

## SCENE 5

*Scene: Esmerelda's palace. Esmerelda is somewhat weaker than she was in Scene A. Nellie has now taken the role of her assistant, translator, and apprentice. Nellie is writing while Esmerelda talks.*

NELLIE: What was that part again? The last few lines.

ESMERELDA:

The flower grows through the thorns and the pain,

So twisted, like it never was before.

Unless it's plucked, the double lives will strain,

NELLIE: A little slower.

ESMERELDA: *(slower, pausing to let her write)*

The double lives will strain,

Concerned with the other's pain, through earth's floor.

The twins grow identically, yet not,

One grows to be stripped, the other, to rot.

NELLIE: *(finishes writing)* And that was it? That was the end of your dream? *(ESMERELDA nods)* Well. Alright. *(shuts the small packet she was writing in)* Shall I title this one, or do you have a name in mind?

ESMERELDA: What might you call it, child? Let me hear.

NELLIE: I'm not sure. Something like "Twin Plants", or "The Wronged Flower".

ESMERELDA: The wronged flower? Which one was wronged?

NELLIE: The one that rotted. He was planted under the thorns by his wicked sister, and he suffered more and more as he grew. She ruined him. *(ESMERELDA looks at her)* What? That's not what happened?

ESMERELDA: You write well, but listen poorly. Read it again.

NELLIE: *(glancing at her own stack of books and papers)* My apologies. What should this one be titled?

ESMERELDA: *(sighs)* "Twin Plants" will do, Nellie. Well done, again. *(NELLIE writes the title on top of the packet and sets it aside, looking to ESMERELDA)* I have no more stories for you now.

NELLIE: Thank you. *(she rushes over to her research stack)*

ESMERELDA: *(to herself)*

The child feels more terrible guilt each day,  
For the fall Rupert took on her behalf.  
Though I knew some pain would land in her way,  
I dreamed her later days would let her laugh.  
She thinks, oh, she thinks she can be perfect,  
Her powers helping all for forever.  
Listening here, taking time to reflect,  
She wouldn't seek this "perfect" endeavor.  
She was only a child, proud, to be sure,  
But so young and ignorant, nonetheless.  
Only once *his* forgiveness is secure  
Can Nellie forgive herself, can she rest.  
I hope soon she understands and is free,  
Or may his return ever quicker be!

NELLIE: If I can only crack this code. There's a pattern here-- betrayal, pain, misery-- but what's the solution? Two oak trees... two flowers...two weeds... a lonely log, that's weird. And this part about "through Earth's floor," that shows up a lot. I guess they might be connected by root? Is that why they're twin plants? Gosh, why does every twin story have to be so painful?  
*(ESMERELDA slumps back in her chair)* I know what I did to him. Why is the world punishing me through Esmerelda's dreams? *(sees ESMERELDA and rushes to her)* Esmerelda. Esmerelda, what's wrong? Listen to me! Can you hear me?

ESMERELDA: *(reviving, somewhat trancelike)*

Far into the woods, past where children play,  
A slow, slow poison has just been released.

NELLIE: A poison? Esmerelda, are you dying?

ESMERELDA:

Life across the realms will be torn apart,  
Without a bridge connecting them as one.

The gemini, these twins who share one heart:

If they perish, the world will all be gone.

The poison lies not with me, it's not here,

It is with my sister, humantale me.

Down to the lake, take the leap that you fear

And discover another world: be free.

NELLIE: I have to go down to the enchanted lake. And jump into it. *(deep breath)* I trust you, Esmerelda. I'll do everything I can. *(she rushes away, exiting)*

ESMERELDA:

I know not in full where you go, my dear,

But still more trouble awaits you, I fear.

*The set transitions to a split stage with the portal in the middle. Music sequence as NELLIE runs in and approaches the portal. RUPERT enters from the other side, running for his life. Both face the portal and are pulled in at the same time. They switch sides: NELLIE in Aleera and RUPERT in Arryn.*

## SCENE 6

*Setting: Outdoors, Arryn. Next to the portal. RUPERT stumbles out of the portal. His costume has transitioned into his nymph form, a pigeon. RUPERT looks around, completely stunned.*

RUPERT: Great Scott! I'm home. I'm back. I haven't seen this place since... I pulled out her feathers, right here. *(looks down at himself)* What on earth? Cooooo *(slaps his hands over his mouth)*

*NIKO enters.*

NIKO: *(singing with gusto)*

Memories you'll want to keep

And some you'll want to lose.

Which ones will life bring you today?

Oh, well, you just can't -- *(bumps into RUPERT, speaks)*

Hello. That's a new face I spy, isn't it? Pardon me, but *(pointing at RUPERT)* who, what, where, why, how?

