

CURSED

"What happens after happily ever after...for the other girl?"

Inspired by Cinderella and her "Wicked" Stepsister

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FOURTH DRAFT

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**TEASER**

EXT. BARREN WOOD - DAY

FELICE NOX, 42, beautiful but dark fairy godmother and aunt to Princess Ellinor of the North, pets a RAVEN a few paces away from a cauldron bubbling over a lively fire.

HANS, 10, her illegitimate son, sits on a log in front of the cauldron.

Felice cracks the bird's neck and rips off a clump its feathers. Blood pours over her hand. She tosses the carcass into the brush and takes the feathers to the cauldron.

HANS

Why are you doing this, mother?

She drops one feather at a time into the brew.

FELICE

To keep people in their place.

HANS

But I thought their curse was to be lifted nevermore.

Felice laughs.

FELICE

A curse can always be lifted, but I will not allow that. I cannot allow that.

She drops the last feather inside. A cloud emits and fills the entire scene.

EXT. NORTHERN CASTLE - KITCHEN YARD - DAY

Princess Ellinor's disgraced but beautiful stepsister, STEPHANIE THORNE, 21, sits pitting cherries with a thin knife on the back stoop of the kitchen yard. Her apron is soaked with their blood-red juices.

She sees smoke pushing out of the woods in the distance. She twitches as if something churned in her stomach.

MARY OLIVER, the head kitchen maid, appears in the door.

MARY OLIVER

You're wanted upstairs, milady.

STEPHANIE

I'm just Stephanie, Mary Oliver.

MARY OLIVER

Yes, milady. But Princess Ellinor wants to see you.

Stephanie cleans off the knife with her apron and sticks the knife in its pocket then stands up with her bowl of cherries.

STEPHANIE

Whatever for?

MARY OLIVER

It's not for me to question.

She hands the bowl to Mary. Oliver and takes off her apron.

STEPHANIE

But you know?

MARY OLIVER

They want you to move upstairs, milady.

Mary Oliver cannot contain her smile. Neither can Stephanie. She rushes inside.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - KITCHENS - DAY

Stephanie moves past the other SERVANTS.

She takes a handful of food from A KITCHEN MAID'S mixing bowl and stuffs it in her mouth as she passes, grinning. She takes more from ANOTHER KITCHEN MAID'S bowl, tugs at her apron tie before sweeping blissfully out of the room.

KITCHEN MAID

You'd think she weren't a high born lady, never.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - SERVANTS QUARTERS - DAY

Stephanie stops in the threshold to have a quick look inside. Haybeds and floor mattresses litter the room. It's modest and dreadful. She sighs and smiles.

STEPHANIE

Finally.

She leaves the threshold and heads toward the stairs.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - PRINCESS'S QUARTERS - DAY

Stephanie enters. PRINCESS ELLINOR, 19, fresh-faced and beautiful, stands in front of a tall mirror being attended by her 20-something, LADIES-IN-WAITING:

MARIGOLD, beautiful and bookish, ABIGAIL, stern, plain, and no-nonsense, and PENELOPE, the group's peaceful mediator, all glare at Stephanie.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Thank you, ladies. I would like to speak to my sister-cousin alone, if you please.

The ladies exit.

Stephanie is a bit out of breath, but she stands straight as her training has not been forgotten. She curtsies.

STEPHANIE

Your highness.

Ellinor smiles softly, still not used to her step-sister being subservient to her.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Stephanie.

The air in the room is thick. Princess Ellinor starts fidgeting and pacing. She sees her gowns and a few garments lying on top her bed. She picks them up and begins putting them away, instantly relaxed.

STEPHANIE

Ah...your highness?

Princess Ellinor ignores her as she is engulfed with her task. When she finishes, Princess Ellinor wears a satisfied smile on her face and turns to face Stephanie full on with a bright smile.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

How long have I been married to Prince Dominic?

Stephanie grits her teeth.

STEPHANIE

Five months, three weeks, seven hours, twenty three minutes, and three seconds, your highness.

Ellinor appears taken aback by Stephanie's precision.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

You never took care to know any minute of the day when we were children.

STEPHANIE

Things change, your highness.

Princess Ellinor sits on a bench at the foot of her bed.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

That they do.

She folds her hands and looks out of the window, twiddling her thumbs. Stephanie waits for a moment before speaking.

STEPHANIE

Your highness, I heard from Mrs. Oliver that you wanted to speak to me.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Oh. Yes. As you may have noticed, I am not doing well in my station. I'm rubbish, really. And the last time I attended a tea party was when I served you, which--

STEPHANIE

Not to be rude, Ellinor...your highness. But would you please get to the point?

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Prince Dominic's mother is returning from the south for the first time since our marriage, and I wondered if you could be my tutor.

Stephanie is taken aback.

STEPHANIE

What?

PRINCESS ELLINOR

We are to have a dinner party for her upon the first night of her return, and I want to prepare. But it would be for more than just that. I want to you to be my special tutor.

Stephanie's smile is hard, but Ellinor prattles on.

PRINCESS ELLINOR (CONT'D)  
Yes, you would be my special tutor.  
You will teach me all about  
etiquette and what not.

STEPHANIE  
I don't know what to say.

PRINCESS ELLINOR  
If you want to keep your kitchen  
duty, I understand. Is that what  
you were doing just now?

Ellinor seems keenly interested.

PRINCESS ELLINOR (CONT'D)  
What is it you were doing down  
there?

STEPHANIE  
Cherries, Princess. I was cutting  
cherries.

Ellinor smiles.

PRINCESS ELLINOR  
I love cherries. So, what do you  
say to my offer? It would be a  
change in position. You could live  
right here next to me. There's a  
small room adjacent to this one.

STEPHANIE  
So, I can hear you and the prince  
in throes of passion while I lie  
cold and grateful under a thin  
sheet of cotton alone?

PRINCESS ELLINOR  
Don't be silly you'll have thick  
blankets.

Stephanie clutches her fist at her side.

PRINCESS ELLINOR (CONT'D)  
And you will be compensated.

STEPHANIE  
Is this some type of punishment?  
You can ask your ladies.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

They try to help me, but they expect me to know things so quickly. Please, will you help me?

STEPHANIE

Will I have my title reinstated?

PRINCESS ELLINOR

You know I can't do that.

She turns around and begins brushing her hair.

PRINCESS ELLINOR (CONT'D)

It will be much safer for you this way.

Stephanie looks confused by the last remark but unmoved by the overall proposal. Princess Ellinor gives her a worried glance through the reflection in the mirror but soon turns it into a sweet smile.

Stephanie looks away from her. She cannot do this.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - COUNSEL ROOM - DAY

PRINCE DOMINIC, early 20s, handsome, charming, and intelligent sits in counsel with THE KING'S ADVISORS. His father KING PAUL, mid 40s, a good looking sturdy man, argues with his brother, THE GRAND DUKE, MATTHEW OF KENTWALL, early 40s, stern and exhausted.

KING PAUL

I will not listen to those heathens.

DUKE MATTHEW

Brother. I am saying this kindly, but you will have to head to the Ministry of Legions in order to talk this through with the High Emperor and his counsel.

KING PAUL

I just hope he will see reason. I appoint you as regent in my stead, Matthew.

PRINCE DOMINIC

You should both go. I'm more than capable of keeping things steady while you are away.

KING PAUL

I don't think so, son.

Dominic stands, palms firmly planted on the table.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Why not?

KING PAUL

As charming as you might think you may be, you are not level-headed.

PRINCE DOMINIC

That's simply not true.

KING PAUL

You're given to... flights of fancy at the best of times. Flying off toward whatever whim that suits you.

Dominic laughs.

PRINCE DOMINIC

You don't know me at all.

KING PAUL

Taking months to find a bride because you wanted to marry for love.

Dominic leans back in his chair.

PRINCE DOMINIC

There's nothing wrong with love.

King Paul slams his fist onto the table.

KING PAUL

We have a kingdom to command! I presented you with princess after princess, and you went for a common girl, a servant no less.

