

## Metanoia

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/26195125) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/26195125>.

Rating:	<a href="#">Not Rated</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings</a>
Category:	<a href="#">F/M</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">달의 연인-보보경심 려</a>   <a href="#">Moon Lovers: Scarlet Heart Ryeo (TV)</a>
Relationships:	<a href="#">Hae Soo</a>   <a href="#">Go Ha Jin/Wang Yo</a>   <a href="#">Third Prince</a> , <a href="#">Hae Myung Hee</a>   <a href="#">Lady Hae/Wang Wook</a>   <a href="#">Eighth Prince</a>
Characters:	<a href="#">Wang Yo</a>   <a href="#">Third Prince</a> , <a href="#">Hae Soo</a>   <a href="#">Go Ha Jin</a> , <a href="#">Original Male Character(s)</a> , <a href="#">Wang Sik Ryeom</a> , <a href="#">Empress Yu</a>   <a href="#">Queen Shinmyung Soonsung</a> , <a href="#">King Taejo</a>   <a href="#">Wang Gun</a> , <a href="#">Wang So</a>   <a href="#">Fourth Prince</a> , <a href="#">Wang Jung</a>   <a href="#">Fourteenth Prince</a> , <a href="#">Wang Wook</a>   <a href="#">Eighth Prince</a> , <a href="#">Hae Myung Hee</a>   <a href="#">Lady Hae</a> , <a href="#">Wang Eun</a>   <a href="#">Tenth Prince</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">twist of fate</a> , <a href="#">Fate is a bitch</a> , <a href="#">Historical Inaccuracy</a> , <a href="#">seokyeong is great</a> , <a href="#">Love is complicated</a> , <a href="#">Non-Canon Relationship</a> , <a href="#">Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence</a> , <a href="#">Yo's centric</a> , <a href="#">Fake Relationship</a> , <a href="#">Political Alliances</a> , <a href="#">Power Struggle</a>
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2020-08-30 Updated: 2020-09-25 Words: 18,467 Chapters: 12/?

# **Metanoia**

by [gwendolyharry](#).

## Summary

Metanoia ; - the journey of changing one's mind, heart, self or way of life.

A change of heart.

Hae Soo just want to find her way back to the love of her life, Wang So.

But fate certainly said otherwise.

# Chapter 1

Opening her eyes, Ha-jin saw green. Canopies of tree and the land was a bit muddy. Was it dew?

She could hear the birds chipping, the sound of wildness.

Where was she?

Ha-jin recalled her desperation to end her life. Was it to end her life? She just wanted to go back, to Goryeo. To Wang So. To be with everyone she loved.

The moment her dear mother took her last breath, Ha-jin was lost. She has no one. No friend, no lover and no family. She was left alone, utterly. Was that how she made So felt?

Once she heard the news of the once in thousand year solar eclipse will occur that day, Ha-jin lost it. She was running towards the lake with tears running down her cheek.

Losing all her sense of mind, Ha-jin jumped into the lake. Deaf to the ruckus of people around her.

She remember her lungs constricted, her chest burn. But it worth it, isn't it? If she didn't end up in Goryeo, at least she died.

But she did.

She did end up in somewhere, somewhere unfamiliar it seems.

Oh well, whatever it is, she'll do whatever it takes to survive. And find her So.

...

Walking down the unruly road, Hae Soo found herself in the middle of nowhere. It was obviously a forest with a road seem rarely traveled. She had been walking down the road for almost one hour, but she hadn't met a single soul.

Soo was grateful, for whatever reason, the 'real' Hae Soo was wearing a clothes suitable for traveling, not the usual flowy hanbok. It will be a pain in her ass if she did. Oh, and she did find a decorative silver dagger around her ankle, a pouch of silver and a water bottle. Did the Hae clan were traveling somewhere?

Lost in her own thought, Hae Soo was surprised to see a group of men nearing her. Her fight or flight instinct was activated. She guessed all three of them might be bandits, with unruly hair and dirty clothes. She eyed them with weary eyes. On instinct, her hand reach out for the silver dagger that she had placed on her sleeves.

"What a beautiful agassi. I could see you're from a rich household?" the man, whom she assume the leader took a step towards her. He was eyeing her pouch bag, but she could sense

his the two others were eyeing her.

“I’ll give you the money. Just leave me alone!” her silver pouch was half full. Hae Soo was reaching for her pouch when the other bandit, with scars marring his face said.

“What a pretty agassi indeed. It a shame if we brothers didn’t have a taste first?” he leer menacingly towards her. Soo could feel cold sweat drenching her back. Why does she had such a bad luck?!

