



The Straight Little Prince

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Fable

Once upon a time, there lived a straight little Prince in a very cold Kingdom. In the only world he's ever known, the little Prince lived in the Kingdom of Winter; the coldest, yet most beautiful realm out of all of the surrounding seasonal Empires.

Each year his two fathers, the King and his partner, would parade the little Prince throughout the land on the warmest day. They'd greet people and all stand together to watch the last droplets of frozen water condense back into its shimmering liquids, before the first icicles of the new year would freeze.

It was during a very particular year, the year of the Prince's eighteenth birthday, that his fathers would pull him aside and tell him they think they're ready. That the King is finally ready to retire and that they believe he's ready. Well... almost.

"But father, are you sure?" He asked them, his voice quiet. He suddenly felt small, like he was the furthest thing from being ready to rule an entire Kingdom.

"Of course we are, young one." His other father said, beaming.

"But, if you are to rule, then, we need to find you a husband." The little Prince suddenly felt nervous.

"But father. I-"

"No buts. It is tradition and you must marry if you are to inherit the magic that keeps the Kingdom running.

And you must choose wisely.”

“Or, we’ll choose wisely.” They laughed while the little Prince did his best to smile convincingly.

In his world, anybody could be whoever they wanted and be, with whoever they thought was the perfect fit. No matter who the other person was. But if he were to inherit the magic that he needed, if he were to become King, the little Prince knew that he couldn’t be straight, yet, he knew he was. And above all else, he never expected to fall for a girl. Specifically, a prisoner of the realm.

Diana Hart had everything but Royal blood. Perfect, long, sun kissed hair, paired with large round eyes. Ones that looked blue in some lights but then glowed green in the dark. Her pale, but not white, skin mirrored her deep crimson lips.

But of all the girls in all the Kingdom, the little Prince couldn’t have her.

When he was no older than twelve, Diana was convicted, along with several other well- known travelling thieves. They looked amazing from a distance. Riding into his land on horses with coats and eyes as black as the darkest night.

Each one decorated in scarves and high-knee boots made of leather, that you wouldn’t believe they owned unless it was stolen. The little Prince almost envied them for a time, resented them for how free they were. How they could do and go anywhere they wanted. Without anyone ever holding them back.

The first time they came to his Kingdom, they stole some worthless frosted jewels and left. But the second, they stole some rare treasures and left the girl behind.

Now, she remains trapped below the frozen pond at the very edge of the vast, white Palace gardens. While everyone else always saw the pond as more of a display piece, something pretty to look at – on the rare occasion that the snow would melt and they were greeted by dry, green rooted scenery. The Prince had always seen it as a home away from home.

Even before Diana was enslaved there, the little Prince would spend every extra, precious piece of time. Whether he was just sitting on the ice or attempting to skate on it. He would always feel the most relaxed there. Almost as if he was always waiting for her.

Although a thief, a rebel, Diana Hart had always been kind to him. He always valued kindness above almost anything else. Being brought up to know that one day the Kingdom will be his to run, the little Prince always thought that if he were kind to other people, whether a King yet or not, then they would be kind to him. And in turn, each other.

The eve of the day his fathers informed him of his looming crowning, the Little Prince sat below the ice, with her. With nothing separating them but a tall row of blue frozen bars. He wrapped his hands around them, relaxing at the coolness of the iced metal, calming his previously hot skin. Sensing his worry, Diana comes to the bars from her side, putting her hands over this. They stood like this a lot, being together the best they could while still having to deal with a literal wall between them.

“Why are you sad, my Prince?” She spoke quietly, leaning closer to him with every word. He sighed, letting her feel close to him. Letting her words break up into the air like ashes escaping a fire, all eventually finding their way back onto his pale skin.

