that reflected the colors from the sky.

"This is where we get the materials needed for the ritual, also known as the Lost Kingdom of Eden. This is one of the parts of Asia that our ancestors decided to not rule over so anyone can enjoy its beauty. Though there are rumors that people who camped out there disappeared after."

"Deadly beauty." Prince Seokmin whispered.

"There are rules to follow for this process. My people have done the same procedure before and managed to save a few dozen..." She paused, "Though it is really up to the ailed individual if they would like to continue living." She added quietly.

"What was that?" Prince Seungkwan asked, the gold princess shaking her head in reply.

"What I would like for us to focus on is retrieving the materials needed. First is liquid from the body of water that reflects color the most. When collected in a vial, it should retain its rainbow-like color."

She pointed to the canyon in the illustration, "Second, a black opal must be mined from here."

"Pardon? But isn't the mining for black opals usually done underground?"

"And even then there is only a small chance of finding it because it is extremely rare."

Princess Mei Zhu nodded, "Which is why this journey is difficult. At least one black opal stone is required for this to work."

Finally, she pointed at the sky. "The third material needed, the clouds."

"Excuse me?"

"How in the world are we supposed to collect clouds?"

Princess Jin Yi cracked up a tiny smile, "What are clouds made from?"

“Water vapor.” Prince Wonwoo answered easily.

“How do clouds form from water vapor?” The silver princess questioned, the others finally understanding it while Prince Seokmin furrowed his brows.

“Then couldn’t we just get water from the body of water?”

Princess Mei Zhu shook her head, “The vial for the body of water and the one for the clouds are different. The first vial must be kept lukewarm while the vial for this step must be kept cold.”

“You mean it must be from the raindrops of the sky?”

The princesses nodded, “Legend says that in this area the water vapor from the clouds is different from the body of water. When it rains, it lays separate from the body of water. You may imagine it like oil and water.” Princess Jin Yi explained.

“That is why it is important for us to collect these two vials. The temperature and kind of water is crucial.”

Princess Mei Zhu folded her arms, “It only rains during every sixteenth day of the month; the healing properties last about a week so we must make sure that we have all the materials by then.”

While the other princes digested the topic, Prince Minghao wondered aloud. “Does the black flower have no other relevance to this?”

Princess Jin Yi rested her chin on her palm, “That is the next task.”

“We must find a way to get the flower out of the garden without touching it.”

Princess Mei Zhu beckoned her butler over and whispered to him, the man bowing in return before he headed off.

“I asked Sebastian to bring the glass dome that my kingdom used before. We shall place the flower in there after we’ve successfully uprooted it.”

“Shouldn’t it be simple to do so? Since it has no roots, we can simply pull it out with a pair of tweezers.” Prince Chan suggested.

“That is a nice idea, and it should be that easy to do...” Princess Jin Yi trailed off, looking at Princess Mei Zhu who frowned.

“Remember what we mentioned a while ago? We are susceptible to touching the flower. No matter how hard we try to resist it, no matter how strong we think we are, there is always a possibility of any of us touching it.” She paused.

Continuing, she looked at them sadly. "And we cannot let anyone else but us royals do this task. If any of the other helpers do it, they may die."

They gasped at that, asking what rule led to that to which the princesses sighed at. "Equality. Since the flower had tasted royal blood when it touched Hansol's finger, only other royals may pluck it out. It is unfair if commoners are ordered to do the tasks."

As if planned, the princes fell down to sit on the floor in sync. Head filled with brand new information about a rare illness in the kingdom and how they may lose their companion if they fail to do so.

"But that is all, right? Those are all the difficult tasks to do?" Prince Chan asked uneasily. The princesses nodded, which made everyone sigh in relief.

Kyoya, the silver princess's butler, knocked on the door, "Your royal majesties and highnesses, it is getting late. Prince Hansol's family gave an invitation for all of you to stay in the castle for the night."

All of them thanked him. Seungcheol spoke up, "We must talk more about this in the morning. For now, let us get a good night's rest."

One by one they went to their respective sleeping chambers; leaving the princesses alone in the library.

Prince Jeonghan had been the last to leave. His eyes were easy to read as he flashed them a look; bidding them a good night, he closed the door.

"He knows that we did not tell them everything," Princess Jin Yi breathed out.

"How on earth will we bring up that it is up to Hansol whether or not he'd like to wake up?" Princess Mei Zhu cradled her head, "But, we will do whatever we can to save him, Jin Yi."

The silver princess nodded, turning to hug the other tightly. "We'll work hard for him. We will not let the same thing happen again."

She felt the gold princess grab onto her back, "Yes. That shall not happen again."

### **[SETTING: Dining Room, Chrysanthemum Kingdom]**

When dawn came, the princes were awakened by their respective butlers. Informing them that they were being summoned by the princesses.

Awaiting at the dining room was an early Japanese-styled breakfast of steamed rice, miso soup, and grilled salmon. The princesses sat at the ends of the long table, already cleansing their palate with tea.

"Good morning, how nice of you to join us." Princess Jin Yi greeted, watching as they sat down. At the other end of the table, Princess Mei Zhu merely nodded her head.

"We apologize for waking you earlier than usual. However, we would like to discuss our plans as soon as possible." She paused. "We thought of transferring Hansol to the tower."

The princes looked shocked at the idea; they've never stayed at the tower aside from having slumber parties so it was a surprise for the princesses to suggest this idea.

"I think that it is best to keep Hansol's condition a secret for now. Since the tower is hidden from everyone, no one will be able to spread rumors if ever they spot an unconscious prince at this castle." She continued, studying the look on Prince Seungcheol, Prince Jeonghan, and Prince Jisoo's faces as they were the next ones in line to approve orders.

"Will that mean that we would all have to stay at the palace for the time being?" Prince Seokmin asked.

Princess Jin Yi nodded, "Yes. We thought that it would be best that we stay together because of our plan. That would heighten our manpower for security. We can also say that we're having a meeting that requires us all if Imperial Dispatch has the gall to ask for an interview."

Prince Jeonghan crossed his arms and leaned back in his seat, "I do not have any problems with this arrangement and I have also been pondering about our plan. Shouldn't we try to uproot the flower first before traveling?"

At that the gold princess set down her tea, "Yes, we will try to accomplish that task in a week's time. Hansol will be moved to the tower by then. Since we don't necessarily need Hansol here to remove the flower, if we fail then we can just try and try until we succeed." She paused. Looking over at the other princess, she sighed.

"Jin Yi had thought of having all of Hansol's closer friends try and uproot the flower first."

The princes nodded with a look of determination, not scared at the fact that they might also be tempted to touch the flower's petals.

"Then, I am sure that we are all mature enough here to know who are closer to Hansol." Seungcheol spoke up. The others nodded, Princess Jin Yi smiled lightly.

"Very well. Then we will proceed with the plan. Do not worry though as I will stand guard nearby. Anyway, as long as you don't look at the flower, it won't have any effect on you."

"And while Jin Yi does so, I will have half of you with me to strategize our travel route to the Lost Kingdom of Eden."

Prince Jisoo smiled, "Alright. I assume we are all in agreement with this plan?" He looked at the others who simply nodded. "Fantastic. Everyone, let us have our breakfast first and then we may proceed."