Thinking about her way out, Soo realized that she had been wearing a pendant all this while. Pulling it out, she could see that it was a jade pendant. This will do.

“I will give you all my silver and this pendant! It’s jade. It should worth a pouch or two. Just let me pass.” Gulping her saliva, she could see the leader was considering her bargain. Not his two lackey it seems.

“Why have only the goods! This Agassi look like she come from a noble family. Leader, when will we encounter a fortune like this?!” the third bandit look like he could eat her right then and there. His smile was feral enough to make her heart thumping in fright.

Looking at the leader, Soo could see he was contemplating his lackey’s idea. This couldn’t be good.

Soo pull out her dagger and point it to the bandit. She swore to herself. She had lived in two lifetime but never once did she ever think about learning self-defense.

The air was tense. One word from the leader, all hell will break loose. He was eyeing her still.

“Take her!”

The two lackey were quick on their foot to catch her but Hae Soo was still Hae Soo. She will never get down without putting a fight. She was swinging the dagger without any particular direction and screaming bloody murder.

She could only pray someone heard her in this middle of nowhere.

The two lackey were trying hard to take a grip on her without slicing their arms out when they heard the sound of groaning.

Their leader was shot with an arrow straight to the heart.

Hae Soo eyes widen in fear. This could only mean two things. One, there are people who had heard her screaming for help. Or two, it was another bandit.

If it was the later, Soo swore she will slit her own throat right away!

With the two bandit reaching for their own sword, completely forgetting about her, Soo eyeing her surroundings. One part was a vast forest with numerous of trees, perfect for hiding. Another part was a hill. She swore, the arrow come somewhere from there.

“Coward! Show yourself!” the scarred bandit was also eyeing the hillside. The sword ready to slice whomever brave enough to show themselves. Hae Soo unconsciously gulping down her saliva.

“Argh!” both Hae Soo and the scarred bandit turn toward the sound.

It was the third bandit, slashed down completely. Behind him was a man clad in black with face half masked. On his hand was a shiny sword drenched in blood. He gave out cold murdering aura.

“You!” the scarred bandit lunge toward the man.

Oh god, Hae Soo thought. This bandit was clearly stupid.

With a flick of his hand, the man took the last bandit out. Soo could only stared wide eyed. It was only her then. Shakily, she point her silver dagger toward him. Silently praying that he was not another bandit.

“Stay back! If you wanted my money, take it all. Just leave me alone!” Soo cried in desperation.

She could the man chuckled in amusement. His hand reaching out to his face.

Pulling off his mask, his bare face was revealed to her.

“Aggasi, are you alright?” and he smiled.

Soo could only stared in shock.

## Chapter 2

### Chapter Summary

A prince, a bodyguard and time traveler girl. What could be wrong?

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Soo could not remember how long does she stood there, with dagger in her hand staring at him.

Fear engulfed her fully, it was him. Hae Soo couldn't believe it, how come did she met him here?! Is this somewhere in Songak? In all the possibilities that she had ever think of, there were none including him.

"Agassi? Are you hurt?" concerned, he took a step towards her. His bloody sword was left on the ground.

"Stay back! You bastard! Don't you dare to step even closer!" Soo went berserk. Why on earth did she met him out of all people! She eyed him warily, he had a look of concern in his eyes. Heck, he doesn't even look like a prince!

Out of nowhere, another man appear with a bow in his hand. Eyeing her closely, he look back at him.

"What's going on?" he look at the girl curiously. She looks fragile, very petite but the look on her face was absolutely fierce.

"No idea. Maybe she's in shock." He glanced at the other man but his stance never left her.

"Who are you? Are you lost?" The other man asked her.

Hae Soo mind was running a hundred miles per hour by now. What year was this? Why does he look like that? So young and innocent? Her last bet was to actually ask them.

"What year is this?" dagger still pointing towards them, Soo asked. Both man look at her weirdly.

Finally, he answered

"The year is 939, the reign on Taejo Wanggeon. This is Goryeo, Agassi." He answered her calmly.

Hae Soo couldn't breathe. 939.

The last time, she landed on Goryeo in 941. She was three year earlier. Unconsciously she asked,

“Where is this?”

Hae Soo’s world was swaying.

“This is Seokyeong.”

So, she drown herself just to meet a 16 year old Wang Yo?!

With the last thought, Hae Soo found her sign fading into darkness.

...

“Wangja-nim, are you sure it’s a good idea to keep her with us?” Ta-jin eyed the unconscious girl cautiously. She does look like every other girl from noble families in Songak, but this is Seokyeong, he knew all those clingy agassi who tried to seduce his master. They doesn’t look like this girl.