PRINCE DOMINIC

She is high born.

DUKE MATTHEW

Even blood cannot save a child's noble graces when she is forced into a lifetime of servitude.

KING PAUL

The oath law states that you have the final say in your selection of a bride, but you are supposed to do right by your kingdom. As I did and your grandfather before me.

Prince Dominic presses his lips together and changes the subject.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Mother will be home very soon.

KING PAUL

Then let us prepare my leave, Matthew. (to his advisors)  
Gentleman.

The King's advisors depart.

The Duke looks between his brother and nephew.

DUKE MATTHEW

I will rule finely in your stead,  
your majesty.

King Paul looks at him solemnly.

KING PAUL

Do not indulge my son too much,  
brother.

King Paul leaves to get ready. The duke stands but turns to Dominic before leaving.

DUKE MATTHEW

Do not take your father's words to heart, dear boy. You will be a fine ruler someday.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Thank you, uncle.

He exits.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - KITCHENS - DAY

Stephanie scrubs the floor intensely.

FIONA THORNE, 40, a severe noblewoman turned servant with a commanding air who has not let her circumstance destroy her poise and purpose, enters and looms over Stephanie's hard working form with a cocked eyebrow.

FIONA

You should only be on your knees  
ever for one reason and one reason  
alone.

Stephanie turns.

STEPHANIE

Mother!

FIONA

To find a bobble or a jewel if it  
has gone missing. What did you  
think I meant?

STEPHANIE

Mother, I have work to do, and I'd  
rather do it without your hovering.

FIONA

I heard the *princess* offered you a  
place upstairs, and you turned it  
down.

Fiona, arms across her chest, looks at Stephanie, shocked.

STEPHANIE

That's right.

FIONA

Are you a fool?

STEPHANIE

I am not you, mother. I am through  
with playing in dirt and deceit.

FIONA

And whom will you ever marry you  
working as a common maid in a  
kitchen?

STEPHANIE

My sister seems to have made out  
all right.

FIONA

Running away with that woodcutter  
at sixteen. Yes, a wonderful life  
she will have. Granted, she is not  
beautiful like you are.

STEPHANIE

My sister is seventeen, and my chances are over, mother. Stop dreaming otherwise.

FIONA

All right. Sneer, and I'll keep the little gift I got for you to myself... I did it after I discovered your foolish mistake from that loose-lipped Mrs. Oliver. It's quite a gift, I think.

Stephanie stands up, wipes her hands on her apron.

STEPHANIE

All right then. What is it?

FIONA

A room of your own.

STEPHANIE

I already told you mother, I will not be *Cinderella's* servant.

FIONA

You are exactly that as long as you work in this castle.

Fiona walks out of the back door of the kitchen, and Stephanie follows her.

EXT. NORTHERN CASTLE - BACK OF KITCHENS - DAY

They walk through the small yard out of the building.

STEPHANIE

We could leave.

FIONA

We wouldn't last a minute in the world alone.

STEPHANIE

I just want my dignity back.

They come to a door. Fiona pulls out a set of keys and opens it.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - PRIVATE SERVANT ROOM - DAY

It is a room with a bed and a washbasin. It has a small window and a tiny desk, and, to Stephanie's surprise, a small hearth for a fire.

STEPHANIE

This is lovely, mother. How ever did you manage it?

FIONA

The Duke still considers me a friend.

STEPHANIE

If that were the case, couldn't you have cashed that token in sooner?

FIONA

This room just became available. This was where Thomas lived.

STEPHANIE

The groundskeeper who just died? Where will his replacement live?

FIONA

He and his wife are living in the black cottage at the top of the south heath.

STEPHANIE

That's a long way off. Perhaps, You could move here with me then and be away from the mill. Of course, you don't lift a finger there.

FIONA

They know who I am.

Stephanie, genuinely happy, kisses her mother's cheek. Her mother smiles, showing a glimmer of warmth that quickly fades.

STEPHANIE

Thank you, mother.

FIONA

Be happy, daughter. You'll earn back your due in time. We both will.

**END OF TEASER**

ACT ONE

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - PRINCESS'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Ellinor lays in bed alone awake as the moonlight pours into the room. She shifts to lay her cheek on her pillow and sighs. She waits a bit longer then throws off the covers.

Ellinor sits at her vanity to brush her hair then puts down the brush. She goes over to the window to look down onto the grounds. She tries to listen for a sign of activity, but she all she hears the hoot of an owl.

INT. BARREN WOOD - COTTAGE - NIGHT

Felice enters her small cottage. Her son, Hans, and her doe-eyed niece HELENA THORNE MILLER, 17, and Helena's woodcutter husband, NICHOLAS, 20, sit at a table eating beans and drinking ale.

HELENA

Aunt Felice.

FELICE

Eat up, dear. You're skin and bones.

HELENA

I was thinking.

She gets up and leaves the men to their food and drink. She approaches her aunt to whisper so only she can hear.

HELENA (CONT'D)

I need permission for something.

FELICE

What is it, child?

HELENA

I'd like to go see my sister.

FELICE

You know the rules. I'm sorry.

Helena hesitates and looks back at her husband.

HELENA

I need to go and speak to her.

Helena gives her a pleading look.

FELICE

Helena, you knew the rules when I allowed you to come to live in my forest and in my realm.

HELENA

...but it is not your realm.

Felice gives her an angered look. Before she can speak Hans approaches.

HANS

Helena, Nicholas is drooling over your pie.

Helena looks squarely into Felice's eyes before she smiles to Hans.

HELENA

Come, let's go stop him from gobbling it all up then, shall we? Then a little tea and off to bed with you.

Helena strides back toward the table. Hans looks at his mother, expectantly as Felice quickly takes out a vial of liquid and gives it to Hans.

FELICE

Do exactly what I told you? Later, I'll be out again. I don't want any disturbances.

Hans nods and dashes after Helena.

HANS (O.S.)

Helena, could I help you with the tea?

Felice smiles.

FELICE

So predictable, Helena.

Felice sashays to her bedroom.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - SERVANT'S PRIVATE ROOM - NIGHT

Stephanie lies on her bed, staring at the ceiling. She stands and slowly strips off her clothes, letting them drop to the floor without bothering to pick them up.

Wind whips through the open window.

STEPHANIE

Damn it.

Stephanie grabs a sheet to cover herself as she walks to the fire to start it up.

Stephanie is thrilled when she gets it lit the first time.

A sharp knock follows the room. Stephanie stiffens. She looks around and finds a dress she thinks is clean and hasty puts it on. She opens the door.

FELICE

You two are so predictable.

She walks into the room pushing Stephanie to the side. Stephanie closes the door and glares at Felice.

STEPHANIE

What do you mean by that?

FELICE

I came to see how my dear niece is doing.

Stephanie laughs, thinking this is a great joke.

FELICE (CONT'D)

Well?

STEPHANIE

Great. Wonderful. Superb. I love losing my title, any bit of land we had, all of my dowry. Oh, yes, and the love of my life.

FELICE

I'm glad you are enjoying yourself. Though you should learn to cover yourself up in case in a room with no locks.

Felice walks towards the hearth and makes the fire brighter. She smiles in triumph.

STEPHANIE

Glad that sarcasm isn't lost to some people.

Felice gives Stephanie a hard look.

FELICE

Did Ellinor speak to you?

Stephanie goes towards the fire to warm up.

STEPHANIE

What's it to you?

Felice sharpens her eyes in a hard glare toward Stephanie.

FELICE

I'm going to see Ellinor.

STEPHANIE

Good. I don't know why you bothered stopping here in the first place.

FELICE

I know you think I favor Ellinor over you, but I don't.

STEPHANIE

You spent her whole life begging my mother to take her out of the kitchens, so I'm sure you're only too happy to see me in her place. I just never understood why you didn't intervene. Why you didn't take her away if you were so against it?

FELICE

Because it would have altered her fate, and yours.