“I can’t be King.” He replied, putting his head against the bars. “But I can’t let my fathers down. I can’t let the Kingdom down.” Diana stays where is she, slowly moving her hands over his. He closed his eyes, enjoying himself far more than he knew he should. He knew all that time he should be thinking about potential suiters, all those Royal men in the smart uniforms of their Kingdoms. Yet he’d rather stay under the ice, with a women confined to a small room for the rest of her life.

“Did you bring me anything nice today?” Her voice is soft, as if she hadn’t been listening to him at all. Yet at her voice he still smiled. Happy to be with her if nothing else. Happy to be in the company of someone he could talk to, even if they weren’t as great at listening.

“In fact, I did.” He continued smiling, finally separating himself from the bars while Diana lays across them, clearly eager to see what joy the Prince has brought her.

In truth, Diana quite enjoyed her life. While she missed the freedom of travelling with her troupe, the freedom of being able to go anywhere and see anything she wants while continuing her passion of picking up little trinkets on the way. But now, even though imprisoned with only the Prince for a frequent visitor, she gets to spend her days spinning Royal Winter fabrics into admirable gowns and jackets, worn only by those of the highest order.

The Prince came back to the bars, passing through several strands of white fragile fabric. Each piece sliding through the bars like a piece of a spiders web, some parts getting caught while others slipping through almost unnoticed. Diana took the pieces from his hands, examining them closely. Squinting at the little pieces of life caught in-between each singular piece, Diana smiles at the frozen snow that wrapped itself around each piece like a blanket, keeping it together so it doesn't break.

In many ways, Diana always felt like she was the Prince's blanket. Caring for him, wrapping herself around him like bubble wrap. Wanting to protect him for the world while making sure that he still reaches his final destination without a scratch. She always knew it was his destiny to become King. She always knew their time, if it could be called that, would have to stop at some point. She would have to watch hi marry a suitable Lord of promising ruler and live out his days with him in their large beautiful snow touched palace, while she remained under the ice, until it was her time to leave. Leave the Kingdom in the form of her own type of smoke, a type that would rise up and float all the way into the most distance clouds of the Summer land.

A part of her always imagined making that journey with him. They'd burn each other if ever apart, their skin peeling and breaking up like dust vacating it's temporary host. Each one having no idea where they'd end up next, but then neither of them would care if they were with the other. Joint ghosts in both life and death. Consumed by the thoughts of each other in a world of otherwise paper people with paper ideals. But they weren't paper, they were dust and snow, and anything else that seems to be one thing but is in fact another. They are the ships in the night, the dolphins in the Spring seas. The Prince and the prisoner, two ends of the same, sharp ended sword.

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"May I present, my nephew, Lord Jasper of the Spring Kingdom."

A young blonde, who appeared to be nothing more than a boy, stepped forward. With his hair so bright it could be mistaken for white in certain lights, and eyes the blue of frozen lakes, it becomes very clear to the little Prince why he was put forward. Although from Spring, there was a certain chill to him. Something that would aid him greatly in the Winter Kingdom. But the little prince knew he could never learn to love him.

The next person to step forward was a clearly older boy of the Summer Kingdom, also known as Lord Fernan. Unlike Lord Jasper, this one at least looked like he was ready to take up his fair share of responsibility. There was intellect in his eyes. The want, the need to

learn, to expand what he knows and then take this to what he can do for the people around him. The Prince liked that. But there was no ice to him. None at all. He looked like a summer fairy, dainty, skinny soldier boy made up to look strong and fierce in his green flowered uniform. While he would clearly make a good ruler one day, he was not one for the Winter Kingdom.

Lastly, the strongest of three stepped forward. Lord Thorner of the Autumn Kingdom, second heir to the throne in a realm of colour and wonder. A realm where things are always changing. There was something about the Autumn Kingdom that always fascinated the little Prince. He marvelled at the simple leaves on each tree that always seemed to be a slightly different colour every time he visited while was used to bare branched open wood that just hardened the more it snowed. Out of all the Kingdoms, Autumn was always his favourite. The Little Prince also remembers spending the most time with Thorner as a child. They'd play hide and seek in the gardens and knights with the battlements. As children they used to appear quite similar, with the only differences being the little Princes pale hair to match his white kissed skin while Thorner was always the martyr for colour with his almost luminous orange locks paired with his equally darker but not tanned skin.