Yo know Ta-jin was looking out for him, but he saw the pendant the girl was wearing. It held the insignia of the Hae clan of Songak. The same Hae clan that his brother Wook was engaged to.

If the girl died while he was in Songak, father will find a way to point it all to him. And the girl seems harmless.

He had practically carried her on his horse all the way to his secret residence in Seokyeong. Only he and Ta-jin knew this place. The road was undetected and completely hidden, in another way, it was road-less. And he had carried her all the way.

Ta-jin was laughing at him all the way, he know.

“As long as we stayed here, it’s alright. She doesn’t know any way out.” Yo took a sip of his tea, awfully blended.

His residence had no servant, it was just him and Ta-jin. He had purchased it using Ta-jin’s name at the black market recently. Only his trusted people knew about it, meaning him and Ta-jin.

They were on the way to his residence when he heard a woman’s voice, screaming for help. Instantly, he ordered Ta-jin to take a look and his bodyguard reported back about the bandit and everything else is history.

“You know what? Let’s cook, the girl look starving.” Ta-jin then took the lead towards the kitchen and start cursing. Yo could only laugh, since when this place have rice?!

Reaching out for some money, he told Ta-jin to go to the nearest market.

Ta-jin is more his brother than all his brothers combined. He first met him at Uncle Shik Ryeom's manor when he was 10. Ta-jin was two years older than him. Seeing how well the two of them interacted, Uncle bestowed Ta-jin as his bodyguard.

Ta-jin is his only friend.

The only person he trusted.

Yo is a calm person, but didn't they say that the most silent was the deadliest one?

Looking back at the girl, he frowned. Did she hurt her head? If she truly came from the noble Hae clan, how could she forget what year it is?

What a weird girl.

...

Hae Soo grumbled in dismay. Her body hurt all over the place, as if she had traveled for hours by horse. Jeez.

Opening her eyes, Hae Soo found herself laying on a bed inside a room, definitely Goryeo style. Recalling the event before her not so graceful unconsciousness, Soo frowned.

Him. Did he buy her here? But where is here?!

She remembered Wang Yo told her, this is Seokyeong. Far, far away from Songak. She had never stepped a foot here. If she recalled, this is the third prince's hometown. So, was she surrounded by his people?

Taking a shaky step, she walks toward the door. The residence was eerily silent and once she stepped out of the room, the sight was even creepier. The surrounding was coated with dried leaves all over, as if no one was ever here.

And the house was simple looking, for a prince, that's it. Didn't they say that the third prince Wang Yo was notorious for his lavish lifestyle? This is anything but lavish!

Or... is this where he throws away dead bodies?!

"Agassi?"

"Argh!" Hae Soo screamed in fright. Soo swore she'd lose half her lifetime on this day alone.

Ta-jin only smiled sheepishly. Yo was right, this girl is weird.

Soo realized, this was the man who's with Wang Yo. The one with bow and arrow.

"My name is Ta-jin." He cautiously said, the smile never left his face but his eyes were guarded.

Ta-jin? She had never heard anyone named Ta-jin back then. How can this person be someone close to Wang Yo?

“Ta-jin. My name is Hae Soo.” Soo saw him nod in understanding.

“Come eat with us, Soo-agassi. I’m sure you’re hungry. You’ve been unconscious for quite some time.” With that he led her towards the main house.

Albeit weary, considering her empty stomach, Soo followed him.

Soo could guess that Ta-jin is a bit older than Wang Yo and her. If her calculation was right, Wang Yo was 16 by this time and she could be somewhat 15?

Know what? She will not count how old people was in this era. It was disturbing because that 16 years old Wang Yo still killed people.

...

The food in front of her were simple. Just a meal of rice and meat with sides of pickled radish. She doesn’t mind that, truly. But the Wang Yo in front of her does.

Dressed down was not the appropriate word to describe it. He was a completely different person.

His hair was not in a tight knot of a married man that she always associated him to. He was not married, yet. His hair was half tied with a simple tie. His eyes was devoid of any eyeliner ever exist and he doesn’t wear any jewelry.

He looks human.

A damn handsome human.

“Are you from the Hae clan? The Hae clan of Songak?” he eyed her curiously. His tone was polite and friendly. Soo could feel her brain being fried.

She knew how to deal with rude Wang Yo, angry Wang Yo and bastardy Wang Yo. But this? This eco-friendly Wang Yo with a sunshine smile? Is this Goryeo or Mars?!