RUPERT: You forgot when. *(NIKO shrugs)* Rupert, nymph, human world, revenge, Nellie. *(NIKO attempts to decipher this)*

NIKO: You're as simple-minded as I am, very bad sign.

RUPERT: As simple as, say, a child?

NIKO: Oh, no, much worse. No, you and I most likely suffered similar accidents as babies and that stunted us. I was dropped on my head. And you?

RUPERT: Me? I was banished.

NIKO: Good heavens, a brooding outcast! Please, please, tell me your story. I'm all ears. *(considers)* Well, really, I have some arms and legs. I may have a head, too, but I'm certain I lost it around here when I was 8. I really don't know where it is. Have you seen it? Nevermind, your story. Your head. Ah--go ahead.

RUPERT: Well—Niko, yes? *(NIKO nods)* Honestly, I exaggerated. I was sent away on a mission. I was just so young that it felt traumatic, being sent away from my tree, and all.

NIKO: A spy turned brooding outcast, do tell.

RUPERT: Nellie and I were good friends long ago. I was her playmate and confidante. After she got her powers, she needed to know more about humans. So, she sent me to their world.

NIKO: Bolts and beetles, humans? Really, truly, a whole world inhabited by them? Is it as magical as Esmerelda says? Why, of course it is, show me! *(reaches hands towards RUPERT, but he pushes them away)*

RUPERT: Later, Niko, later. Now, it seems that Esmerelda isn't doing well, yes?

NIKO: Yes, as we were leaving her palace, it did seem as though she was slumbering. Odd time of day, I would say. Then again, I can sleep anywhen. *(yawns)* Dear me.

RUPERT: Niko, since my mission with the humans is complete, Nellie's sent me here to help you all—specifically, Esmerelda.

NIKO: Wait. I've never seen you before. For all I know, you could be a human yourself.

RUPERT: Really?

NIKO: No, not really. I told you, I've lost my head. We really must find it. But first – *(places hands on RUPERT's head. Background music plays, and YOUNG RUPERT enters in a memory, with a toy sword.)*

YOUNG RUPERT: Back, you monster! Back, back! *(continues stabbing the air and making fighting noises)*

*(YOUNG NELLIE enters.)*

YOUNG NELLIE: What are you doing? *(gasps)* Is it an air nymph? I always wanted to meet one!

YOUNG RUPERT: It's a monster, a big ugly one!

YOUNG NELLIE: Oh. You're pretending again. Well, I just introduced a troll and a fairy. They've been neighbors for years and never met before! It's pretty great, what I did.

YOUNG RUPERT: Get away, Nellie, this is no place for a lady. I'll protect you! *(RUPERT trips over himself and falls to the ground)*

YOUNG NELLIE: *(unenthused)* Oh, no. I'm being eaten by a big monster. Rupert should have stopped it. Aah.

YOUNG RUPERT: Ow. *(music stops, both CHILDREN exit)*

RUPERT: Harsh.

NIKO: She was indeed, but I do find it hilarious! And enlightening. Sir, you have earned my trust. Good Captain and friend of Nellie, follow me to Esmerelda's palace!

RUPERT: One moment, may I see this?

NIKO: Hm? *(RUPERT grabs NIKO's hand, stealing power)* Ah! What in the cookie crumbles?

RUPERT: Allow me. *(places hands on his own head. Background music plays, and YOUNG RUPERT and YOUNG GWEN enter in a memory.)*

YOUNG GWEN: Now, remember what I told you, Rupert. To secure a place in Parliament, you must start early as a brilliant prodigy. An idle brain is...

YOUNG RUPERT: A weevil's cough drop.

YOUNG GWEN: No, evil's workshop! Alright, if at first you don't succeed,

YOUNG RUPERT: I spy a pen.

YOUNG GWEN: It's try, try, again!

YOUNG RUPERT: I think you mean, bye, bye, a-Gwen. *(gets up to leave)* I'm no good at this.  
*(music stops, both CHILDREN exit. RUPERT is wheezing)*

NIKO: You...you used my power!

RUPERT: Take it back, please.

NIKO: And you really did live among humans! How marvelous! To the palace!

*(exeunt)*

## SCENE 15

*Scene: The Duchess' palace. Outside of the Duchess' room, two sentinels stand guard. The Duchess is turned away from us or hidden by a curtain. NELLIE and CLEO enter, whispering. NELLIE whispers something to CLEO, who nods and exits. NELLIE walks forward.*

NELLIE: Excuse me, guards!

GUARD 1: The Duchess must be protected at all times. Please leave immediately.

NELLIE: I understand, and believe me, I'm harmless! But the members of Parliament think that the Duchess should be removed from power, and they're causing an uproar in the garden! *(silence)* Ahem! An *uproar* in the garden.

CLEO: *(offstage)* Uproar! Uproar!