A part of him always thought that they would be the ones to end up ruling together. Thorner's elder brother was always the most natural leader, pathing the way for Thorner to learn the world at his own speed. Allowing him to learn how to rule as a partner to the King. Of all the little Princes, somewhat limited, options, he'd chose him. Even though he could never love him, not in the way he needs to.

As the little Prince smiled towards him, he also began to greatly panic about whether the magic he will inherit will still work, of even pass through to him, if can never truly love anyone the way he loves Diana. Thornbe would make an excellent partner in the way of the Kingdom, but in the ways of his heart, the little knew there

was only one. But she was girl, and she was a thief. Neither of which could ever be accepted.

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“Have you made a decision?” Diana asked as the little Prince stands next to her bars once against. Their hands once more entwined through the small constant gaps in the metal.

The little Prince had been pacing under the ice for hours. Letting Diana watch him, her eyes mimicking those of a cat. But her face caught between the animal ready to pounce and it clearly wanting something. Needing something.

Desperately.

“I don’t want to be with any of them.” He sighed, looking closer into her shining eyes. “I want to be with you. Up there, on the surface. In my palace and in the village.” She laughed. She laughed to.

“But-“

“And I want you to meet my fathers.”

“I’ve always met them.” Her smile faded, her eyes filling with a different type of emotion. One that she hadn’t felt in the longest time. “They didn’t like me very much.”

“That was the you, you were then. Not the you, you are now.” The little Prince smiled. Diana copied him, perfectly mimicking his sudden glow from the corner of his eyes to the slight curving of the edge of his lips. “So, you admit that I’ve changed?” The little Prince smiled again, his face genuine and happy. He never felt more alive than he did when he was with her. For someone who came into life, his Kingdom, signifying something his land was always fighting against, the little Prince is unable to even begin to say how proud he is of her. Now only, if she could be the one to rule at his side.

“Of course you have. You’ve blossomed here.”

“Not withered like the rest of the flowers that used to grow here?”

“No,” He paused, soaking up every bit of their time. Even with a wall constantly keeping them apart. “The only things that ever survive here are the frost flowers. They belong here, which is

why they grow and keep living. You're my frost flower." She smiled, more sweetly and wanting than she ever has done before.

"Which is why you need to come with me!"

The little Prince rattled the bars, more from sudden excitement than anything else. He beamed, feeling like nothing could touch him if he could make his new dreams a reality.

"What do you mean?"

"I'll get you out of here, in secret. We'll disguise you as a regular village woman. You'll come to my crowning, hidden in the crowds. Then when the magic comes to me and they ask me who my magic partner is, I'll name you!"

"But that's not allowed!" She sighed, the reality of what he's saying quickly bleeding through the well-crafted fantasy they'd both prefer. "I mean, your fathers, the King, the Kingdom! They simply wouldn't allow it. It's not the way."

"Then I'll make it the way." He leaned in closer through one of the larger gaps. So close he could feel the warmth of her breath. "When I'm King, I can it. I can change everything!" He shouted, dancing around the small curved walls on his side of the prison. He danced all the way to the exit while Diana clung to the bars as if he were still there.

"See you soon, my dear?" Although she phrased it more like a question than a statement, the little Prince looked at with pure determination. No question at all seem upon his bright face.

"I will see you later my love. And be ready. We change the future, tonight!" With another shout of enthusiasm, the little Prince vanishes to be back above the ice. His heart beating so fast and his smile so wide, he was worried he'd accidentally melt something along his way back to the palace. Beneath the solid ice that still sheltered her from the world above, Diana continued leaning against the metal gate, she thought locked for eternity, with a wide smile plastered on her face. As the light from above slowly begins to dim, signifying another end to a day but beginning of a night, the smile across her face slowly changes to. From one of happiness to one of clear cruel intentions.