“Yes, my name is Hae Soo.” She timidly answered. What else could she said? What the heck Wang Yo? Why are you like this?!

“Ah... were you separated from your entourage? The road where Ta-jin and I found you was rarely used.” He asked as they all eat. Ta-jin nod in agreement.

“Maybe, I... don’t remember much.” Soo then shoved the rice and meat in her mouth.

This thing taste weird.

“Sorry, Soo-agassi. Yo couldn’t cook even if his life depended on it. The meat taste like rubber isn’t it?” Ta-jin solemnly said.

Everything that Ta-jin said was a surprise to her.

He called His Highness Third Prince Wang Yo, simply Yo.

And the fact that that His Highness Third Prince Wang Yo cooked?

No wonder the meat tasted like rubber!

“Hah! A pity that you’re not religious Ta-jin. You probably end up in hell the moment I killed you.” And the gracious prince she once serve vanished as Wang Yo throw the meat straight to Ta-jin’s face.

The scene was hilarious that Hae Soo could help but laugh.

Here she was, having a horrible meal with notorious Wang Yo and this unknown Ta-jin,

But why does she felt warm inside?

## Chapter End Notes

what do you think? leave up some review peeps!

# Chapter 3

## Chapter Summary

Leisure days in Seokyeong and Wang Yo is cheap.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Ta-jin bought her a chest full of clothes, undergarment and some knick knack.

“I don’t have any idea what was inside. Yo throw the money and let the dressmaker handle it.” He said with embarrassment painting all over his face.

That was on the second day of her stay in this humble abode.

By now, Soo had spent the entirety of five days with Wang Yo and Ta-jin. At first, Yo offered to send her off to her nearby relatives but Soo told him that she didn’t remember whom. But she told Yo that she will stay with him and join him when he will head back to Songak.

And in truth, she wanted to observe him. This version of Wang Yo is totally different from the Wang Yo that she knew. He was friendly, helpful and very, very kind.

And because he treat her well, it was all in her nature to repay him.

And repay him she did.

“How come you guys don’t have salt?!” Hae Soo look at both Yo and Ta-jin in horror. No wonder everything she ever eaten in this house was so bland!

Both Ta-jin and Yo went hunting this morning as she insist to clean the garden. By afternoon, they come back with wild chicken so she thought of making chicken soup. But it turns out, the kitchen only have rice and a jar of pickled radish.

“Salt is expensive.” Yo deadpan said to her.

Expensive her ass.

Yo and Ta-jin never told her of the third prince’s status but Soo wouldn’t tell them that she knew either. By then, Soo simply called him Yo and he called her Soo. The wonder of youth.

Regarding his kitchen, Soo insist for all three of them to go to the market.

At first, she could see the uneasiness on Yo’s face but after a while, he said yes.

Soo knew, Yo was protective of this place and sometimes weary of her too.

Vice versa.

...

The trip to the nearby village was uneventful. The people don't know them and they don't know the people.

Their meal ended with Ta-jin almost burning the whole kitchen down and Yo demand her cooking for every meal. And she wanted to ask Yo something.

Ta-jin could sense that Soo wanted to say something, not to him, but Yo. She keep eyeing the prince for a while. So he will not be a third wheeler and decided to retreat to his room earlier.

"Do you want tea, Yo?" Soo invested some of her silver to buy jasmine tea. Not the kind that Yo liked, that was expensive as hell but the common one.

When it comes to tea, if the brewer was good, the cheapest tea will taste excellent.

"Of course." Yo was not daft, he was one of the most brilliant in Goryeo and he could read people. Especially someone as transparent as Hae Soo. He could almost see the question looming all over her.

He observe the way she brew her tea. Odd. He recognize the way she brew them, almost the same as Oh sanggung.

"Here, have a taste." She push the cup toward him. Yo take a sip but didn't say anything.

A moment pass before she have the courage to say something.

"I... know who you are, Wangja-nim." Her eyes never left the tea cup in front of her. Silence pass between them.

"I know." He answered serenely. That caught her off guard.

"The real question is, you act as if you don't know. Why?" at that, she lift her face to meet his curious eyes.

"Because you don't seem to mind." And she saw a genuine smile on his face.

"So... are you going to start calling me wangja-nim or something?"

"No way, Yo."

And he burst out laughing.

...

“Soo-yah, what do you think of Yo?” both Soo and Ta-jin were having tea at the garden. Yo was in his private study since the morning, doing who know what.

After the revelation that she indeed know that Yo is a prince, both Ta-jin and him opened up to her even more. The prince told her that the court was on a summer break, which is why he leisurely spent time in the residence. He basically told her, “Once father ended the court that day, I left the name Wang too.”