At that, Prince Jeonghan snickered. "How formal of you, Joshuji." The prince of Zinnia pinched his side at the comment; Prince Jeonghan jolted in his seat and laughed as his upper-body laid bonelessly on the table.

"Show proper table manners please, Jeonghanie." Prince Jisoo easily shrugged him off and started to eat his food.

The others giggled into their food.

"As I'm sure we'll be busy, I would like to make a rule that we should have our meals together like this. For breakfast, lunch, tea time, and dinner." Suggested Prince Mingyu.

"I love that rule!" Prince Chan chimed in with Prince Seokmin and Prince Seungkwan in tow.

The princesses smiled at them, though the princes could see how it did not reach their eyes.

"Of course. Let us all abide by that rule. Thank you for thinking about our well-being, Gyu." Princess Jin Yi said, waving her hand for them all to actually start eating.

She casted a look at the entrance of the dining room where she could see a glimpse of Prince Hansol's family portrait. She smiled sadly at the image.

She started slightly when a warm hand rested on hers. Looking beside her, Prince Jun gave a warm smile.

"We're all in this together and I'm sure that Hansolie wouldn't be happy if we're all too down in the dumps."

He squeezed her hand lightly before letting go. She appreciated the gesture greatly and moved to give him more salmon.

"Ah Jun ge that's unfair~ sweet talking Jin Yi to get more food." Prince Minghao pouted playfully to which Prince Jun raised a brow at.

"You can't even finish your food if you have extras, Hao."

The rest of the royals laughed at the way Prince Minghao huffed and proceeded to transfer some of his rice to Prince Jun's bowl.

**[SETTING: Garden of Hansol, Chrysanthemum Kingdom]**



Flora worked in miraculous ways. Some proved to be beneficial for medicine, ingredients for food, and decorative uses. However, there are also some poisonous ones; though the royals' problem at hand seemed to be more of a mystical problem.

The rainbow flowers in the garden danced slightly with the wind; pollen from the plants resided in the air, causing some of the royals to sneeze.

"Ah." Prince Jisoo's eyes skimmed around the greenery, "I can feel Solie's aura. He really spent a lot of time here."

"Or that may be because his aura is in that flower." Added Prince Minghao, arms crossed as he sniffed the pleasing aroma of the flora.

Prince Seungkwan sneezed into his palm with Prince Jihoon passing him a handkerchief. "Though we can agree that his garden is the most beautiful compared to all of ours."

"Ayo it's not fair because he has all the colors of the rainbow." Prince Seokmin chided, brightening up the mood. Prince Chan laughed, "We do not have the same amount of love as he does for his flowers..."

He looked around and caught a glimpse of the black flower, "Which is why we need to do everything we can to show our love for his kingdom and for him because he is our friend."

Princess Jin Yi smiled at the princes, beckoning them over to a spot of little distance from the single black flower.

They have agreed upon having a day each to try and uproot the cursed plant. Whoever would try must remember to speak of the emotions they felt so that they may be able to note it down.

The silver princess had the helpers set out a small sitting area nearby where they can stay. Kyoya even prepared baked goods and tea while they were there.

Prince Jihoon looked at the set up and hummed into his cup, "I think Hansolie would like this."

"Would like what?" Prince Seungkwan inquired.

"This. Us sitting here at the place he loves the most. It's a lovely experience, I hope we get to do this when he wakes up."

They smiled at his words and bit into their biscuits. Prince Minghao lit up, "That's it! Perhaps we must think of good thoughts and remember our moments with Hansol so that we don't get swayed by the flower!"

"Even if our intentions are pure, perhaps the stronger the memory with Solie, the better chance of us retrieving the flower?" Added Prince Jisoo.

Princess Jin Yi thought for a moment, "That is a good theory. Let us try it!" She opened the journal she brought along. To explain, she had decided to record their findings into a new book as the previous events happened long ago. Princess Mei Zhu agreed and would also add the other half of the plan later on.

For the first day, Prince Seokmin tried. His memories with the Rainbow Prince circled around their birthdays together. As tradition, they would always meet during that day even if it is a second till midnight. Their cakes would be blown out together and they would spend the night at each other's castles.

When he tried to uproot the flower, he almost dropped the tweezers at how much his hand shook.

In horror, he turned to Princess Jin Yi who had pulled him away from the plant's sight and into a hug.

"It... it altered my memories to make me think that I needed to touch the flower so Hansol and I could have happy birthdays..." He buried his face into her neck.

"I fought back as hard as I could, but I couldn't bring myself to pluck the flower because I was scared that I would be removing Solie's life instead."

Princess Jin Yi brought Prince Seokmin to his sleeping quarters, tucking him in and gently caressing his hair. "Don't worry, Seokmin. It was just the flower's tricks. You're safe and soon, Hansol will be too."

She wrote down the observations on the book and told the other princes about it before they had their turn.

For the second day, Prince Chan decided to have a go. He bonded with the Chrysanthemum Prince in different areas of the arts. While they practiced dance and rap together, Prince Hansol had taught him to make handicrafts. In exchange, he created newer technology so the prince may have an easier time with cutting, putting together, or dyeing his creations.

He squeezed his eyes shut when he felt the princess tug him away and into her hold. He held back tightly, not realizing how close he had been to touching the flower with the tweezers before his hand started trembling.

"I almost had it." Prince Chan whispered into her hair. "But, it made me feel uneasy. Like it was ripping out a part of myself that I have hidden and shoved it to my face."

He pulled away slightly to catch the princess's eyes. "I have met Hansolie when I was little. Seeing him was the first time I've ever found anyone beautiful."

He need not say anymore as Princess Jin Yi pulled him in for a warm embrace and brought him into his room.

When Prince Seungkwan and Prince Minghao had attempted, they were both shaking at the end.

Their friendship with the prince revolved around quality time. They were the ones that the prince spent a lot of time being with, even if it was only for quiet time, and felt recharged with their company.

Even if they knew it wasn't true, their hearts shattered when they envisioned Prince Hansol turning away from them and leaving them in the dark.

Princess Jin Yi had just tucked Prince Seungkwan in bed when Prince Jisoo and Prince Jihoon called for her at the garden.

"I think that it toys with insecurity." Prince Jihoon stated, head tilting up to gaze at the sky. "Whether it be an insecurity within ourselves or with Hansol."

"At first, we thought it to be fear because of Seokmin's encounter. But, with Channie, Kwanie and Hao, it was more clear." Prince Joshua crossed his arms, "Seokmin was insecure with himself and thought that everything had to be perfect to have a good time with Hansol; Channie was insecure with a part of himself he had yet accepted brought out by Hansol; Kwanie and Hao was insecure with themselves and that their friendship with Hansol will end if they fail to make him happy."

Princess Jin Yi processed their words, and though it made sense, they have yet to overcome it.

"I will try next." Prince Jisoo declared, "Solie is like a brother to me and as much as possible, I do not want anymore of you to go through with this ordeal."

Though things are easier said than done.

With Prince Jisoo, his relationship with Prince Hansol runs deep in their veins in a familial bond. Their families were close to each other because of their similar living arrangement (that is coming to Asia from America).

The vision in his mind was as clear as day. Seeing his family sat together with Prince Hansol's as they shared a meal. It was then he noticed the black flower used for the decoration on the vase when the scene started to change.

He found himself in the garden holding the pair of tweezers. He was situated in front of the cursed flower and was so close to cutting its stem off.

