

a court of fools

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Summary

There is no reason, then, that the young king should be killed by a red-yellow-black fairy with too much fury, but whatever the case may be, the outcome is the same: the fairy lays eyes upon the curious little child, and curses him to live only to the age of twenty.

George is the king of the forest.

Notes

a trope subverting//?/?// sleeping beauty au with george for the second 32au fic! hope you enjoy :]

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

George is son of no one and king of everything and all of a flourishing, ebullient two years old when the fairy comes to kill him.

It is over the brouhaha surrounding the appearance of the alleged king. “Come see,” say their siblings, all abuzz with the idea of presenting the little king with a gift, the colours of morning

glories and snapdragons laid out on crosshatched sills, and the curious fairy with their red-yellow-black hair trails after them.

There is no reason, then, that the young king should be killed by a red-yellow-black fairy with too much fury, but whatever the case may be, the outcome is the same: the fairy lays eyes upon the curious little child, and curses him to live only to the age of twenty.

The other fairies stumble over themselves in a swarm of green and purple and white deflecting the spell. The dead fairy was powerful, their words immutable, and no matter how they twist and yank, the shackles will not bend. Over it all, rosy-cheeked and sharp-eyed, sits the little king, unimpressed, a little colder already with the chill of death. The forest despairs, and birds begin to sing mournfully, the dirge splashed bloody over the sky as clouds strain into the sun.

“Hold.”

The fairies and fauna part way for their queen, wisdom in his sightless and silvery eyes. He holds a golden amulet in one hand, a child in the crook of his arm. He looks down at the little king like he sees a tragedy.

George squints back.

A smile graces the queen’s face. They deposit the child - sallow yet with the magic of life, hair like cornsilk against his face - by the flowers yawning open beneath the little king, and says, “That was my first gift.” They loop the amulet around the little king’s neck, tucking the heavy totem with its dainty emerald eyes into the little king’s cloak. “That was my second.” They open their palms and allow the little king to slip his tiny hands into them, and says, “This is my third.”

The queen is as powerful as she is infallible. She sews her magic into the curse and pricks her fingers on its thorns and promises the little king that he will not die, given he is presented with the person he loves more than anyone in the world and given a kiss. It is just as much a tragic comedy as it is a well-traversed romance, easy to weave into the spell, an oft-travelled road. The queen leaves then, just as she came, and the fairies leave with her, tittering at the excitement. This leaves just the little king and the child.

George says, “My name is George.”

The child says, “My name is Dream,” and it is the start of something beautiful.

They grow together in the castle of the forest, shaded by its magic, by its lush foliage all glorious green. George is frost-eyed but just, and all the flora yields to his hand. The animals never run from their king, who is cold but kindhearted, and they especially adore his boy knight, gap-toothed and freckled from the sun that bronzes him, like a thing suspended in amber. George thaws, around him, all soft-edged smiles, eyes narrowed as he watches his knight laugh and twirl in the clearings surrounded by mushrooms with spotted heads. Moss eats over the little king’s cap, but he pays it no mind; he knows he could sit, and watch his knight forever. Fairy magic is accursed, but it has given him this: the luxury of a better friend than anyone could ask for, the surest companion he will ever receive. He would upheave canyons for Dream. He would build mountains.

They both become barely-adults in the space of time it takes to breathe. It is nonsensical, paradisiacal, dizzying in its haste and paradoxical indolence; George feels thirteen one day and is nineteen the next, staring down the mantle of a curse he has never wanted and never deserved, one that has made its home between the ugly clay cups he and Dream molded in the shelves, nestled itself like leaves into the rungs of his strangely ancient ribs. The red-yellow-black fairy’s magic was cruel, in that way: time, ever the essence, ever moving, ever restless. George has lived his life

to what feels like the fullest, but every night his slumber grows longer and longer, and the time he spends in the sunbeams that highlight his knight's face lesser and lesser, and the shadows beneath Dream's eyes darker and darker.

The night before the dawn of his twentieth birthday, Dream crawls under the soft woollen sheets with George and clenches his hand and whispers, "Your Highness?"

"Yes, Dream?"

"I don't want you to die."

"I know, Dream."

"Will you be safe, Your Highness?"

George feels his heart squeeze uncomfortably in his chest, or as strongly as it can whilst it beats so slow. He can hear its echo against his lungs, graceless, as he whispers back, "I'm just sleeping, Dream."

Dream's eyes are feverish green, like acid, like the most poisonous of potions, eating him away from the inside out. "It's hardly just sleep if you do it forever," he murmurs, and presses George's hands fiercely to his cheek, committing the grooves to memory.

In the morning, at first light, the child brought by the queen of the fairies will bundle himself in his king's red cloak and stagger out of the door of the shack they share. The boy knight with his heart of gold and tragic face will swear, lionlike, "I will bring you back the person you love more than anything in the world."

And so the son of no one and king of everything will sleep in the briar groves, all his pledges and promises a bed of strewn glass amidst his slumbering kingdom, as the person he loves more than anything in the world rides away to fulfill a broken prophecy.

End Notes

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