That make Soo think, how come this carefree prince turn into such a ruthless person? In the span of three years that’s it. What had happened?

And Ta-jin’s question make her think again. What does she think of Wang Yo?

The Wang Yo that she knew back then was a demon in a demon body. There’s almost no remorse in him, except that few last moment before his last breath.

But the Wang Yo she had known for these past days was a totally different person.

“I don’t think I’ve known him enough to judge, but from what I’ve seen these past few days... he is an enigma. What prince does spend his days in an abandoned house?”

Hearing that, Ta-jin let out a small laugh. He actually had a strange idea. Before the last court session ended, the king mentioned about marriage to Yo. Saying that he was of age to get married and if he had someone in mind, the king as his father will consider it. It might seem as if he cared enough for his son but everyone know he mistreated Wang Yo for years.

And as if the heavens heard it, this little miss out of nowhere fall upon Yo. It’s like the heaven saying;

‘I know your father don’t like you, but I like you. Take this girl and be merry!’

Ta-jin knew his own imagination was a wild one, but he cared about Yo and wanted the best for him. And this little Agassi doesn’t seem bad at all.

“Well, he is an enigma but within reason. If he trusted you than you are lucky, he will protect you fiercely. But once you betray him, he will make you wish for death. That’s it.” He took a sip from his cup. Delicious. A woman’s tea is different from a man’s tea.

Nodding in understanding, Hae Soo asked “But why did he spend all his time here? I suppose his mother wanted him in Songak. Seokyeong is miles away from the capital, she probably miss him.” If she recall, Wang Yo was the golden son of Queen Yoo, wasn't it?

She was surprised when Ta-jin scoffed in dismay, “There is Wang Tae, her golden boy! The one who is on par with the Crown Prince, both favored by the king. Why bother with this son.”

That make Soo stared at Ta-jin in shock. Wang Tae is alive?! She knew that Wang Tae was next in line after Crown Prince Wang Mu, but when she’d arrived in Goryeo the first time,

Wang Tae was dead. But how come so many things drastically changed in this three years?

Hae Soo found herself more curious than ever.

Ta-jin took a deep breath before looking straight into her eyes, “Yo was stuck in the middle right now.”

“How?”

“His uncle want to push him to the throne, but his father wanted the Crown Prince as his heir. And his mother, she wanted Tae to make her shine.” Ta-jin look troubled than ever.

The fight for the throne had been fierce from the start, Hae Soo mused.

“What about Yo? What does he want?” she cautiously ask. Ta-jin might be friendly and all but Soo could see how loyal he was to Wang Yo. He probably won’t hesitant to cut off her head if she ever ask anything weird.

Ta-jin observe the petite girl for quite some time, “What do you think?”

Hae Soo couldn’t see any emotion beneath Ta-jin’s calm exterior. The question itself was trickier than it seems.

“The third price seems... indifferent?” that was her honest answer. From what she notice in during her stay here, he really seems indifferent. She know for a fact that, these so called court break was a time where all those contender for the throne sought for noble families’ support.

But Wang Yo spend his time hunting, reading, playing with her and Ta-jin and... sword fighting. The later baffled her and she asked both Yo and Ta-jin, didn’t Yo prefer archery?

And they laugh at her. Later, after her not talking to them for the whole day, Yo explain that he is indeed a good archer but he prefer sword. Archery is Ta-jin’s forte, bull’s eye every single time.

Hae Soo let it slide, but a bad feeling started to creep into her heart.

Back to her conversation with Ta-jin, the man just give her a cryptic smile.

But his statement baffled her completely,

“Yo is not betrothed yet.”

## Chapter End Notes

What do you think about Yo/Soo/Ta-jin dynamic? ( not a love triangle tho )  
Criticisms are welcomed.



# Chapter 4

## Chapter Summary

Hae Soo puzzled him. So much that he's start to doubt himself.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It was on the tenth day after her arrival on the Seokyeong residence that Yo announce, he plan to return to Songak in two days. Court session will be held in the next week, so the timing will be right. But another problem cross her mind.

Returning to Songak, where would she go? The Hae clan? But truth to be told, she only knew Hae Myung Hee, Eight Prince Wang Wook wife, or future wife, that's it.

But be it 16 or 19 years old Wang Yo, he is still Wang Yo. He knew everything, and it was him who had figured out what happened to her. He narrates that her entourage were indeed heading to Songak. Her father was a merchant whom travelled all over Goryeo, but a few month back, the real Hae Soo's father died unexpectedly. She lost her mother since she was 6. With no one to turn to, her paternal uncle, Minister Hae Ming invited her to stay with the main branch Hae clan in Songak.