When he successfully did a snip, the stem grew thicker and he only managed to cut half of it before he was yanked away.

Eyes clearing, he saw Princess Jin Yi eyes as she cupped his face.

“Joshua, can you hear me?”

He blinked, nodding slightly. At that moment, he realized how his hands were bare. His eyes flickered to the plant to see the tweezers stuck on the stem.

“What happened?”

Princess Jin Yi sighed and let him sit on the chair, “We thought that you had it under control. But you struggled to cut off the stem. Then, Ji realized that your eyes looked foggy and how you were moving nearer and nearer to the flower. Your skin almost touched it when you were trying to snip it off.”

The Zinnia Prince’s eyes grew wide, “I have no recollection of that. I managed to snip half of it off in my vision...”

Prince Jihoon put a hand on his shoulder, “You did. Though the tweezers were left on the stem... we did not expect for it to be so firm. It did not even look that thick.”

The princess exhaled, “You’ve done a good job, Joshua. Please rest and leave the rest up to Ji and I.”

Once he was tucked in bed, Princess Jin Yi and Prince Jihoon read through their notes.

“Let’s look at this from a realistic point of view.” Prince Jihoon started, “Going nearer to the plant means that the individual gets lost in their head space. Frankly speaking, there is only about ten minutes before it gets harder to resist the temptation of touching the plant.”

Princess Jin Yi put down her glass of water, “If I understand what you’re procuring, we both need to attempt to get the plant in the glass dome.”

The Calla Lily Prince nodded, “I will cut off the stem. You will have to be the one to place it in the glass dome.”

Agreeing to the strategy, they bid each other a good night and prepared their minds and hearts for the next day.

That evening, Princess Jin Yi sat by the desk situated in front of a window in her sleeping chambers. The book she used to record their observations was laid out in front of her beside a candle.

A gust of wind entered, curtains swept by it and left a cold touch on her cheeks. She was startled when she heard a knock on the door.

Turning to it, she saw Princess Mei Zhu leaning against the door frame.

"I heard that Jihoonie came up with a plan that guarantees success in retrieving the plant."

The silver princess hummed, "Guarantees is a strong word. We hope that the plan will work."

Princess Mei Zhu closed the door behind her and sat by the bedside, "I am sure it will." She gazed out the window and to the moon, "Exactly two days left before we all transfer to the tower. It would be favorable if we have the plant with us."

Another gentle breeze came in; Princess Jin Yi made a move to close the book and blow out the candle.

Just as predicted, Prince Jihoon had cut off the stem before he was pulled aside. His gaze was heavy on the ground before he looked up at the silver princess.

"It was a mysterious sight, really." He paused, shakily standing up to sit himself on the chair. "Seemed to be a perfectly normal day. Hansolie was walking with me in this garden and he actually helped me cut off the stem."

Princess Jin Yi held his trembling hands, "You almost touched it yourself, Ji."

"Because Hansolie was about to pick it up." He looked up at the sky, "You need to be careful, Jin Yi. Do not let the Hansol you see in your mind sway you just like what happened to the rest of us."

Once he was tucked in his sleeping chambers, she found herself walking back to the garden.

It looked different at night; whereas it looked refreshing and lively in the morning, it looked more serene now. There were fairy lights hung around, creating a spectacular view. The flowers seemed to be reflecting the lights and gave tiny rays of rainbow throughout the garden.

She stood in front of the cursed flower that was lying on the grass. From the few meters away, she could already feel her head and heart start to pound.

"I knew you would be here." At the sound of the voice, she tilted her head to the back.

Princess Mei Zhu stood there with the glass dome nursed in her arms.

She smiled at her and walked towards her, heels click-clacking against the pavement.

"How did you know?"

"Best friend's intuition... and it's already midnight anyway so it's technically the next day." The gold princess laughed and handed her a pair of tongs.

Princess Jin Yi accepted it and let her gaze wander to the cursed flower. "Do you think I can do it?"

"Well of course. Whatever you set your mind to, you will surely achieve it." Princess Mei Zhu paused, fingers tightening around the glass dome. "This is made from special glass. Once the flower is concealed in here, it will have no more effect on any of us."

She gave the dome to the silver princess. Brows furrowing, she nodded at her. "You can do this. Just remember what your true intentions are."

Princess Jin Yi nodded firmly, turning to the plant where she was immediately engulfed by a mirage.

Prince Hansol was sitting beside the cursed flower. Knees pulled up to his chest while he gazed up at the moon.

Tears welled up in her eyes; walking slowly towards him, she could hear the faint sound of his humming.

It was the song Prince Jihoon had composed for her 'Bye Bye My Blue', and it tugged at her heart strings. Prince Hansol caught her gaze and smiled, though she could see how his eyes looked listless, as if the energy from him had been drained out.

"Have you come to retrieve the flower?" He spoke, voice ringing in her ears and squeezed at her chest. It had been too long since she last heard him.

She nodded as an answer, the prince mirrored her action before looking back up at the moon.

"And you've been collecting data about what's happening, I suppose?"

She nodded again, and even if Prince Hansol was not looking at her, he knew her answer. "I'm not sure if you will believe me now, but I am the real Hansol."

At that she furrowed her brows. He continued talking, "I know that for the others, they saw visions of me with them in melancholic scenarios. I saw all of them too."

He closed his eyes, long lashes caught the dew drops of the leaves above him. His side profile was accentuated by the moon beam; delicate features along with the sight of his chest rising made him feel like he was actually there.

"It hurt. Watching all of that transpire and not being able to do anything because I'm trapped in this flower. I try to speak, to yell, to reach out but I can't."

He turned to her then, catching her eyes before picking up the flower. In-between his fingers, he rolled the stem around. The single rainbow petal on the cursed Chrysanthemum glimmered.

"It felt so wrong to see something that is meant to only be seen in their eyes. I never knew that they felt that way towards me, towards themselves, and towards our friendship... do I even have the right to wake up with the knowledge of all of this?"

At that, the princess tightened her grip on the tongs.

"I will always believe in you, Prince Hansolie." She slowly walked towards him, "We all have our own insecurities and it's frightening to have it laid out bare to us."

She kneeled before him and looked into his eyes, "This cursed flower is speaking to your deepest self; the part of yourself who you've been hiding."

She put the tongs down and opened the glass dome, "The Prince Hansolie I know loved the feeling of life. He strengthened life with his own hands and warmth; tending to his greenery and loving us all."

The prince moved to copy her stance, flower still in his grip.

"And you have the right to choose whether you will wake up or not." She paused, throat closing up at her next words. "But I want you to, so badly, wake up and be with us- with me again."

Prince Hansol's pupils dilated as he gaped at her. The princess's tears started to stream down her face, "And you said it yourself, didn't you? That you would marry me in the future... that we'd have an us."

Her hands shook as she held out the glass dome, "So please think about it..."

The Rainbow Prince reached a hand out and caught her tears, wiping them away with his thumb.

She shivered at his cold touch, sitting still as she said her next words.

"Come back and live your life. I did not even get the chance to say I love you yet."

Prince Hansol wordlessly placed the flower in the dome. Covering Princess Jin Yi's hands with his as they closed it together.

He kept silent as he looked at her, "Stay safe, my princess." Then he embraced her, strong arms wrapped around her like a shield and kissed her head.