Felice leaves Stephanie with a painful understanding her aunt's cryptic words.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - SERVANT'S PRIVATE ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Stephanie turns over on her pillow, asleep, content.

The window sill knocks open. She starts then goes back to sleep.

The door to her room is unlocked. Black boots walk across the floor.

AN UNKNOWN MAN slinks under her covers. Stephanie awakens with a scream, but it is drowned out by the man's fist in her mouth. The man is wearing a mask. He proceeds to pull up her dress. She struggles against him.

A raven flies through the window, distracting the man. Stephanie knees him and manages to scramble out of bed, away from him. She runs into the courtyard.

EXT. KITCHEN COURTYARD - NIGHT

Stephanie runs into the kitchen.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - MAIN HALLWAY

Princess Ellinor walks with Felice, who is comforting her.

FELICE

He is a man, and we cannot control  
all that they do.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

But he is never here.

Stephanie comes running through the castle in hot with fear.

STEPHANIE

Help me! Please, help me!

She collapses in Princess Ellinor's arms.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

What happened? Tell us, Stephanie.

STEPHANIE

A man, a man, he... tried to.

Felice's eyes grow dark.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Who was this man?

STEPHANIE

I couldn't see him. He had a mask.

Felice takes Stephanie's chin in her hand. She studies every inch of her face then drops her chin. Felice sweeps down the corridor, determined.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Let's get you upstairs.

Stephanie nods, burying her head in Ellinor's shoulder.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - PRINCESS'S QUARTERS - DAY

Stephanie awakens in Princess Ellinor's wide bed on her side. Her eyes open to the beautiful view of the gardens from Ellinor's window. She nuzzles back into the pillow.

At the far end of the other side of the bed, Ellinor sleeps deeply.

Prince Dominic enters the room, not noticing there are two ladies present.

He begins toward his wife with a small tired smile on his lips.

Stephanie shifts beneath the sheets, catching Dominic off-guard. He's unable to discern who it is until Stephanie turns onto her back.

Dominic's breath catches.

PRINCE DOMINIC  
(whispering)  
Stephanie.

Dominic checks to see that Ellinor is still asleep. She is.

He quietly goes around the bed and kneels next to Stephanie. Carefully, as if he cannot resist, he reaches trembling fingers close to Stephanie's cheek.

Before he touches her, Stephanie opens her eyes and SCREAMS. Ellinor wakens. Dominic steps back, frightened. Stephanie gathers the sheet close to her chest, sitting up, and crying into her knees. Then she looks up--

STEPHANIE  
Dominic?

The princess wakes.

PRINCESS ELLINOR  
Dominic, you're home. What happened? You must have thought it was me.

PRINCE DOMINIC  
What is she doing in our chamber?

PRINCESS ELLINOR  
She was attacked last night.

PRINCE DOMINIC  
What?!

A MAID enters carrying a breakfast tray.

MAID

I'm sorry, your grace. I didn't expect you for breakfast this morning. I'll bring in another tray.

She glances at Stephanie but quickly looks away, curtsies for the King and leaves.

PRINCE DOMINIC

What happened?

Ellinor climbs out of bed to sit on the bed next to Stephanie, who flinches away from her when she reaches out to touch her shoulder.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

She received her own quarters just last night. Then a man, she couldn't see who, entered her room.

Stephanie sucks in a breath, unable to look at either of them. Dominic's expression darkens.

PRINCESS ELLINOR (CONT'D)

She managed to get away before he finished the deed.

Stephanie grips the sheet of the bed.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Did you see any markings? Anything?

STEPHANIE

I think I'll be going.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

He was wearing a mask, she said.

Teeth gritted, Stephanie gets out of the bed and hunts for her dressing gown. Dominic finds it first and hands it to her. She looks at it dangling from his finger tip for a moment then takes it.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Stay, please.

STEPHANIE

I can't.

PRINCE DOMINIC

(to Princess Ellinor)  
Have you offered her the position as your tutor yet?

STEPHANIE

That was your idea?

PRINCE DOMINIC

It will be safer for you here. A lady of your standing.

STEPHANIE

I am no lady. You made sure of that. And I'd prefer not to stay here and be sneered at by girls I grew up with in court, pitying me.

PRINCE DOMINIC

It won't be like that. I promise.

Stephanie wants to resist, but she can't. She's in love with him, and his words melt her.

STEPHANIE

All right then. (looks to Ellinor)  
I'll be your tutor. But you'll have to listen to me and not fuss.

PRINCE DOMINIC

(to Ellinor)  
You fuss?

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Thank you, Stephanie.

STEPHANIE

And thank you, Prince Dominic.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Where are you going?

STEPHANIE

To gather my things.

PRINCE DOMINIC

No.

Stephanie looks confused.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Yes. He's right. You can't go back there. Come, I'll let you borrow one of my gowns. You should have a bath first.

Ellinor takes her by the hand and leads her to a bathroom next to her room.

PRINCE DOMINIC

I'll send a servant in to attend to  
your bath.

Neither respond. Dominic's dark expression returns as he  
squeezes his hand in a tight fist.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - KITCHENS - DAY

Fiona enters looking about. Mary Oliver cooks contentedly  
with her two servant girls assisting.

FIONA

Mary Oliver, where can I find my  
daughter?

MARY OLIVER

I'm sorry, milady. But she's moved  
upstairs.

Fiona smiles, rubbing her hands together with satisfaction.

MARY OLIVER (CONT'D)

You haven't heard then?

FIONA

Heard what?

MARY OLIVER

Would have thought your sister  
might have told you. Heard she was  
here last night when it was all  
goin' on.

FIONA

My sister, Felice? Here?

MARY OLIVER

Oh yes, milady. She came in the  
dead of night to see the princess.  
And my girl saw her go into your  
daughter's chambers as well. Just a  
bit earlier, I'd say.

FIONA

Well, my sister has always been a  
meddlesome--

Mary Oliver fidgets and her two girls work quickly, avoiding  
Fiona's eyes.

FIONA (CONT'D)

Mary Oliver, what aren't you  
telling me?

Mary Oliver cuts a few more pieces of celery.

FIONA (CONT'D)

Mary Oliver...

MARY OLIVER

Stephanie...Or Lady Stephanie, as  
you'd like me to call her, was  
attacked last night, milady. That's  
all I know.

Fiona heads out of the room in the direction of the main  
castle interior.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - CORRIDOR - DAY

Fiona marches down the hallway. FOOTMEN watch her, confused,  
but they remain at their stations along the walls.

DUKE MATTHEW emerges from another corridor and spots Fiona.  
He pulls her into a nook of the hallway.

DUKE MATTHEW

You cannot be here.

FIONA

Matthew.

DUKE MATTHEW

You cannot address me as such here.

FIONA

I apologize, your grace.

DUKE MATTHEW

Fiona.

FIONA

When my husband died, you arranged  
for us to keep our lands and our  
titles. You promised him you would  
take care of us.

DUKE MATTHEW

I have.

Fiona breaks away from his grip.

FIONA

You have not. Where is my child?

DUKE MATTHEW

She is in fine capable hands. She will come to see you in a few days.

FIONA

You expect me to trust you? Any of you?

DUKE MATTHEW

Yes. I will get a message to her from you. I'll come for it before the sets. Now, please. Go.

Fiona narrows her eyes at him, considering his proposal. She knows her place even if she does not like it. She composes herself and walks off, head high.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - THRONE ROOM - DAY

Prince Dominic and his handsome serious cousin with impeccable taste, LORD COLIN OF KENTWALL, 25, the Grand Duke's eldest son, converse. Dominic sits on his father's throne, elbows on knees, frowning. Kentwall paces.

DOMINIC

We must find this assailant.

KENTWALL

No matter how well we know her or who she once was, Lady Stephanie, Stephanie, is now a servant. We cannot pursue this with any man power without questions.

Kentwall straightens smooths down the arms of his velvet coat.

DOMINIC

I don't care about questions. Who would question me?

Kentwall looks up from his previous occupation with a serious expression.

KENTWALL

Your father. My father.

Dominic stands up and starts toward Kent.

