

## THE PROPHET'S SONG

In a lost village where the dragons swallowed from the lagoons and the sirens rode seahorses, Madame Ruby prophesied the death. Her crimson hair shone at the light of the sun every morning waiting for the moment to arrive, everyone knew what it was. The prince from the biggest kingdom near lay sprawled on his carriage, he was finally facing the truth, his youth had gone away and now he had to fit his responsibilities, after a life of parties and drinks he had to be the heir people needed. So he traveled through acres and lived lots of adventures to ask the prophet about his future.

After months of travelling he finally arrived at a small house. The stone of the wall felt cold at his fingertips, but there was something that felt lovely about the place, maybe the smell of burned wood. He knocked on the door and he was welcomed by Madame Ruby with a bright smile, he walked in and looked all around the furniture, it was exactly like his father had described to him. She accompanied him to a table, where there was already a kettle and a couple of tea cups. She served him and told him to drink, then, she took his cup again and looked inside of it, there were still some herbs remaining. The look on her face said everything that couldn't be told. "What is it? What do you see?" The prince asked impatiently and scared, and after a few seconds, the redhead looked at him with a serious face. "You must hear me, young boy, otherwise you'll end up getting hurt. One day, when the truth finally comes out, you'll have to choose between what you want and what you need. Under your deteriorated breastplate you'll find the solution to all of your problems, but remember, don't turn into the warmth or the light of love will bruise on you." He felt even more confused that he already was after hearing the words, he uttered "What does that even mean?" But the answer never came, Madame Ruby stood up and kicked him out of her house.

Since that day, for months he tried to find out what it was all about, but he never figured it out. He asked all kinds of living things about their opinion, fairies, trolls and even gnomes, but they didn't know either. When he was in a tavern, he shared a talk with some giants that were very, very drunk. They said something that certainly sounded like "For ships and pink situations!" while they clinked their big glasses. He didn't understand what they were talking about, but he followed their path anyway.

The prince wandered for what felt like forever, chasing every thing that could tell him something about Madame Ruby's cryptic words. He was starting to lose hope when he found a forest glade where the trees grew tall and formed a web that filtered the sunlight into threads of gold. A melody came to his ears, delicate and sorrowful, guiding him into behind an evergreen. There sat a young boy with hair like fall leaves and bright eyes. He played a lute, his fingers plucking the strings. The prince, careful and cautious, stepped forward, and the music flattered as he turned to face him. "I didn't think anyone came this far into the forest," the boy said, his voice like a lullaby. "I've been searching for answers," the prince replied "for a prophecy I can't understand." The boy tilted his head, curiosity speaking by itself. "Maybe you're looking too hard into it." He whispered, and then, he invited the prince to sit down beside him.

Days blurred together, the prince abandoned his quest and stayed in this place with this intriguing boy. Love slowly blossomed, wild and unstoppable, like the ivy curling down around trees. The prince didn't care anymore about his responsibilities, he had found something far more precious. But prophecies cannot be avoided, not even princes can ever dream of such kind of redemption. One evening, as they sat by a small fire, the boy gently traced a scar on the prince's hand, a remnant of a long-forgotten battle. The boy hesitated, his fingers lingering over the scar, and then leaned in to kiss him. But as their lips met, a cold feeling spread through the prince's chest like ice beneath his skin. He gasped, clutching at his chest, as the color left his face. The boy's eyes widened in horror and he caught the prince as he collapsed.

The prince's vision blurred, but he finally understood. The deteriorated breastplate wasn't his armor, it was his heart, cracked and fragile from years of longing. And the warmth he had turned to, the love he had embraced, was the light that would bruise him. With his last breath, he smiled at the boy. "It was worth it." he whispered, before the forest fell silent once more.

In a village, far, far away, Madame Ruby watched the sun dip below the horizon, her crimson hair catching the fading light. She closed her eyes and whispered a single word to the wind. "Fate."