The princess closed her eyes tightly, cheeks tainted with salt, and nose flushed. She savored the feeling of his hold, "I will see you soon, my prince."

When she opened her eyes again, she was hugging the glass dome. Inside was the black Chrysanthemum held up by a stand.

She felt a hand on her shoulder, "I told you, you can do it."

She smiled at her words and stood up, moon beaming down on them. She looked at the flower and noticed dew drops on it.

"It's extraordinary... I have no recollection of placing the flower inside because Hansol did all the work in my mirage."

Princess Mei Zhu smiled and led her out of the garden, "He helped you put the flower in. Perhaps his want to speak with you was very powerful which explains why your experience is different from the others."

She thought about it, "But what did it look like? How did I put the flower back in?"

They arrived at the sleeping quarters, Princess Mei Zhu being the one to tuck her in bed with the glass dome placed by the desk.

The gold princess sat by her bedside, "You had a distant look in your eyes, then you started to cry silently. You picked up the flower with the tongs and placed it carefully inside the dome. When you closed it, you hugged it tightly and even kissed the glass." She paused, looking at the silver princess and pursed her lips.

"Though your actions seemed to be robotic; as if you were being controlled by something. Maybe it was Hansol's soul guiding you to safely retrieve the flower?" She walked to the door, "Whatever it really was, I'm certain that Hansol was protecting you the whole time."

Princess Jin Yi smiled, snuggling into the covers. Princess Mei Zhu turned off the lights, "Now rest. You have done well today. We can move to the tower later on... I think we'll all feel calmer then."

When morning came, the princes were astonished to find out that the first task was completed. They couldn't contain their happiness and bounded in the silver princess's room, waking her up from her slumber as they jumped on her bed joyfully.

She laughed for the first time in a week at their excitement, letting herself be reeled in for hugs and praises.

They still had a long way to go for the remedy, but it didn't hurt to celebrate their accomplishment.

### **[SETTING: The Palace]**

After they settled Prince Hansol into the hidden gazebo as suggested by Prince Chan and stored the glass dome safely in the tower, they gathered at the palace's dining hall.



Prince Seungcheol grinned at all of them, "Ah, I'm glad that we finally get to eat in good spirits again. The previous days have been quite rough what with some of us being too exhausted... but I am thankful that we all stuck by our rule of eating together."

They smiled at him, nodding as they ate their lunch. Princess Mei Zhu finished first and called for dessert.

"I wanted to discuss with you all our route and plan for the second task over dessert." She waved her hand and Sebastian came in with a big parchment pasted on a standing board.

"To check the date, we started at exactly May first. It is now the seventh of May, which means that there are nine days left before the rainfall at the Lost Kingdom of Eden." She pointed at where the palace was and their destination.

"It will take us approximately three days to arrive. We thought to bring a portable living area which is a new product of Junie... it was called a trailer, yes?"

Prince Jun nodded excitedly, "I had tested it already, and it is very durable and easily transportable just like a carriage! We will be having three trailers; two for us royals and one for security!"

"That solves where we'd be staying for the days we are there. Now about the members who will go..." Princess Mei Zhu opened a compartment and stuck a to-do list on the board.

"The princes involved with retrieving the flower will stay here on standby and watch over Hansol. Particularly, you will be here to make sure that no one is suspicious of our voyage. The rest will be coming to the journey."

They did not question why the silver princesses was still included in the second task.

"We will be taking turns. Team A will be myself, Jeonghan, Soonyoung, and Wonwoo. Team B will be Jin Yi, Seungcheol, Jun, and Mingyu. Team A will be mining for the Black Opal while Team B will gather the water. We'll switch tasks after a day.

When a task is done, the group has to help the other after. By the sixteenth, we will all catch the rain... I believe that is the easiest one to do. I foresee that we will spend a lot of time on the Black Opal."

She revealed a small chest with three sections, two of them stored the vials while the other had a cushion. "We will place the ingredients here. Now, Gyu-ah is in charge of our meals and we have until the end of the month before supplies would run out."

Princess Mei Zhu crossed her arms, "Soonyoungie is in charge of the materials that we may need such as mining tools and buckets. Wonwoo is in charge of leading us to the place. Cheollie is in charge of security."

"And Jeonghanie is for luck!" She clasped her hands together and the room rang with laughter. "Ya, you all know it's true~ I am very fortunate." Prince Jeonghan proudly stated, taking a sip of his strawberry milk.

"Well, it is very accurate... the gods are always in favor of hyung's side." Prince Seokmin thought aloud, the others sighing in agreement.

Princess Mei Zhu waved her hand again, Sebastian taking the board away. She sat down on her chair and brought out an almond shaped bell necklace.

"If there will be any emergencies, this will be used." She turned to the person beside her, Prince Jihoon immediately bowed his head when the princess moved to lock it around him.

"It is a special bell that only the messenger bird can hear. I have a whistle to command the bird to send a message to you. In the worst case scenario, the whistle will be the one to help you find where we may be by following the direction the bird flies."

"I will entrust this duty to you, Jihoonie. Jisoo will be in charge of keeping the public from asking any questions about us. The rest will help him while keeping watch over Hansol."

She propped her arms on the table and clasped her hands together, "We will be leaving at dawn tomorrow."

The rest playfully saluted and chuckled when the princess rolled her eyes fondly at them.

Princess Jin Yi looked over at the board at the side of the room, sincerely hoping that everything would go smoothly.

The next morning, the palace was buzzing. Helpers were loading up the trailers and tending to the horses.

"My, it feels like we're going abroad." Princess Mei Zhu hummed from beside her, flattening out her yellow-gold skirt.

They decided to match with their attire; their bottoms in the Solidago Kingdom's color while their tops were in the Myosotis color.

"Feels more like a road trip, really." Princess Jin Yi fixed her suspenders. "This will also be a good way for us to test Junie's trailer idea. I think it'll be a big hit."

"Of course~ He's even thinking of a 2+1 deal! If you buy two trailers at the same time, the next one you'll buy will be 50% off!"

Princess Jin Yi laughed, catching a glimpse of the other princes as they mounted on their horses.

She took in the smell of the fresh air; thankful that it was not too sunny or cloudy which made the trip easier to handle. Prince Wonwoo walked over to them and grinned.

"Ready for our trip?"

"I absolutely cannot wait for what lies ahead! The route you've prepared is on the safer side, so we'll most likely arrive with no scratches!" Princess Mei Zhu put on her hat and fixed Princess Jin Yi's.

Prince Wonwoo pushed his glasses up, "Yes. Though I actually look forward to our trailer adventures, I think Jeonghanie hyung prepared games to let off some steam."

"Ah, even just playing mafia is already a lot of fun."

Their respective butlers herded their horses to them; Prince Wonwoo assisting the princesses as they mounted on.

He gave a light squeeze when Princess Jin Yi got on, "Everything will go as planned; and by next month, we will be able to be with Hansolie again."

She gave a squeeze back before letting go of his hand. "I have faith in that too, Wonwoo."

Prince Wonwoo gave her a gentle smile, going to ride on his own horse. "Alright, our journey starts now. Everyone remember to follow me and make sure to communicate if there is something wrong."

The royals looked at the others who would be staying in the palace. Prince Joshua bobbed his head at them, telling the guards to open the gates.

"All of you better be in one piece when you get back here!" Prince Chan exclaimed.