DOMINIC

I want this man found and hanged.

KENTWALL

Dominic, see reason. It isn't as if we could hang him. For what? A servant?

DOMINIC

Then we kill him.

KENTWALL

Dominic, I know she was your--

DOMINIC

I don't want to talk about that now.

KENTWALL

I know your love affair had been secret and that you wanted to wait, but I never understood why you didn't marry her. Why you chose Ellinor so suddenly.

DOMINIC

I couldn't help myself.

KENTWALL

What does that even mean?

DOMINIC

I don't know. It doesn't matter. We have to find this man.

KENTWALL

Then we'll go together, all right?

DOMINIC

Thank you, Kent.

KENTWALL

But no killing.

DOMINIC

I don't make promises I can't keep.

They exit together.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - PRINCESS'S QUARTERS

Stephanie finishes reading the letter from her mother as she sits with Ellinor, planning the day.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

This will be great fun, I promise.

Stephanie pockets her letter then sees Dominic riding of with Kentwall from the window below.

**END OF ACT ONE**

ACT TWO

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE ROAD - DAY

Prince Dominic and Lord Kentwall come upon a group of royal travelers on horseback.

In the middle of FOUR KNIGHTS is PRINCE PHILLIP OF THE EASTERN REALM.

PRINCE PHILLIP

Well, if it isn't my dear cousin from the North and his dapper whipping boy.

PRINCE DOMINIC

He is my cousin too.

Prince Phillip looks bored at the reminder.

PRINCE PHILLIP

Yes, well.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Where are you off to, Prince Phillip?

PRINCE PHILLIP

To my manor in Northborne. I have a few things to take care of there.

PRINCE DOMINIC

I see.

PRINCE PHILLIP

And you? Why aren't you home with that beautiful new bride of yours? Or is she too busy scrubbing pots and pans to be bothered with you in the light of day?

PRINCE DOMINIC

As ever, my dear, cousin Phillip, you are both kind and gracious.

PRINCE PHILLIP

I have my moments.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Well, we have business to attend to. Good day. (to Kentwall) Kent.

They begin to ride, but before they can pass more than a trot by Phillip's entourage, Prince Phillip stops them.

PRINCE PHILLIP

(loudly)

Have you heard the new decree?

Dominic turns to him, steadying his horse.

PRINCE DOMINIC

From the Emperor of the High Castle? No. But my father should be seeing him today at the Ministry of Legions.

PRINCE PHILLIP

Ah, well. You'll soon find out then. And I will see you at your mother's party. My dear aunt. I do miss her so.

PRINCE DOMINIC

So that's why you're in Northborne. To get your hands on our ladies at court.

PRINCE PHILLIP

You accuse me of things often, Dominic. If I were you, I'd take care.

Phillip nods to his men that it is time to go. They gallop away.

EXT. WOODLAND ROAD - DAY - LATER

Dominic and Kentwall ride through the woods toward the Northborne village.

PRINCE DOMINIC

What do you make of this decree?

KENTWALL

I heard it this morning, but I didn't want to upset you with the news of it. Your mind was elsewhere.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Tell me.

KENTWALL

Perhaps we should speak of it after  
we return to the castle.

Dominic stops and gets off his horse. He goes to Kentwall.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Get down.

KENTWALL

Cousin.

Kentwall gets down, and Dominic gets in his face  
threateningly.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Do not test me, Kent.

Kentwall gives in.

KENTWALL

It was a decree that each royal  
marriage of the realm must produce  
an heir in one year's time or the  
marriage shall fall into annulment.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Why would they pronounce something  
like that, I-- Ellinor. We are the  
only union that has occurred in the  
last year. They want her out.

KENTWALL

Don't you want her out too?

PRINCE DOMINIC

I can't have a ruined marriage.

KENTWALL

But it is by decree of the Emperor,  
surely--

PRINCE DOMINIC

He is doing this to test me. To  
challenge my manhood.

KENTWALL

Then get the princess with child.

Dominic swallows and gets back on his horse.

Kent follows suit.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Let's go.

They ride off toward town.

EXT. NORTHERN CASTLE - GARDENS - DAY

Princess Ellinor and Stephanie sit at a perfectly dressed table for tea and etiquette lesson number one.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Okay. Hold the handle of the teacup using my thumb and the first one of my fingers.

Princess Ellinor delicately holds the teacup, but she brings up the saucer cup with her. Stephanie resists the urge to toss the tea into her face.

STEPHANIE

No.

Princess Ellinor gives her a hurt look.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Don't bring the saucer up.

Princess Ellinor gently brings the teacup back to the table.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

And don't bring the saucer up.

She gives out a frustrated sigh.

STEPHANIE

Again.

She slumps her head to the table, causing the tea to splash over the side. Stephanie presses her lips into a line.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

I can't. There are too many rules to remember for just having tea.

Stephanie sighs.

STEPHANIE

Well, you need to remember those rules since you've decided to invite your mother-in-law to tea before the party.

Ellinor looks at her.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Does it really have to be two whole hours?

STEPHANIE

Tea time is an important two hours where we absorb critical dirt about others. You must learn to master it.

Ellinor opens and closes her mouth, shocked. Fiona walks through the gardens and spots the ladies at tea. She looks relieved when she sees Stephanie is in one piece. Stephanie waves her mother off as discreetly as she can manage.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Why would I need dirt and gossip about ladies at court?

Fiona rolls her eyes. Stephanie tries to ignore her mother and focuses on Ellinor.

STEPHANIE

Because you will need to know who might upset the throne of your husband.

Fiona, satisfied her daughter is fine and irritated at the whole scene, exits.

Princess Ellinor frowns and laughs softly.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Why? Prince Dominic is a wonderful prince.

Stephanie gives her a tight smile.

STEPHANIE

Of course. Let's start again.

Princess Ellinor gives an exaggerated sigh and the ladies continue.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - OLD CASTLE LIBRARY - DAY

Princess Ellinor enters the candle lit court library, wearing a hood. The library is musky with old books lined up against the high ceiling walls.

She walks by silently hoping the LIBRARY PATRONS, will not recognize her.

She walks to a familiar section and pulls out a large book. She finds a secluded table and pours over its contents.

Princess Ellinor touches a likeness tentatively with her gloved fingers.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Mother.

The picture is simple. Her mother's face is sketched in a small profile beside many others in her line. Below the images is a manor, palatial and proud.

PRINCESS ELLINOR (CONT'D)

Just wait a little bit longer,  
mother. I'll make our home what it  
once was.

She picks up the book and hugs it tightly then returns it to the shelf.

LORD SAMUEL KENTWALL, 22, the Duke's youngest son, looks on but doesn't say a word.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - STEPHANIE'S ROOM - DAY

In her new room, adjacent to the princess's, Stephanie writes a letter furiously. She doesn't notice a knock on the door nor the door opening. Prince Dominic enters.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Stephanie.

Stephanie gasps and snaps her head up to see Dominic standing in front of her. They are alone for the first time in months.

STEPHANIE

Dominic, what are you doing in  
here?

Prince Dominic walks swiftly to Stephanie and places a gentle hand on her cheek to make sure she's okay.

PRINCE DOMINIC

I am so sorry I couldn't be there  
for you.

Stephanie swallows, holds his gaze for a moment, then painfully removes his hand.

STEPHANIE

Your highness. I am only your responsibility as your subject and nothing more.

PRINCE DOMINIC

You know you're more than that.

STEPHANIE

Do I?

He grows slightly tearful and reaches for her again.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Dominic, please.

Stephanie tries to push him away, but he manages to slide his hand gently over her neck. He waits for a moment to see if he's gone too far, but she relaxes into his touch. It's familiar and safe.

PRINCE DOMINIC

I've been tied up in knots for weeks. It's as if I no longer know myself. I question how any of this happened.

STEPHANIE

What? My being attacked?

PRINCE DOMINIC

My letting you go.

Stephanie breathes in his scent then looks away. She won't let him keep his hold over her.

STEPHANIE

You made your decision.