Her household temporary residence was located near the East Sea thus their journey was far and tedious. On the road, her procession was surrounded by bandits. Hae Soo, a young merchant daughter naturally didn't take a lot of guards with her per usual.

That was how Hae Soo end up in the middle of nowhere. The rest was history.

Hearing that, Soo does remember Lady Hae told her about her father's demise. Poor girl. Secretly, she sigh in relief. At least she knew Hae Myung Hee and her father, Minister Hae.

She then asked Yo how did he knew about her circumstance and he smiled, "I have ears all over Goryeo, Soo."

A royal is still a royal. No matter how simple they look like.

Thus, she went along with Wang Yo's plan.

The next two day pass in relatively silence. Both Wang Yo and Ta-jin were busy preparing for their journey and she pack for their food. From Seokyeong to Songak, it will take a week if they traveled with carriage. At first, Hae Soo refuse Yo's offer on taking a carriage but thinking that Yo probably going to buy her a horse. A horse that she don't know how to ride at that, she agreed on his offer.

...

Hae Soo has been staring at the chest for a long time. The same chest that had been given to her by Wang Yo. It was moderate in size but clearly not suitable for a long journey. A pity that she couldn't take it to the Hae household in Songak. But it would be shameless if she does take it back with her.

Wang Yo had accommodate her enough, for her to take it all would be an embarrassment. She sigh dejectedly.

"Take it." Soo turn to see Wang Yo leaning on her door. He was clad in dark brown travel outfit, a band around his forehead and hair half tied. It takes a non brainer not to admit that the third prince is indeed handsome.

"I could not, you have accommodate me enough, wangja-nim." She looked at Yo who had make a stride towards her. His face was devoid of emotion, just his usual serene face.

Yo took a step besides her and open up the chest, didn't once realize Hae Soo's look of horror.

It was true that he had thrown away some silver and let the dressmaker handled it, but he had personally chosen some hairpins too. Rummaging into the chest, he ignore all the small silk clothes. It will not do him and Hae Soo any good to embarrass themselves.

Finally, he pull out several hairpins and shove it all into Soo's little hand. All of it was simple in design, but it suits her taste none the least. She was a simple girl after all.

"Take these. The chest is indeed heavy but some knick knack doesn't hurt your pouch." He carelessly sit beside her. They will start the journey to Songak in an hour. He had time to kill.

Smile bashfully, she thank him. "Thank you, wangja-nim." She could hear his scoff.

"You have never called me wangja-nim, why start?" he look at her closely. Yo never going to admit it out loud but he like her calling him Yo. Screw that, he like it a lot.

"If people in Songak heard me casually calling the third prince by his name, it would be scandalous. They probably going for my head." Because our fate wasn't supposed to be intertwined, Wang Yo.

"Leave the chest in this room. Who knows, some day you might need it." He said nonchalantly, as if there is no underlying meaning.

Closing the chest, she glare at him suspiciously "Someday?"

He smile, and for the first time, his eyes shine in delight.

“Who knows.” His dark gaze was piercing, not menacingly, like once when she had served him. It was warm.

And it make her heart pound.

It wasn't supposed to be like this.

...

Wang Yo was a simple man. He understand his surrounding, the people around him and more importantly, Wang Yo understand himself. He was quite straightforward too.

And that girl, Hae Soo, she was a little cautious around him. He's not blind. While she greets him warmly, make him tea and talk to him as if they had been friend since forever, he could see the wall. It was not present when Ta-jin was around so he knew it was directed to him.

To be honest, he didn't mind. It was for her own good. A cautious woman is smart woman.

But what bothers him was, the surprise in her eyes every time he does something good. It was as if she always draw him as someone who isn't capable of being nice. And every time he prove her otherwise, she had this look of utter horror on her face. While it was never that obvious, Yo is an observant person. He could see what others couldn't.

Especially if it's involving him.

He first realize it on the day she first cooked for them. The chicken soup was excellent, it could rival the palace cook easily. Naturally, he as a gentleman was supposed to complimented her but to his surprise, she choked on her food instead. It took two cup of water to calm her down. Ta-jin had teased him all day long.

That was not the worst part.

The worst part was when she had washed his clothes. Admittedly, all this while, it was Ta-jin who had washed his clothes. Wang Yo was a prince after all but seeing Hae Soo washing his muddy garments doesn't feel right. She was his guest after all, not his servant. So, he offered to help her which she refuse ardently but he insist back. That, resulting in them knocking a pile full of water on him. He was shocked and it was an understatement. He didn't mind actually, just a little bit shocked.