"Hopefully, you do not run into any casualties." Said Prince Minghao.

"If you can, do bring back souvenirs!" Prince Seokmin chimed in; Prince Seungkwan thwacked his head. "They are there for a mission, not for vacation!"

"I'll be keeping my attention peeled for the messenger bird, but I pray that you do not have to use its service." Prince Jihoon cut their banter.

"We will do our best~" Prince Jun happily supplied.

"I'm actually more worried about leaving you all here... you're mostly all from the maknae line." Prince Seungcheol pursed his lips.

"Ah~ they have Joshuji, Cheollie! They will be fine!" Prince Jeonghan smirked lazily, holding the reins of his horse with one hand.

“Don’t have too much fun here without us!” Prince Soonyoung added, exchanging kissy faces with Prince Seokmin and Prince Seungkwan. He gave a wink to Prince Jihoon who rolled his eyes.

The princesses laughed at their companions. “Then, we’ll see you all soon.” Princess Jin Yi signaled for the Wisteria Prince to lead.

“Don’t worry, we’ll try not to use the emergency messenger bird, and we’ll see what souvenir to get you, Seokminie!” Princess Mei Zhu waved at them as they set off.

To The Lost Kingdom of Eden, they go.



Venturing off to the mysterious place was more or less a pleasant experience. They got to feel the crisp air caress their cheeks and enjoyed the small talks they’d make during their ride.

The nights they spent on the road were a lot of fun. They decided on their trailer-mates through rock-paper-scissors, except for the two princesses who stayed together. The princes who stayed with them were Prince Jeonghan and Prince Wonwoo.

For the two nights, they snuggled up in one trailer. A pile of comforters and pillows scattered across the trailer’s floor. In the mornings, they were awoken by the delicious aroma of Prince Mingyu and Prince Jun’s cooking.

They fought not to use the bird to send a message to the other princes; already missing them but knowing that they’ll definitely panic upon seeing the gold-feathered animal.

Surprisingly, the route Prince Wonwoo had led them to had little to no commoners around. Meaning that no one was able to find out about their secret mission.

On the third day of their expedition, they were amazed to see the contrast between the foundation of the ground.

As the Lost Kingdom was situated near the ocean, they were surprised to see the division of the fine golden sand to a black color.

There was also a mist that divided the two areas, Prince Wonwoo being the first one to step foot into it with the others following in tow.

They reached deeper into the kingdom. Prince Mingyu and Prince Jun gasped at the sight while the others stared in awe.

“We are here.” Prince Wonwoo spoke, gaze locked on the black canyon. Unnamed colors lit up the dark sky and reflected on the inky waters.

"I thought that the illustration was an exaggeration... seeing it in person... it is similar." Prince Jeonghan uttered.

Prince Mingyu took out his camera to take a photograph. "I bet Hao could make a great painting for this."

Princess Mei Zhu whistled lowly, "Not if I do it first."

They parked their trailers in an open area beside the canyon. The handful of security they brought along with them taking care of their horses and patrolled the area.

"Since it's almost midnight, let us start mining and collecting the water tomorrow. For now, a good night's rest!" Prince Seungcheol declared.

After they changed into their sleeping robes, they sunk in the comfort of each other's presence and stayed in one trailer again.

Princess Jin Yi scanned the vicinity, eyes stopping at Princess Mei Zhu who had half of her face tucked under the blanket.

"We'll be able to do it, right?" She broke the silence, speaking softly over the quiet snores of the princes.

The gold princess slightly wiggled, "Of course, we will."

She nodded, closing her own eyes and relaxed her breathing. "Okay."

### **[SETTING: The Lost Kingdom of Eden]**

Being at the castle meant having strict rules and protocols to follow. One of them being the proper attire to wear; and though the royals loved the extravagant clothing, there are times when they want to dress in a more laid-back manner.

Since their labor will probably reach from dawn to dusk, they wore comfortable and easy-to-move-around garments.

With the heat of the sun and occasional breeze, the princesses wore light dresses while the princes wore suspender shorts.

They were pleasantly surprised when they saw their reflections and how lighter they felt. It had definitely been quite a long time since they wore such attire.

"Ah~ we still look quite dashing in this ensemble." Prince Mingyu held Princess Jin Yi's hand and gave her a twirl. "And of course, our royal majesties are the cream of the crop!"

Princess Jin Yi giggled, letting her dress fan out, causing its silver sparkles to glimmer under the sun.

"That is a given." Prince Jeonghan clicked his tongue. Princess Mei Zhu had her arm tucked in his arm, "Our princesses are Asia's treasures."

"Now, now." Princess Jin Yi laughed, "Let's focus on our duties."

"Perhaps to make it more thrilling, we can have a sort of duel?" Prince Soonyoung piped up.

"Don't you mean a wager?" Prince Wonwoo shook his head while the Tiger Lily Prince harrumphed.

Prince Seungcheol put a finger to his lips in thought, "What kind of wager though?"

"I know." Prince Jeonghan smirked, "Whoever retrieves the black opal first, wins!"

"Oh, so this is an individual match now, is it?" Prince Jun crossed his arms in interest.

"But wouldn't it be unfair since Team A has a head start?" Prince Seungcheol pouted.

Princess Mei Zhu waved her hand, "No, it won't be. Technically, we'd have to find dust or particles of the black opal on the walls. We'd all be mining in the same area... really, this task is all about luck."

Prince Wonwoo hummed, "Well, I am fine with this wager. What will be the winner's prize?"

"Perhaps a kiss from whoever they want?" Prince Jun boldly suggested along with an exaggerated wink.

Prince Wonwoo raised a brow at him, but otherwise did not comment on it.

"Oh?" Prince Jeonghan's wolfish grin widened, "I don't mind this prize."

"Now, now," Prince Seungcheol held his hands out, "We only have two ladies with us. Surely they would think it would be quite unfair?"

He was dumbfounded to see Princess Jin Yi's look of interest while Princess Mei Zhu snickered. "The kiss can also be between princes." She casually remarked.

"And anyway, it can just be a kiss on the cheek. We're all close companions." She added, Prince Soonyoung cheering from the side.

"Hurray! That means that the wager is on!"

"I'm going to get a kiss from Joshuji." Prince Jeonghan thought evilly, Prince Seungcheol gasped. "We can get kisses from the other princes as well?"

"Why, of course~ it's from whoever we want." Princess Jin Yi clapped her hands. "Now then, let us begin."



Unbeknownst to Team B, the bright sun tampered with their job. Its rays reflected off the water too much that it gave off a white sheen.

The princes had the water up to half their thighs as they examined the water, a bucket in their grasp.

"Maybe it's better to find it during the afternoons and evenings? I can barely see any color with the sunlight!" Prince Jun whined.

Prince Mingyu squinted his eyes, quickly scooping up water to reveal a lone squid in his bucket. He squealed, dropping it and holding onto Prince Seungcheol who was beside him.

"Why are there sea creatures here! I thought this was special waters?"

"Mingyu, you're far bigger than these animals. They will not hurt you. Anyway, think we can cook this up with our dinner tonight?"

Prince Jun wiggled his body in agreement, "Oh! I do want to taste fresh squid!"

"You're going to let me dress the squid?" Prince Mingyu cried out.

Farther away from them was the silver princess who stayed in a shallower part of the water. She stayed closer to the canyon, eyeing the waters that were shaded by its structure.