Prince Dominic swallows, hurt at her words.

PRINCE DOMINIC

How can I prove to you that it was a mistake and that it wasn't at my doing?

Stephanie shakes her head.

STEPHANIE

It is too late.

Dominic ponders for a moment, finger curled around his chin. His eyes widen, then--

PRINCE DOMINIC

A mistress!

Stephanie is taken aback by his words.

STEPHANIE

A what?

PRINCE DOMINIC

Yes. That's it. Just wait a little while longer, and perhaps you can be my official mistress. Then I will become king and give you back your lands and title.

Prince Dominic looks happier than a kid on Christmas morning.

STEPHANIE

Your highness. I am holding my tongue to keep the acid at bay.

Princes Dominic looks confused.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

I am not interested in committing regicide.

PRINCE DOMINIC

I wasn't talking about killing my father. I was talking about waiting for a few years, and we can make a wrong a right.

STEPHANIE

My dignity is lost, Dominic. You took that from me.

He looks at her, pained.

PRINCE DOMINIC

No. Please, trust me. I want to make this right.

STEPHANIE

Dominic. You're the one who told your father you'd marry only for love. I thought that night you would...you would...

Stephanie moves to the other side of the room. She can't be near him any more. She turns to look at him. He's desperate for her, but afraid of what she might say next. Stephanie senses this but can't let herself care.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

You made your decision. So leave,  
just leave.

Prince Dominic looks hurt but does as she requests. She goes back and sits down, taking up her pen to finish her letter.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

I loathe myself.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - CORRIDOR - DAY

The next morning. Prince Dominic walks down the main corridor of the castle and comes upon his younger cousin, Lord Samuel.

LORD SAMUEL

Dominic.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Cousin.

LORD SAMUEL

My brother said you were out of sorts, and, for the first time in a long time, I see he was not telling me a tale.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Just a lot of things going on with my father away.

LORD SAMUEL

And with Stephanie Thorne practically living in your quarters.

Dominic grinds his teeth.

PRINCE DOMINIC

I really must get going.

Dominic starts to walk away.

LORD SAMUEL

One of the servants said it was a man from court.

Dominic turns and strides back toward him.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Tell me who.

LORD SAMUEL

She was too frightened to say more.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Which servant?

LORD SAMUEL

The one they call Mary Oliver.

Dominic starts off toward the kitchens.

LORD SAMUEL (CONT'D)

But your mother's arrival. Dominic?

Dominic is gone.

**END OF ACT TWO**

**ACT THREE**

EXT. NORTHERN CASTLE - ENTRANCE & COURTYARD - DAY

Most of the CASTLE STAFF and MEMBERS OF COURT stand awaiting the Queen's arrival. Dominic's absence causes chatter amongst the people. Stephanie stands close to Ellinor, whispering last minute instructions.

The trumpets blow and everyone stands still as the Queen's magnificent carriage arrives.

QUEEN ANNABEL, mid 40s, steps out of her carriage gracefully. She is a proud woman with an air of command around her.

Duke Matthew comes forward with his arms wide open.

DUKE MATTHEW

Your majesty.

Instead of hugging her, however, he kisses her ring reverently.

QUEEN ANNABEL

Matthew, I am glad at least one member of my husband's family is happy to see me home.

DUKE MATTHEW

You are the sun that brightens this castle.

QUEEN ANNABEL

Thank you for using the same line every time I've come home for the last twenty years. I didn't expect to see Paul, but where is my son?

DUKE MATTHEW

Uh, I think...He was meant to be here, your majesty, but I think he's ill.

Annabel lifts an eyebrow.

DUKE MATTHEW (CONT'D)

Just a bad egg or something.  
Nothing serious.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - KITCHENS - DAY

Prince Dominic sits with Mary Oliver at the kitchen staff table. The room is empty of servants as they have all gone to greet the queen. Mary Oliver looks nervous.

MARY OLIVER

Please, your highness. I don't know no more. He did have a mask. Please, the queen may notice if I'm not there to greet her.

PRINCE DOMINIC

I think my absence will distract her enough and she'll never take notice. Now, this man you saw. He was a gentlemen. A man of court, you say?

MARY OLIVER

I should have stayed in rather than going to fetch more cherries for her majesty's favorite pie. I had enough on hand.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Please, Mary Oliver, pay attention.

MARY OLIVER

If I hadn't gone to get the cherries, you would have found me sooner, and I'd be out in front with the others. Forgive me, your highness. But I don't know nothin'.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Did you see anything of note? A marking? You have to tell me.

MARY OLIVER

He had blue boots on and a sword at his side. His coat was a dark color. And he was tall. That's all I saw.

Prince Dominic's face darkens. This new set of information has spurred on his need to investigate.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Any markings on the sword?

MARY OLIVER

None that I could see.

Dominic looks out of the window.

PRINCE DOMINIC  
You may go Mary Oliver.

Mary Oliver hesitates before leaving, then turns around.

MARY OLIVER  
Your highness. There is one more  
thing.

She hesitates.

PRINCE DOMINIC  
Well? What is it?

MARY OLIVER  
My brother Robert mentioned he saw  
a gentleman with blue boots at  
Devil's Tide Inn when I told him  
about what I saw the other night.  
He was carryin' a sword, he said,  
but he only caught the back of his  
head. The man was talkin' to the  
bartender there.

PRINCE DOMINIC  
Are you sure that's all you know?

MARY OLIVER  
Quite sure, your highness.

PRINCE DOMINIC  
Thank you, Mary Oliver.

Mary Oliver scurries away as Prince Dominic stands up, his  
jaw set, and eyes strong with purpose.

EXT. NORTHERN CASTLE - ENTRANCE & COURTYARD - DAY

Prince Phillip approaches and embraces the queen. Lord  
Kentwall and his brother Samuel follow suit.

PRINCE PHILLIP  
Aunt.

QUEEN ANNABEL  
Phillip. Looking as handsome as  
ever. Kentwall. Samuel.

She scans the crowd gathered behind them.

QUEEN ANNABEL (CONT'D)

Now, where is my son's new bride,  
or is she 'sick' too?

Stephanie nudges Ellinor, who comes forward and takes a bow. We see Mary Oliver joining the staff in the background. Queen Annabel notices this and cocks an eyebrow before turning back to her new daughter-in-law.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Your majesty.

Queen Annabel scrutinizes her. She is beautiful, young and fresh in her delicate gown and angelic bun.

QUEEN ANNABEL

A delicacy for my son, you  
certainly are.

Ellinor looks down for a moment, then lifts her eyes.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Your majesty, it would be my great  
honor if you joined me for tea this  
afternoon.

QUEEN ANNABEL

I will have to check with my  
schedule but thank you for the  
invitation.

Annabel enters the castle as the household and staff follows her. Ellinor bites her lip trying to keep her head held high. Stephanie nudges her.

STEPHANIE

You did very well, your highness.

Ellinor smiles and squeezes Stephanie's hand. Stephanie surprised with herself, squeezes back.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - CORRIDOR - DAY

Dominic strides down the corridor, occupied by his thoughts. When he looks up, he sees his mother and an entourage of people behind her, including Prince Phillip, Lord Samuel, Lord Kentwall, The Grand Duke, Princess Ellinor and Stephanie.

QUEEN ANNABEL

Dominic.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Mother!

He touches his left cheek to hers with an air kiss.

QUEEN ANNABEL

I thought you were ill.

PRINCE DOMINIC

I, I couldn't bare not to welcome you home.

QUEEN ANNABEL

You look in fine health to me, but I never was a very good judge of such things.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Quite.

QUEEN ANNABEL

You will be by my side tonight at my welcome party then?

PRINCE DOMINIC

I couldn't think of any place I'd rather be more.

QUEEN ANNABEL

It is good to see you, dear. I think I'll retire until the party. Oh, but your wife has asked me to tea.

The queen looks back at Ellinor, who looks pink-cheeked at Dominic.

PRINCE DOMINIC

(to the Queen)

That sounds wonderful.