But Hae Soo.

Hae Soo had her head on the floor begging for forgiveness as if he was her deity. She was scared shitless and the look on her face...as if...as if he was going to hit her!

Did he ever does something that had frightened her like that?

Or maybe it was the after effect of him killing two people in front of her back in the woods? But she was never frightened when Ta-jin and he were practicing sword fighting in the garden.

And Ta-jin killed people too! It's not just him!

For someone who pride himself of being intuitive, the fact that he doesn't have a slight idea on why she was afraid of him hurt his ego.

But Wang Yo couldn't lie to himself. He does attracted to her, plain and simple.

The girl was intriguing but not overbearing, quick witted, fierce when it needed to and she brew the best tea. She ticked all the right thing in his book. Now that he think again, thank god father had not decreed any marriage on him. For once, being the unfavoured son does have it perks.

Moreover, Hae Soo was from the Hae clan. Not that he cared about her status, but palace life is hard and harsh. If she does have her own backing, she could breathe easier.

Besides, he was going to pursues father to let him move to Seokyeong.

Truly, he doesn't want to be involve in the palace political scheme. Yo knew Uncle Shik Ryeom is pushing him into the fight and if anything ever happened to Tae, mother was going to push her ambition to him. He doesn't want that. Yo just want to live, away and free from that dirty place. It would be a bonus if he managed to find a wife before that.

Maybe if the other person consent, he could request marriage too.

As hard as it to believe, Wang Yo find himself blushing.

## Chapter End Notes

The first five chapter will be light, setting the pace between Yo, Soo and Ta-jin. Pay attention to the small details people, it's getting dark.

# Chapter 5

## Chapter Summary

They wanted Yo on the throne. Not Mu and obviously not Tae.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The journey to Songak was tedious, while they did stop at nearby inn comes dawn, it was still tiring. Hae Soo couldn't imagine what Ta-jin felt like. Yo insist that both of them should takes turn driving the carriage but the bodyguard refuse, saying that he would lose his head if any noble personage saw that he let a prince drive a carriage. Wang Yo just scoff in disdain.

The whole event resulting in Hae Soo and Wang Yo spending 12 hours a day for a whole week. With no other activities to be done in the small carriage, the two talked. A lot. From the smallest subject of foods to political schemes in the capital.

And Hae Soo going to admit that Wang Yo is a good conversationalist. Engaging and he pay attention to the small little things that she told him.

"I like jasmine and black tea, so what type of person am I?" they were talking about tea, or to be specific, Hae Soo was talking about tea. Wang Yo has been intently listening before asking.

"A black hearted bastard!"

That was not her answer, it was Ta-jin's. Both Yo and she always talked loud enough for Ta-jin to slide into the conversation, and his input was hilarious. Both him and Yo had been insulting each other every single time and Soo as the spectator could only laugh, it was amusing.

Seeing Yo's annoyed look was amusing but she will take pity on him...

"Well, to be honest, Ta-jin is right."

Or not.

"This is an act of treason! Execute!" Wang Yo was snarling at her but the mirth in his eyes could not be mistaken. If the other version of Wang Yo said the exact same word to her, Soo could only pray to Buddha to place her in heaven.

"Your Holy Highness, please forgive this lowly subject!" She slightly bow to him, her face mock solemn. Looking back at him, Soo could see the laughter in his eyes.

“To be honest, Jasmine suits you truly. Cool, calm and collected.” And there’s another thing. While all the things she said were true, the second fragment from what she had reads in Oh sanggung’s notes really points out to him.

A person shut out from the world. A person who kept in all in his heart.

The third prince didn’t show it, but deep inside, he was hurting. From her conversation with Ta-jin back in the garden, she realized, Queen Yoo only used her sons for her own standing. Now, that Wang Tae is alive, her other sons aren’t that remarkable. Soo’s afraid of what’s going to happens in the future.

“Hm... understandable. It’s weird, the way you talked reminds me of Oh sanggung, the way you brew tea too.” Yo eyed her curiously. As far as he knows, Oh sanggung doesn’t have any family members left, thanks to his dear mother. People said hell halt no fury like a woman’s scorn, but his dear mother is a demoness reincarnate. No wonder his father favor Oh sanggung so much.

Hae Soo try to hide her shock. Sure, Oh sanggung was like a mother figure for her, but in this timeline, she haven’t met the woman yet. Oh sanggung of course, didn’t know she exist either. With that, she gave Yo a questioning look.