She held her dress's ends with one hand while the other held onto the pail. Slowly, she walked around, feeling the fine black sand between her toes and how it would have been nice to spend some leisure time here.

"Does remind me of a beach." She murmured, the corner of her dress slipping and slightly touched the water.

She immediately pulled it back up, though the action created ripples in the water. A figure slowly being formed on the surface.

The princess blinked, mouth opening agape as she stared at the reflection.

"Perhaps the heat is playing tricks on my mind?" She said to herself, seeing the ever so handsome Rainbow Prince on the water.

Hearing her words, the apparition shook his head. He gestured for her to follow him as he moved towards an isolated area just past the canyon.

She could hear the bickering of the princes grow fainter as she followed him. At one point, she almost tripped, but there had been a force of the wind that kept her upright.

When she looked at the water, the eyes of Prince Hansol's apparition told her to be more careful.

Once she reached the isolated region, her eyes widened at the colors dancing on the water. She looked at the prince again and tilted her head in confusion when he was holding up all ten of his fingers.

"I don't understand what you mean."

The apparition scowled, hand brought up to his chin as he thought.

Though before he could make any more charades, a hand was placed on her shoulder.

"So this is where you were." Prince Seungcheol exhaled, looking around the area. "And you've found the rainbow-like water!"

She nodded at him, eyes still glazed as she turned back to the water, only to see how Prince Hansol's apparition was no longer there.

He was trying to tell or maybe warn her of something though she could not understand his hand gestures.

The princes attempted to scoop out the water but sulked when it did not keep its colorful tone.

"Wha- why won't it keep the rainbow properties!" Prince Jun glowered, scooping out more water and looking at it in his transparent tub, only to find it in its natural crystal clear state.

Eventually they turned in for the night when they found their fingers pruning. They waited for Prince Mingyu to prepare them food- he really did include the squid in their supper.

Just as he was about to serve their meal, the other team came in the trailer. They looked ghastly with the amount of grime on their clothes and skin.

They were quickly pushed to the showers. Letting them change into their evening wear and waiting for them to get back before they ate their meal together.

"Jin Yi found the perfect spot to collect the water." Prince Seungcheol spoke after he had a bite of his squid, "Though now our next problem is figuring out how to get the color to stay."



Prince Wonwoo nodded, "A good amount of progress for the day then."

"As you can see, by our previous appearance, we've excavated a part of the canyon and found a spec of the black opal. Though we have yet to find a fully formed gem."

"I think we've both made a good amount of progress. Tomorrow we'll be switching, so let's continue to do a good job!"

Princess Mei Zhu noticed how quiet Princess Jin Yi had been throughout dinner. Casting her a look though they were too tired to stay up and talk about it amongst themselves.

It had been three days after and while there was more progress on finding the black opal (the specs becoming more frequent to find on the canyon walls), they were still clueless on how to obtain the rainbow water.

Team B had their shift again, the princes excusing themselves to try and go to a deeper area while the silver princess stayed behind.

This time, she let her dress get soaked into the water. Hoping that the apparition would appear again.

She sighed when he didn't appear, bending down to rest her palm on the water's surface.

Squeezing her eyes shut, she took in the fresh air. She could taste the salt in her lips, feel the sun beating down her skin, and smell nature through the summer breeze.

Suddenly, she felt the water ripple again. Opening her eyes, she saw Prince Hansol resting his palm atop of hers.

He smiled gently, mouthing a greeting to which the princess teared up to.

"It's almost the day of the rainfall and yet we still haven't retrieved the black opal or the rainbow water... and I had hoped that we'd be done by May 16..." She silently whimpered.

The prince's apparition looked at her sadly. He pulled on a 'fighting!' action and gestured for her to not give up.

"And I can't even understand what you meant when you raised all ten of your fingers." She sighed.

Prince Hansol crossed his arms as he thought, snapping his fingers in eureka.

He made slanted lines on top of his eyes with his fingers, then proceeded to raise both of his hands again.

The princess squinted her brows. "What does that mean? Ten...?"

Prince Hansol flailed his arms and paused again. He fisted his palm and made an 'o' expression.

With his hands, he made a claw pose then proceeded with the slanted eyes and ten fingers pose.

"Tiger... Soonyoung?" At that, Prince Hansol cheered.

"Soonyoung? Ten... Ah! Ten-ten! He always says that his eyes are exactly ten-ten based on the clock's hands!"

Prince Hansol was jumping, nodding his head joyfully. He made a hand gesture of scooping the water and Princess Jin Yi finally understood.

Looking around her, she made sure that no one was around. Quickly, she pressed her lips to the water. "Thank you for your help, Hansolie."

The apparition was flustered, hiding his face behind his hands as he motioned a 'It's my pleasure' to her.

She smiled at him one more before heading off to the other princes.

"I know how to get the water!"



"That's amazing! So we're only supposed to get the water at exactly 10:10am or 10:10pm!" Prince Mingyu awed, drying his hair as he stared at the vial containing the rainbow substance.

"Luckily, Jin Yi found out when it just turned 10am." Prince Seungcheol happily tugged on his boots.

When she told them about it, they immediately looked at their watches and ran to the area with the most reflection. Each held their breath as they waited for the clock to strike 10:10.

Obtaining the rainbow water was magical. They quickly poured it into the vial and raised it up to the sun to see its reflected shimmers and colors.

Afterwards, when the vial was safely stored in the box, Prince Jun tugged them all down to submerge in the water.

"Now, we can go help the others and start the wager properly!" Prince Jun said excitedly. The rest followed and they were greeted with praises by the other team.

"Great work! That's one less task to do!" Princess Mei Zhu happily hammered the wall in front of her. "Now, we focus on this pain in the arse gem!"

As predicted, they did spend more time mining for the gem. Even to the best of their abilities, they still had no luck uncovering it.

"I thought you're supposed to be lucky, hyung." Prince Mingyu pouted.

"Now now, I might be lucky, but things come at the most unexpected times." Prince Jeonghan lightly replied.

Though they had to pause with their mining event as it was already the day of the rainfall; May 16.

After breakfast, they wore their raincoats and stepped outside their trailer. The sky was darker, the sun not peeking from behind the dark clouds.

When the clock struck 10:10 again, the rain started to fall.

"Ya, Soonyoung, are you secretly a prince in this kingdom too? Why must it be 10:10 and not the usual 11:11 make a wish legend." Prince Jun remarked, the Tiger Lily Prince simply shrugged.

"This is all new to me too."

Princess Jin Yi was skeptical on why the task seemed easier. Surely, it would not be as simple as standing in the rain with a bucket and catching the water.

And she could not be any more correct when they found out that the water that fell into the buckets immediately dried out afterwards.

They attempted to use other objects to catch the water, carved out cups from the rocks, and even tried to directly catch the water into the vial (though the entrance was too small).

"What should we do? It's already the afternoon and if my insinuation is correct, the rain may stop at 10:10pm." Prince Wonwoo bit at his fingernail.

Princess Mei Zhu held out a hand and saw how the drops of rain accumulated on her palm. Princess Jin Yi saw this; they looked at each other, reaching an epiphany.

"Everyone, cup your hands together and collect the water! It doesn't dry out when it touches the skin!"

With the combined raindrops, they managed to fill the vial before it stopped raining. Unlike Prince Wonwoo's projection, it stopped at 17:00, military time.