QUEEN ANNABEL

Perhaps. I shall see how I feel after my nap. Everyone return to your duties.

The queen sweeps down the hallway en route to her quarters. HER THREE LADIES-IN-WAITING and TWO FEMALE SERVANTS follow as the other servants and members of court disperse to their work.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

I think I'll go rest too.

Dominic takes her hand, glancing briefly at Stephanie, who shows no expression.

PRINCE DOMINIC

I think that's a good idea. I have some business to attend to, but I'll see you tonight.

His eyes flicker to Kentwall.

PRINCE DOMINIC (CONT'D)

Kentwall? Join me, please?

LORD KENTWALL

I'm training knights beyond the south wall, your highness.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Ah, very well then. I'll see you later.

Dominic exits. Kentwall bows to Princess Ellinor, then shoots his brother, Samuel, a look of disdain and exits as well. Just as Stephanie and Ellinor are about to take their leave as well, Lord Samuel steps in front the princess.

LORD SAMUEL

Might I have a word, princess?

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Just a moment. (to Stephanie) You are coming tonight, aren't you? And to the tea?

STEPHANIE

I have nothing to wear.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

I'll have something ready for you in my room before then.

STEPHANIE

That isn't your job any more, your highness.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Please?

Lord Samuel looks anxious to speak to Ellinor. Stephanie notices. Curtsies briefly.

STEPHANIE

My lord. Your highness.

She leaves them. The princess looks after her for a moment before turning her attention to Samuel.

PRINCESS ELLINOR  
Yes, Lord Samuel?

LORD SAMUEL  
I noticed you looking over a certain book in the library the other day.

PRINCESS ELLINOR  
I, um, yes. It's of the country estates and family nobility in the region.

LORD SAMUEL  
It includes your mother's estate, does it not?

PRINCESS ELLINOR  
Yes, the lands given to my father then to ... Well, they've since been returned to me.

LORD SAMUEL  
I am aware. I visited them just the other day.

PRINCESS ELLINOR  
How are they?

LORD SAMUEL  
The chateau is old and worn down. The grounds are all but barren.

Ellinor looks away sadly.

PRINCESS ELLINOR  
I could have the king restore them for me, but...

LORD SAMUEL  
You'd rather have a hand in it yourself?

Ellinor lights up.

PRINCESS ELLINOR  
Exactly.

LORD SAMUEL  
I think I may be of service.

Her eyes dance with excitement.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

You?

LORD SAMUEL

I'm a burgeoning architect, of sorts. Studied for years under the masters at university.

Princess Ellinor is just about to burst with joy.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

I would love your help. Thank you, Lord Samuel.

LORD SAMUEL

Though I'm afraid my father might not approve.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Why not?

LORD SAMUEL

He'd rather me be at court, learning diplomacy or some such thing. He sent me to university to study the law. But the art of making things beautiful called to me. I just couldn't stay away.

Ellinor smiles softly with understanding.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Then it will be our secret.

EXT. VILLAGE - DEVIL'S INN - DAY

Dominic pulls THE TAVERN OWNER, a stout middle-aged man, out of the dark but lively tavern at the center of the village.

PRINCE DOMINIC

You will tell me what you know or I'll have your head?

TAVERN OWNER

I didn't realize it was you, Prince Dominic. You don't come down here too often.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Who was it?

TAVERN OWNER

A highborn man, that's all I know.

ACROSS THE STREET: Fiona walks with a basket of fine cloths, downtrodden, until she notices the commotion and stops.

Prince Dominic has a knife to the Tavern Owner's neck.

BACK TO DOMINIC:

Dominic relaxes his grip on the man and turns him around.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Was it my cousin, Phillip? Did he threaten you? Your family?

TAVERN OWNER

Aye. But I can't say I even knew his name. But I do remember them blue boots.

The prince releases him. And as the man, returns to his tavern, Dominic starts viciously down the road, catching a glimpse of Fiona.

As Fiona catches his eye, he cranes his head back to look at her for moment. She turns around and walks away.

EXT. BARREN WOOD - RIVER BANK - DAY

Helena sits with her husband, Nicholas, at the river bank fishing with a stick and string.

HELENA

My sister will be here soon, Nicholas. Don't you think you should go now?

NICHOLAS

I haven't caught any fish.

HELENA

Nicholas, please.

He rolls in his line then kisses her cheek.

NICHOLAS

You know I'm not afraid of your sister, or you mother.

HELENA

Some people have more wisdom than others.

Stephanie appears through the brush.

STEPHANIE

Nicholas. I didn't know you'd be joining us.

HELENA

He was just leaving.

Stephanie stares him down, waiting for him to exit. Nicholas kisses Helena again, this time with purpose. Helena stiffens, embarrassed.

HELENA (CONT'D)

I'll see you at the cottage then.

Nicholas gathers his things, shoots an angry look at Stephanie, then leaves. Helena stands to embrace her sister. Stephanie holds up her hand before she can get too far.

STEPHANIE

Do you have anything to report on aunt?

HELENA

Nothing.

STEPHANIE

She said something about altering my fate. She's up to something. I know it.

She finally opens her arms. Helena falls into them.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

I did miss you, Helena.

HELENA

I'm happy with Nicholas.

STEPHANIE

I hope so.

HELENA

And you? How is life at the castle?

STEPHANIE

I've moved in with Ellinor. Next door rather.

Helena's face brightens.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

It's not what you think. Not at all.

A raven bursts from the trees then flies overhead. Helena looks up. Stephanie watches the bird as well. Hans appears through the thicket of trees. He whistles at the Raven, and it lands on his gloved arm.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

How is my little bastard cousin?

HANS

I'd rather a pet falcon. Do you think you could snatch me one from the castle?

STEPHANIE

And have my hands cut off? No.

HANS

My mother says there is a way to reverse the curse.

STEPHANIE

What curse?

HANS

The curse on you. Didn't you know? She put a curse on you when Ellinor's mother died. It was to seem like a curse on Ellinor, but it wasn't really.

Stephanie rises and bears down on the boy who stands unfazed.

STEPHANIE

What are you talking about, Hans?

HANS

I have to go. Mother will be home soon.

He turns to leave.

STEPHANIE

Hans! Hans!

There is no reply. The Raven shoots up from the trees and flies ahead of Hans toward the cottage as if protecting his path.

**END OF ACT THREE**

**ACT FOUR**

EXT. NORTHERN CASTLE - GARDENS - DAY

Princess Ellinor and her three ladies are at tea. The food has not been touched as they are waiting for the queen. Marigold and Abigail share knowing looks. The queen has stood them up.

The QUEEN'S CONSORT, LADY BEATRICE appears with a note for the princess.

LADY BEATRICE

I'm sorry, your highness. But her majesty will not be joining you for tea.

Lady Beatrice exits without waiting for a reply.

LADY MARIGOLD

Well, I, for one, despise cold tea.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

I'm sorry. It's my fault.

LADY PENELOPE

Unless it has a bit of extra sugar in it.

The princess smiles.

LADY ABIGAIL

Cold tea with sugar. My favorite.

Penelope gives Abigail a stern look to give into cheering up the princess. They all sip together, Ellinor using the method Stephanie taught her. They ladies look impressed. They smile genuinely at her then continue to drink their tea.

LADY MARIGOLD

So, how is your new charge getting on? The former Lady Stephanie Thorne?

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Quite well thank you.

The ladies don't seem believe her.

LADY ABIGAIL

The queen's party will be fun, won't it? Everyone who's anyone will be there.

(MORE)

LADY ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

And, oh, Ellinor, you'll be right  
next to the queen...

Ellinor drops her tea cup.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

I'm so sorry.

LADY ABIGAIL

You need't apologize, your  
highness.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

I'll clean it up. I...

They share looks again. Ellinor catches her error and excuses herself, unable to bear the shame of her shortcomings.

INT. BARREN WOOD - COTTAGE - DAY

Late afternoon. Fiona begins up the walk to her sister's house. Hans, who is standing on the front stoop runs inside, before Fiona can get to the front door, Felice appears inside it.