NELLIE: Don't you think that's a bigger threat to the Duchess?

CLEO: *(offstage, putting on different voices)* No more of the Duchesdom! Down with the matriarchy! Parliament is enough for Aleera!

GUARD 2: That doesn't sound good.

*(GUARDS exit. NELLIE goes over to the DUCHESS, and reveals her to us, just as ALONSO and GWEN rush in as well. NELLIE and ALONSO gasp.)*

ALONSO: Esmerelda!

GWEN: What?

NELLIE: *(simultaneously)* Alonso!

ALONSO: *(simultaneously)* Nellie!

GWEN: What?

CLEO: *(offstage, putting on different voices)* Cleo has shown us the light! No one can be trusted! Nymphs walk among us! You're a nymph! No, I'm not! *You're* the nymph!

GWEN/NELLIE/ALONSO: What?

NELLIE: Alonso, it's so good to see you! I have to tell you something!

ALONSO: I have to tell you something.

NELLIE: I found your mother, Louisa.

ALONSO: Mom? You found my mom? Is she okay?

NELLIE: She's fine. But she thinks you're dead.

ALONSO: Oh, Mom.

GWEN: I'm so sorry, Alonso. But we'll make it right. We'll reunite you two, I promise.

NELLIE: Me, too. *(looks at GWEN, stretches out her hand.)* Nellie. Best friend from Arryn.

GWEN: Gwen, best *bestest* friend from Aleera. *(Blushing. Tension.)*

ALONSO: Nellie— my turn to tell you something. Rupert poisoned the Duchess.

NELLIE: Oh, no. Please, no.

GWEN: It was my fault. He was poisoning her so I could be Duchess. But I promise you, I didn't want this to happen.

NELLIE: It's not your fault. You weren't the one who pushed him.

ALONSO: But why is Esmerelda here, and in the Duchess' room?

GWEN: That is the Duchess, Alonso.

NELLIE: She's Esmerelda's twin sister. Their life forces are connected. When Rupert poisoned the Duchess, he doomed Esmerelda, too.

ALONSO: But how can we save her? *(the DUCHESS revives)*

GWEN: She's awake! Your Grace, I'm so sorry. We'll do everything in our power to help you!

*NELLIE rushes to the DUCHESS, placing a hand on her arm.*

NELLIE: Your Grace? My name is Nellie. How can I help?

DUCHESS:

I know not how, but I think you can aid.

When I was poisoned, there was, in my food,

A faint, bitter smell, like one from the glade:

The one that goes by the name of "Worm Root".

NELLIE: Rupert poisoned her with Worm Root. *(GWEN and ALONSO gasp)*

GWEN: She's talking with you?

DUCHESS: *(weaker, desperate)*

Life across the realms will be torn apart,

Without a bridge connecting them as one.

The gemini, these twins who share one heart:

If they perish, the world will all be gone... *(she faints)*

NELLIE: Esmerelda and the Duchess are the force that hold both Arryn and Aleera together! If they die, the portal will be closed off—our worlds may even be destroyed.

ALONSO: You have Worm Root here, in Aleera?

GWEN: Mm-hm. It mostly grows around the forbidden lake. Part of why it's forbidden.

ALONSO: That's where we have it in Arryn, too.

GWEN: But there's no cure for Worm Root. We've been looking for years.

NELLIE: It does have an antidote, back in Arryn. It's one of a kind, though, and is more legend than fact. Maybe it's different here. Do you have any purple flowers here, as large as a watermelon?

GWEN: No, nothing of the kind.

ALONSO: A purple flower? One like an amethyst?

NELLIE: Yes, why?

ALONSO: Rupert is in Arryn now. He was trying to convince everyone that you sent him, to save Esmerelda. He sent everyone to search for that flower to heal her.

GWEN: Well, good! If that's the antidote, all should be well. Maybe... he changed?

NELLIE: No, Esmerelda sent me here because the Duchess was poisoned. It won't do any good if Esmerelda gets the antidote. But since there's only one bloom...

ALONSO: He'll use it up on her. We won't have anything to heal the Duchess with.

GWEN: We have to stop him.

NELLIE: Come on, we have to get back to Arryn. *(she and ALONSO start heading out)* Gwen—are you coming?

GWEN: Someone needs to take care of the Duchess. You and Alonso go back together.

ALONSO: Please, Gwen. You've known Rupert for years, you might be able to talk him down. Plus...if it's too late, I don't think I could bear being separated from you forever. Please come with us.

NELLIE: If Rupert has all of Arryn on his side, we'll need all the help we can get.

GWEN: Alright. Take care, your Grace.

NELLIE: Besides, I'm sure Cleo has the situation covered.

CLEO: *(offstage)* Uproar! Uproar!