"It's a good thing we managed to collect it before the rain stopped." Princess Jin Yi sighed in relief. The gold princess held out the vial to the sun that was peeking out from the clouds.

“But why did it not vanish when we transferred it to the vial?” Prince Jun asked curiously.

“Maybe because it was already tempered with our skin? Since we can naturally touch anything, perhaps the raindrops adjusted to it also.” Prince Wonwoo hummed, “But of course, this is all just speculation.”

Their conversation was cut off by Prince Mingyu’s calls.

“Everyone, look here! The water changes color depending on the light. It either turns white or black.”

They all stared in awe; moment breaking when Prince Soonyoung sneezed.

“Everyone, make sure to take a warm shower and change clothes! We can’t afford getting sick now.” Prince Seungcheol ordered, the royals quickly following his order as they shivered to themselves.

With everyone freshly bathed, full from their hot lugao or rice gruel, and laid on their comforters, they released a sense of tension in their bodies.

“One last strut and then we can go back home to the others.” Prince Soonyoung exclaimed, snuggling into his sheets with Prince Jeonghan patting his head.

“We need to find it in less than a week because the magic properties of the rain-water will wear out.” Prince Wonwoo reminded.

“Then let’s sleep now and start early tomorrow.” Prince Mingyu yawned, already having his eyes shut as he lulled to sleep.

“Well, he’s a goner.” Prince Jun assessed, “I have high hopes for tomorrow! It’s May 17! We’re always lucky on the seventeenth!”

The others gave noises of agreement, “Let us see if we remain lucky then.” Prince Seungcheol turned off the lights, “Now, let’s sleep. Good night, everyone.”

The princes looked at the princesses who were oddly quiet, smiling fondly when they saw that they already dozed off.

“You’ve worked hard, princesses. Sweet dreams.”



True to their words, they started quite early the next morning. Having a healthy meal of bread, fruit, and tea before heading off to the canyon.

On the rocky walls were specks of the “opal dirt” as mined by the royals earlier on. Though it is a tedious task of sinking a shaft with a pick and shovel into the surface, they were kept entertained by Jun’s hilarious acts.

*“We dig dig dig dig dig dig dig in our mine the whole day through~”* The Delphinium Prince sang, *“If you dig dig dig with a shovel or a pick; In a mine! In a mine! In a mine! In a mine! Where a million diamonds shine!”*

The princesses snickered when Prince Soonyoung cleared his throat, *“We dig dig dig dig dig dig dig from early morn’ till night. We dig dig dig dig dig dig dig up everything in sight!”*

*“Heigh-ho, heigh-ho~”* They sang together.

*“Heigh-ho, heigh-ho, it’s off to work we go.”* Prince Mingyu belted out, the song pausing as the others looked at him.

“Those are not the correct lyrics!” Prince Jeonghan huffed.

“It’s ‘heigh-ho, heigh-ho, it’s home from work, we go.’” Prince Seungcheol said each word in-between his hammering.

“I know, but it doesn’t fit what we’re doing now!” Prince Mingyu leaned to Princess Jin Yi and pouted. “They’re bullying me again!”

Princess Jin Yi merely smiled and continued with her mining, “Well, you did change the lyrics of the song.”

Prince Mingyu whined, only getting noisier as the princes teased him more.

It was nearing lunch time when the princes suggested setting out a picnic by the canyon and enjoying their meal outside the trailer for once. The princesses nodded as they left the mining to them first while they prepared food and the table.

Silence embraced them, though it was never an uncomfortable feeling. Princess Mei Zhu picked on a curiously sleek looking exterior.

“You’ve seen your Prince Charming, haven’t you?”

Princess Jin Yi choked back on her words, twirling around to see the gold princess’s smirk.

“Noticed how quiet you were and your eyes looked troubled... only Hansol has that effect on you.” She continued, “But only when you both don’t understand each other. Usually, you’re all melty by the thought of him.”

Princess Jin Yi burned, “I saw him by the water. Though I’m still wrapping it around my brain that it may really be him helping us out and not just my subconscious being a big brain.”

"It's phenomenal then. Hansolie is still watching over you even if his physical body is not here." The gold princess tilted her head, "Shows how much he loves you."

"Do not speak of such embarrassing things." Princess Jin Yi covered her reddening cheeks, though the smile on her face spoke otherwise.

Princess Mei Zhu laughed, "Should I be expecting wedding preparations soon when Hansol wakes up?"

"Do not jinx it, please. The last proper conversation I had with him was not entirely comforting."

"Don't worry, I'm sure that he'll awake." She held out her palm, "Can you come here for a moment?"

The silver princess walked towards her, eyes widening slightly when a handpick replaced the shaft she was holding. "Can you continue mining where I left off? I have to go powder my nose real quick."

Princess Mei Zhu did not wait for a reply as she fluttered off; Princess Jin Yi furrowed her brows at her action. Though she did follow her request and started to pick on the area, only to be shocked at what the opening revealed.

Delicately brushing the rocky texture, she gaped when a three carat black opal was revealed.

With utterly mesmerizing beauty, the gemstone reflected the peeping sunlight from the canyon's entrance, creating thousands of colors inside the dark interior. It looked like colorful mirrors; or maybe an oil painting where the colors are just lightly blended with each other.

"Jin Yi found the black opal!" Prince Jun called out; the other princes bounding in and giving the princess cheers and praises.

At the entry of the canyon, she spotted Prince Mei Zhu wink, and smirked at her.

"It's going to be a fantastic lunch then." Prince Wonwoo fixed his glasses, leading Princess Jin Yi out of the canyon.

"I'll call for the helpers to clean up and pack our equipment laying around then. I assume that we will leave after lunch?"

Princess Mei Zhu nodded at Prince Seungcheol, "Yes, we must leave as soon as possible. I'm sure the others miss us terribly."

Still captivated by the gemstone, Princess Jin Yi startled when Prince Jeonghan slung an arm around her shoulder. "My dear Jin Yi, you are the lucky one for this journey." He hummed, "You

figured out how to collect the rainbow water and extracted the gemstone... though I suppose it does make sense.”

He lightly patted her shoulder, “Great work, Jin Yi. We will see Hansol very soon.”

The picnic they prepared was very humble, as it always was during their stay at the Lost Kingdom of Eden. While they lived in luxury at their castles, here they were stripped bare of their status. Nature treated them equally with the other people around them, and while they still ordered their helpers to clean and pack up, they did most things like cooking and working by themselves.

It was a refreshing getaway, excluding the condition of Prince Hansol.

Princess Jin Yi watched as Prince Soonyoung and Princess Mei Zhu giggled at each other as they scooped up black sand in small vials, stating how it was the souvenir for the others. She watched how Prince Mingyu continued to make noodles with Prince Jun who was piling it on Prince Wonwoo’s plate. She watched how Prince Seungcheol and Prince Jeonghan talked quietly amongst each other and shared warm smiles as they sipped their drink.

By herself, she let the summer breeze gush over her. It smelled faintly of rain, and the area still looked a bit gloomy than usual. But the colorful lights in the sky and their reflection on the waters made up for it. While it was such a pain to complete their tasks, she found that she enjoyed the hands-on work. It reminded her of simpler times, and how she was capable of doing such things even with her title. At the back of her mind, she knew that the others loved the experience too.