FELICE

Sister, to what do I owe this most  
unusual pleasure?

FIONA

My daughter. I want you to reverse  
the curse.

FELICE

It is binding.

FIONA

Are you certain of that?

FELICE

Why do you ask?

FIONA

I just saw the prince engaging in  
quite and interesting altercation.

FELICE

I can't see what that has to do  
with the curse.

FIONA

My informant tells me that he has been searching for my daughter's assailant.

FELICE

He is loyal to his subjects.

FIONA

His fervor is hot. He will not stop until he finds the man.

FELICE

Then I am sure it is because Ellinor insisted that he do so. His love cannot be broken from her as he operates not under a curse but a binding.

FIONA

A binding brought on by the curse you placed upon my daughter.

FELICE

She killed our sister because of your poisonous tongue.

FIONA

She doesn't remember.

FELICE

Telling her lies, teaching her to hate, teaching her to want was not hers.

FIONA

That poison was not mine.

FELICE

I told her to stay out of my things!

The room erupts with waves of powerful dark magic. The room darkens then grows suffocating with steam. Only Fiona is affected. Hans looks on eating an apple from the end of a knife.

FELICE (CONT'D)

None of you had my magic. That is my curse to bear. To be a witch, a hag, shunned from the world. Your daughter lives a high life. Be grateful for the fate her actions wielded.

(MORE)

FELICE (CONT'D)

I only followed the course of the elements. They decided her fate, and it can never be lifted. Now leave, before I ask them to place a judgment on you.

Felice settles her magic and stares at her sister.

Fiona steadies herself and softens her expression.

FIONA

(quietly)

You are fairy, sister, not a witch.

FELICE

(bitterly)

A changeling, a half-born. Now leave us.

Fiona glances at Hans who bores an assuring gaze into her eyes. She frowns, not fully understanding his meaning. Hans nods, and she smiles at him gently then leaves.

FELICE (CONT'D)

(laughs shortly)

So predictable. Hans, we are to make a very large brew tonight.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Duke Matthew comes upon his son, Lord Samuel.

DUKE MATTHEW

Samuel, my boy. Are you and your brother ready for the queen's party tonight?

LORD SAMUEL

I am not my brother's keeper.

DUKE MATTHEW

I saw you speaking with the princess earlier. Be careful there, son.

LORD SAMUEL

We were merely talking.

DUKE MATTHEW

She is just your type.

LORD SAMUEL

What? Young and pretty?

DUKE MATTHEW

Sweet and utterly gullible.

Duke Matthew walks away but turns around after a few steps.

DUKE MATTHEW (CONT'D)

If you see your brother, tell him,  
I'd like to speak to him before the  
dinner.

LORD SAMUEL

Of course.

Samuel sees Ellinor at the far end of the hallway with her ladies. She stops and claps her eyes on him. They hold one other's gaze from afar. She continues on.

EXT. NOTHERN CASTLE - GARDENS - NIGHT

Lord Kentwall speaks in hushed tones with A MESSENGER from the High Castle. Kentwall is already dressed for the evening in his finery.

LORD KENTWALL

Tell the Emperor that my father and  
I have things well in hand.

MESSENGER

Yes, Lord Kentwall.

We see that Kentwall is wearing a pair of fine leather blue boots.

Prince Phillip appears from around the corner.

PRINCE PHILLIP

Thought I'd take a peaceful stroll  
before tonight's festivities.

The messenger bows upon Phillip's presence.

MESSENGER

I'll just be leaving then, your  
royal highness. (turns to Kentwall  
and bows) My lord.

PRINCE PHILLIP

You're from the high castle, are  
you not?

MESSENGER

Yes, your highness. (looks the man  
up and down, toying with his fear)  
Tell the emperor I said hello.

The messenger bows and turns to leave. As he rounds the  
corner, Prince Dominic nearly runs into him.

MESSENGER (CONT'D)

(less friendly)  
So sorry, your highness.

The messenger quickly bows to him and leaves.

Dominic comes upon Phillip and Kentwall.

PRINCE DOMINIC

Holding secret meetings while I'm  
away?

PRINCE PHILLIP

Seems your cousin from the wrong  
side of the family has a penchant  
for those. What were you and that  
messenger whispering about?

Dominic looks at Kentwall questioningly.

LORD KENTWALL

Only castle business. Nothing to  
worry over.

PRINCE PHILLIP

At night, in the middle of the  
gardens?

Dominic notices the boots.

PRINCE DOMINIC

I've not seen those boots before,  
cousin. When did you get those?

LORD KENTWALL

Why are my boots of such concern to  
you all of a sudden?

PRINCE PHILLIP

You let your subjects speak to you  
that way?

LORD KENTWALL

I am his blood.

PRINCE DOMINIC  
Answer the question, Kent.

LORD KENTWALL  
The cobbler sent them to me several  
days ago.

PRINCE PHILLIP  
I've not seen such a color on  
boots.

LORD KENTWALL  
I had him create a special die to  
match a coat of mine.

PRINCE PHILLIP  
Always in the finest finery, aren't  
you Kentwall?

PRINCE DOMINIC  
Where were you the night Lady  
Stephanie was attacked?

LORD KENTWALL  
What are you asking? You can't  
think that--

Prince Dominic draws his sword at his evasive answer. He sees  
in his eyes that he is lying.

PRINCE DOMINIC  
Tell me. Tell me where you were.

PRINCE PHILLIP  
Dominic, I think you might want to  
consider your next move.

PRINCE DOMINIC  
(his rage is redirected at  
Phillip)  
Don't!

Kentwall uses his distraction to get far enough away from him  
to draw his own sword and points it at Dominic. Phillip draws  
his and points it at Kent.

PRINCE PHILLIP  
Blood before all in my world,  
gentlemen.

PRINCE DOMINIC  
Stand down, Phillip.

PRINCE PHILLIP  
I won't let you do this.

PRINCE DOMINIC  
(looking directly  
Kentwall)  
I merely want him to confess. So do  
it! Confess!

LORD KENTWALL  
Why? So you can avenge your new  
favorite kitchen maid? Well, your  
old favorite before you tossed her  
aside. But maybe you've grown soft  
for her again now that she's  
scrubbing dishes or wait no, she's  
probably in your bed already with  
dear sweet Ellinor. Isn't why you  
brought her upstairs with you? So  
she could be your whore?

Dominic snaps and lunges at him. Kentwall dodges his thrust.  
They go to blows, swords clanking.

Kentwall begins to gain on Dominic as the prince's blind rage  
has gotten the better of him. Dominic falls, but Phillip  
manages to intervene continuing the sword play with Kentwall.

Dominic rises to his feet, clutching his side breathlessly.

PRINCE DOMINIC  
Stop. Stop.

They both slow their movements then when they are sure the  
other will not attack still their weapons, keeping them  
trained on one another.

Prince Dominic walks up to Lord Kentwall.

PRINCE DOMINIC (CONT'D)  
You told me I could have no trial  
for the attacker.

LORD KENTWALL  
I didn't hurt her. She got away.

PRINCE DOMINIC  
But you would've. You did it to  
spite me. To go behind my back and  
harm me. A betrayal of blood. You  
know, you're the only one who knows  
I love her more than anything.

LORD KENTWALL

And you need her love to be happy?  
Then you should have married her,  
you fool. Now she's fair game for  
the rest of us. Your father made  
sure of that.

PRINCE DOMINIC

I can't have that kind of betrayal  
in my family, not when I'm in line  
for the throne. Not when you're so  
close to it.

LORD KENTWALL

You're a fool, Dominic, a misfit.  
Your father doesn't trust you to  
rule these people.

Dominic holds up his sword. Kentwall follows suit.

LORD KENTWALL (CONT'D)

You can't even trust yourself to  
rule the kitchen maids who'll one  
day be the downfall of this  
kingdom. Especially if you don't  
stick a bun in that bride of yours.  
Or would you like me to do that for  
you?