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Over the remaining hours of the seemingly short day, arrangements were made and the little Prince did his best to conceal his growing grin. He made sure to plan everything to the letter.

His fathers were overjoyed when he announced that he'd chosen Lord Thorner to be his partner. The two of them worked together, ordering and placing everything from flowers to ribbons at the very end of the large Palace gardens. The most sacred grown across the entire Kingdom.

He'd dressed in the robes sown and bound for him by no one else but Diana. He could recognise her patterns anywhere. The closely bound combination of known threads and beads to those tiny pieces of snow, frozen their solid form that add just a little something, to make their robes that bit more special.

Everyone gathered in the gardens that night, Royals and commoners alike. Each one wanting to witness first-hand the crowning and what really happens when the magic of one King is transfer to another.

The Kingdom of Winter has always kept the process very secret. Unlike the other Kingdoms, who had invited one, and all to come and see it for centuries, for Winter, this is new. While his fathers greatly objected at first, overtime, the little Prince managed to convince them. Convince them that they shouldn't be scared of change, they should embrace it and welcome it. Just like he hoped that they would welcome Diana, once they truly understood.

When stood at the very centre of a circle, surrounded by his fathers, Lord Thorner as well as his family and other Royals, the little Prince began to feel very nervous. Nervous of not only his plan, but of what really happens when his father gives up his magic and it finds its way into the little Prince's body. One had never happened in his lifetime to witness, how he wished now he could go back and see one. Or at least read more about them.

Looking out into the crowds, it took him a while to spot Diana. Dressed in the clothes of an ordinary village woman, hood up over her hair – so fitting for the realm, she seeped into the background of people, as if she were really one of them. At their eyes meeting, the little Prince felt relaxed.

The King then stepped forward, ready to begin the ceremony.

The crowning.

“Hello everyone and thank you for being here to witness this, joyous occasion,” He spoke with the perfect combination of warmth and ice. His voice reaching out to even those furthest away while not to be confused at all with shouting.

“Now, we shall begin.”

The King took his place at the little Prince’s side. He cut their thumbs, fresh blood seeping out the open wounds into the crisp night air. Placing their thumbs together, the Earth beneath started to shake. Everyone gasps, but stays where they are. No one ran or even thought about it. They all stayed, and watched,

“I declare, my reign as the King of Winter over! I pass on the gifts the Earth gave me! I give up my right to share these gifts with the people of the land. I give up the title that has kept me whole!” the King does shout. His eyes and voice reaching up into the cloudless dark sky. The white ground below still shaking.

“I, the Prince, now gain this title!” the little Prince joined in. His voice forever quieter and clearly more nervous than his father’s ever was.

“And who do you name to be your partner as you rule? As you accept the magic and everything that comes with it.”

“I name,” He paused, feeling something new, maybe magical, come over him like a wave. “Diana Hart!”

The whole Kingdom gasps as one, they held their breath, joining together as if forming a large, never ending icicle. From the crowds, Diana let her hood down, revealing her face suddenly flush but happy. But as her smile grew wider, her hair grew darker and her eyes grew wider.

She began rising from the Earth as if being pulled to the sky. Every inch higher she rose; the little Prince’s father grew paler until his skin looked and left like pure ice alike. All the magic had been stripped from his heart before it was time. And none of it made it to the little Prince instead.

“No! Diana! Stop! We can be together now!”

Through everything that history suggested happened next, all the little Prince will always remember is how much wanting to be with Diana eventually cost him the freedom of his Kingdom. All he wanted was a girl, and he thought that’s just what she was. He was not to know that he feel for someone of another world, another time.

For the little straight Prince just wanted a girl to love.

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