She promises that one day, they will go back to this place with all the royals.

After their meal, they changed out of their stained work clothes and into their usual attire. For Princess Jin Yi, she decided on a light blue prince blazer with silver detailings and matching shorts.

Stepping outside of the trailer, the sun beamed down on her. Shielding her face with an arm, she blinked and her eyes slowly adjusted to the view.

The sky was now a beautiful ocean blue color; the rainbow colors still accenting the clouds. The body of water looked the same; almost like a reflection of the sky and by then, the princess realized it.

“You figured it out then?” A voice spoke next to her. She turned to see her best friend dressed in fabrics of gold and white.

“It’s all just a reflection of each other... which means that when I saw Vernon on the waters...”

Princess Mei Zhu nodded, “He is always here with you. Even if you can’t see him.” Giving her a warm hug, the gold princess sauntered off to her horse.

Princess Jin Yi took a moment, mind processing the new information when Prince Jeonghan gave her a little push. "It is time for us to go, my dear Jin Yi."

She mounted her horse, tilting her head slightly when she saw Princess Mei Zhu bend down to retrieve a large gold feather on the ground.

They caught each other's eyes, Princess Mei Zhu pressing a finger to her lips in a 'quiet' gesture.

Prince Wonwoo, perched on his horse, looked back. "Alright, everyone! We have three days of travel ahead of us! Remember to not get side-tracked and to always inform us if there is anything wrong." Noises of agreement followed; and soon, they were on their way.

*"Heigh-ho, heigh-ho, it's home from work we go!"* Prince Jun sang loudly.

### **[SETTING: The Palace]**

With the grand gates of the palace opening, the princes were lined up for them by the entrance. They were greeted heartily by Princes Seokmin, Seungkwan, and Chan giving them warm hugs and Prince Joshua giving them words of praise (and head pats to the princesses).

"Where is Hao?" Prince Mingyu asked, waist still clung on by the younger princes.

"Attending to Mei Zhu's orders." Prince Jihoon replied curtly. Only then did the princes notice the golden feathered bird sitting on his shoulder.

"Ah Jihoonie~ I see you've got my message." Princess Mei Zhu happily walked over to him; the bird immediately transferred to her arm.

"He almost had a heart attack when he saw the messenger bird, Mei Zhu!" Prince Chan supplied.

"He had been stationed by the terrace, with the horrible excuse of reading with fresh air, and would walk around outdoors for the past few days." Prince Seokmin added.

"On the day where he finally thought that maybe the bird wouldn't come, it came flying through the doors! Though the meeting was truly an interesting sight with him catching the messenger bird on his arm." Prince Seungkwan ignored the glare Prince Jihoon gave.

"Ah Jihoonie~ I told you not to worry too much about it! And you must already know that things happen when you least expect it!" Princess Mei Zhu cooed. "Now, we must prepare the things for the ritual while we wait for Hao to return from his kingdom."

The royals raised their brows, "What must we prepare?"



The concoction for the cure was simple. The black flower must be boiled in with the black opal and rainbow water. Once the smell is fragrant, the vial of the cold rainwater must be added in. The steam from the mixture will make the cold rainwater form into tiny puffs of white above the bowl. Simply, all the ingredients recreated the view of The Lost Kingdom of Eden.

“Gyu, you will be in charge of photographing everything as we are documenting this in a book for the future generations.” Princess Mei Zhu ordered just as the palace doors opened to reveal Prince Minghao with a posse of stylists.

“Ah, perfect timing.” The gold princess leaped to hug him in a greeting. “Now then, everyone, change into your ritual attire and get moving!”

Princess Jin Yi shook her head fondly at her best friend. Of course she’d send the messenger bird for something like this. Since it will be documented, she wanted them all to look pristine, and it didn’t hurt to have a set of new clothing anyway.

Prince Minghao designed conservative clothing as it was a special ritual. The tops consisted of kimono robes while the bottoms were skirts (for the princesses) and dress pants (for the princes). Even with the simple style, he still managed to up the look with accents and patterns.

For the hair, all royals must have it gelled back, meaning that no hair strand would frame the face. For make-up, they simply had black eyeshadow on.

As they were preparing for the ritual, Princess Jin Yi looked over at the sleeping prince.

He looked so peaceful surrounded by flowers. His dark lashes contrasted with his complexion, making it look a whole lot longer and that he had been sleeping for such a long time. She reached over to touch the petals of the Myosotis flower clasped in his hands.

She sincerely hoped that he had already made his choice.

The royals surrounded the outdoor bed, all picking up the flowers from their kingdoms. Princess Jin Yi had the honor of releasing the cold rainwater to the steaming bowl, immediately forming clouds. As gently as she can, she lifted the bowl to Prince Hansol’s mouth, tilting his head slightly so that the warm substance may flow down smoothly.

Once the soup was finished, she set the bowl aside. All held their breath as they looked at the still unmoving prince.

The sound of the air was deafening; the silver princess’s hand trembling with each passing moment that the prince did not open his eyes.

“You know, we had a game where whoever finds the black opal gets to kiss whoever they want.” Princess Mei Zhu suddenly shared.

The princes looked at her in surprise because *was it really the proper time to share that?*

“And Jin Yi won. So she gets to pick who she wants to kiss.” She continued.

Princess Jin Yi felt wind hit her, eyes widening at what the other meant. To her side, Prince Jeonghan lightly squeezed her shoulder.

“You may kiss the sleeping prince.”

She tenderly held Prince Hansol’s face, noticing all the little things she loved about his features. She remembered all the memories they shared together and even the times during this journey where he stayed by her.

Squeezing her eyes shut, she hoped with all her heart.

Leaning forward, their lips pressed together. A simple peck, but it seemed like the vibrant colors returned to the Chrysanthemum flowers around them. She felt a tingle run through her spine at the touch, pulling away from the plush lips when she noticed a slight movement.

Steadily, like the beat of all of their hearts, the sleeping prince opened his eyes and was welcomed back to life.

With a bleary smile, he slowly lifted a hand to cup Princess Jin Yi’s cheek.

“I’m back, my princess.”

— END

### NOTES FOR THE MAKING

- Vernon's life force gets sucked into the flower (making it black with rainbow streaks)
- Royals must find a way to get him back to his human body
- Kimberly puts the flower in a glass (like beauty and the beast) while Vernon's body is kept in a bed (like sleeping beauty)
- Mining for black opal (like snow white)
- See reflection on water (like mulan)
- Mention of Prince Charming (like cinderella)
- How to transfer Vernon's soul back to his body is to cut the flower bud and soak it in water. After, they would have to let Vernon's body drink it (like tangled)
- Andrea would suggest for Kimberly to kiss Vernon like what happens in fairytales when Vernon did not wake up from drinking the flower water
- Wedding hints
- In the ending, Vernon's fingers twitched and he awoke

### OTHER ROUTE

- What if Vernon never gets back to his body? When the royals are all growing up, his body stays in the same age
- When the last of them die, suddenly people see a Chrysanthemum placed on top of Kimberly's tombstone and see how Vernon's body had disappeared
- Final scene is the helpers finding a letter in Vernon's chambers; the prince writing down his final words (this part is to make it obvious that he really is back to his own body again)
- *"And if I were to awaken from my slumber? Would we have been together? I fear that it is too late for these thoughts. Rest well, my princess. I will find you again in another life."*