Dominic lunges at Kentwall. They fight again.

LORD KENTWALL (CONT'D)

I can handle both of them for you,  
your highness. Make life easy for  
you like I always do.

Kentwall drives his sword at Dominic, but the prince is too  
quick for him and plunges his sword into Kentwall's stomach.  
Kentwall collapses to the ground dead.

Dominic, chest heaving, and full of every kind of pain  
imaginable, looks down at his cousin's bloody body. Phillip  
checks Kentwall to see if he can hear his heart beating.

PRINCE PHILLIP

He's dead.

**END OF ACT FOUR**

**ACT FIVE**

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - THE GREAT HALL - NIGHT

The Queen sits beside Princess Ellinor, two empty throne chairs sit beside them. NOBILITY fill the rest of the chairs, including the Princess's ladies and the Queen's Consort, Lady Beatrice, Duke Matthew and Lord Samuel.

Dinner is in full-swing but many are dancing as the royals look on.

King Paul enters. The room stills then parts for the king. He strides over to his wife and gives her a large kiss on the cheek.

KING PAUL

My dear little strumpet, you are a sight to behold.

QUEEN ANNABEL

Paul! Have you taken leave of your senses?

KING PAUL

No, but I've had a bit of this ginger green wine the Emperor gave me on the way here. You know, make this whole thing bearable.

He takes his seat next to his wife and kisses her again. The Duke is on the other side of him.

KING PAUL (CONT'D)

I didn't mean that, love. I couldn't miss this. You've been away too long.

The queen softens at his words. He looks over his wife at Princess Ellinor. He notices the empty chair.

KING PAUL (CONT'D)

Where's Dominic?

QUEEN ANNABEL

Your guess is as good as mine.

KING PAUL

That boy.

DUKE MATTHEW

Seems Kentwall is missing too, your majesty.

KING PAUL

Seems our sons need collar and  
leash around their necks.

DUKE MATTHEW

Perhaps they do, majesty.

KING PAUL

They'll need to learn to stay in  
line after what I've heard from the  
Emperor.

DUKE MATTHEW

Oh?

KING PAUL

Let's just say, he isn't pleased  
with Northborne. Particularly, our  
young Dominic.

EXT. NORTHERN CASTLE - GARDENS - NIGHT

Phillip and Dominic drag Kentwall's body through the dark  
maze of the gardens.

PRINCE DOMINIC

The river's not far.

Dominic looks uneasily down at the body as they continue then  
back up at Phillip.

PRINCE PHILLIP

Don't worry. No one will know.

EXT. NORTHERN CASTLE - WALL - NIGHT

Hans slips over the side of the wall. TWO CASTLE GUARDS stand  
at the front entrance, none the wiser. When the boy drops to  
the ground, they turn their heads, but he hunches down in the  
bushes below.

The dogs begin barking from the stables beyond their station,  
drawing the guards' attention.

EXT. NORTHERN CASTLE - GARDENS - NIGHT

Dominic and Phillip near the exit of the gardens and hear the  
dogs barking. They hasten their steps.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Hans creeps inside the corridor and looks up at the high ceiling. His Raven sweeps inside and flies high above his head. He smiles up at it.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - THE GREAT HALL - NIGHT

Stephanie slips into the back of the party, dressed in a beautiful gown.

From her seat across the room, Ellinor smiles and waves her over. Stephanie does not see her.

Ellinor gets up.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Pardon me, your grace. Your grace.  
I'll be right back.

KING PAUL

That one is certainly an  
interesting girl.

QUEEN ANNABEL

We'll talk about it later.

KING PAUL

Let's hope that she's fertile.

ACROSS THE ROOM:

Ellinor approaches Stephanie.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

You came.

STEPHANIE

I never thought in a million years  
I'd be happy to see you.

Ellinor frowns a bit.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

You know what I mean? We've become  
very different people in just a few  
short months.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

And you hate me for it.

STEPHANIE

No. I don't. I suppose I don't  
anyway.

Princess Ellinor's frown deepens. Stephanie lightheartedly nudges her shoulder.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Only kidding.

Ellinor grins.

PRINCESS ELLINOR

Then we can be friends.

She hugs her. Stephanie is uncomfortable and looks as if try as she might there is no possible way that they could ever be friends.

Dominic and Phillip strut into the room, looking slightly out of sorts, a little sweaty, but as strapping and as sure of themselves as their royal breeding commands. They greet the king and queen and take their places at the table.

PRINCESS ELLINOR (CONT'D)

I guess I better go.

Ellinor leaves Stephanie looking on forlornly at the royal family and the noble lords beside them. Dominic catches her eye with a start. She shakes her head at him. He settles back in his chair and lifts his chalice in her direction. She bows her head once. He takes a healthy gulp.

Princess Ellinor, not noticing the exchange puts her hand on Dominic's shoulder.

PRINCESS ELLINOR (CONT'D)

Dominic?

PRINCE DOMINIC

Yes, darling?

He tears his eyes away from Stephanie and acknowledges his wife. When he looks up again. Stephanie is gone.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - STEPHANIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Stephanie puts on her dressing gown and sits before a simple mirror on a small stool.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Black boots walk down the hallway.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - STEPHANIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Stephanie studies her reflection. She touches her neck.

STEPHANIE  
(a whisper)  
Dominic.

Stephanie's door opens. Stephanie startles. But looks up to see her mother. She relaxes.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
Mother, you frightened me.

FIONA  
Your aunt has just confessed to the most horrid thing.

Fiona settles onto Stephanie's bed.

STEPHANIE  
She did?

FIONA  
Well, not outrightly.

STEPHANIE  
Then it wasn't a confession.

FIONA  
You have to make things so difficult, don't you?

STEPHANIE  
I think that's your job, mother.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The black boots come to a door then a hand opens it.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - TOWER ROOM - NIGHT

There is a black globe in the center of the room and several candles on stands. Tapestries hang throughout. It is mystical but regal.

Prince Dominic enters the room.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - STEPHANIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Fiona taps her lower lip in thought.

FIONA

There's a way to get you back  
everything you want.

STEPHANIE

You mean everything *you* want.

FIONA

Prince Dominic's a little young for  
me.

Stephanie whips her head around at her mother.

FIONA (CONT'D)

You think I didn't know. I always  
knew. And then he went and married  
her.

STEPHANIE

Why did they strip our lands?

FIONA

The old king had been waiting for a  
chance to punish me because I  
wanted Matthew.

Stephanie is shocked.

FIONA (CONT'D)

Then he married Matthew off to that  
Countess, and I went to Lord  
Thorne. I was ruined by then, but  
your father was kind. Then he died.

STEPHANIE

And you married your dead sister's  
husband.

Fiona looks at her. Her daughter doesn't remember killing her  
aunt. She really doesn't. Fiona gestures for Stephanie to sit  
with her.

FIONA

Times were dark then.

Stephanie sits. Fiona takes her hand.

STEPHANIE

Darkest for Ellinor.

FIONA

Now darkest for you.

Stephanie pulls her hand away.

STEPHANIE

We were so nasty to her. You taught me to be so nasty.

FIONA

I had my reasons.

STEPHANIE

It destroyed us. Took away my dignity.

FIONA

There's always a tomorrow, my dear.

Daughterly trust fills Stephanie's eyes before they darken.

STEPHANIE

Yes, there is.

INT. NORTHERN CASTLE - TOWER ROOM - NIGHT

Hans steps out from behind one of the hanging tapestries next to a stand with sheets of music on it.

HANS

Your highness.

Hans touches the sheets and soft music fills the room. The prince startles but continues to look at the boy.

PRINCE DOMINIC

The little magician. Very clever.  
But can you show me how to lift  
this curse?

HANS

It all depends on how much you're  
willing to sacrifice.

Blood drips from beneath Dominic's sleeve. Hans smiles through hooded eyelids. Both he and the prince look out of the window. The Raven sweeps inside and lands on the music stand. Hans pets it.

HANS (CONT'D)

Let's start with a brew.

**END OF PILOT**