“Oh... sanggung? I’ve never heard that name before, but I will take that as a compliment. She seems like a remarkable woman.” She smile brightly. Her foster mother is indeed a remarkable woman.

“Indeed.” His dark gaze found hers, “and maybe I should smuggle you into the palace too.”

She gave him a questioning look once again, “What?”

“She will loves you.” Yo give her one last smile before opening a book to read.

With the sound of horses galloping, Hae Soo look out of the window. The prospect of meeting Oh sanggung was thrilling but Songak’s dark cloud will forever haunt her.

And the thought of the man in front of her, as dignified and calm as he was, capable of killing his brothers troubled her greatly.

...

“Master, third prince has arrived in Songak.” The servant inform Wang Shik Ryeom in his study.

“Dismiss.” With a wave of hand, the servant retreat from the room. Leaving Wang Shik Ryeom with his ‘special’ guest from Songak.

Sipping his tea, Wang Shik Ryeom took a glance at the man in front of him. They are cousin, had known each other for life. Both of them has fought for Goryeo, years back but only Taejo held the throne.

He retreated from the palace political scheme years ago, so does the man in front of him.

But it was no secret that he had secretly supporting Wang Yo all along, even while his nephew had never once dream of the throne. A pity. Among Taejo's sons, for him, Yo shine brightly. Brilliant in mind, a good strategist, decisive in conduct and not easily sway.

Too bad his father is that credulous Taejo who rather believes in stars rather than talent. What an eyesore.

And Yo, unknowingly had the powerful house supporting him. He, in the surface might seem like a carefree old man without any power, but who didn't know that half of the courts was his man? Naturally, the Yoo clan will support any of Queen Yoo's sons who will fight for the throne, but the queen favor Tae so much that she turned blind eyes on Yo.

And the man in front of him, just last week, had send a missile saying that he will support the third prince wholly.

But what puzzled him was...

Isn't Wang Gyu's only grandson is a prince too?

"Hyung-nim, I heard the third prince entered Songak with a girl from the Hae clan." Wang Gyu meet the older man gaze. The game of Go between them was long forgotten.

He didn't traveled all the way from Songak to play Go with Wang Shik Ryeom either.

The older man smirk in delight, of course he knew. All of Seokyeong was his after all. Foolish Yo. Wang Shik Ryeom knew where exactly his nephew's secret residence was, but he will let Yo have that. His people informed him a week ago, about his nephew and the Hae girl.

The girl was from the side branch of the Hae clan. Her father was a rich merchant, dead not so long ago. The girl was the only heir and her father had transferred all the inheritance long ago to Songak, under her name. He knew Minister Hae has been keeping the deeds for her.

If Yo ever marry the girl...

Wang Shik Ryeom smile in delight.

"Tae is an eyesore, Gyu-ah."

Hearing that, Wang Gyu smirk. Wang Tae, that good for nothing fool, acting all powerful behind his mother. Destroying him would be easy. Too easy.

But to convince Yo to fight for the crown would be difficult. The boy was unbreakable.

Wang Gyu knew, the man opposite of him was curious, on why he decided on supporting Wang Yo. Didn't he have his own grandson?

To be honest, Eun is indeed young but even in ten years, he could never see Wang Eun sitting on the throne. He was soft and gullible. The throne will crush Eun alive.

Why would he crush his own grandson when he could crush others?

Looking at the abandoned Go board, Wang Gyu met Shik Ryeom's delightful gaze.

"Should we play, hyung-nim?"

## Chapter End Notes

Yes, Wang Gyu IS Eun's grandfather.

Tell me what you guys think about the plot!

# Chapter 6

## Chapter Summary

Power play is a dangerous thing, and Yo has been dragged unknowingly.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It was midday when they finally entered Songak. Wang Yo decided to send Hae Soo first. He had people sending a missile straight to the Hae clan manor a few days after they rescued Hae Soo. He had promised the minister to send the girl right away after he entered Songak, and Wang Yo is an honest man.

His gaze landed on Hae Soo whose eyes never left the scenery of Songak once they arrived. Yo found himself smiling.

The long journey to Songak made the third prince think about a lot of things, mainly about the girl sitting across from him. These past few days, he got to know her much better and Yo has been thinking.

Should he court her?

But Hae Soo doesn't seem affected by him as he was by her. Yo scoffs in disdain to himself. He really had no luck in women but truly, Hae Soo was the first girl that had caught his eyes. He was not a vain man, while Hae Soo was pretty, but comparing to those girls from noble families all over Songak, he could say that Soo was average. Although... her personality does make her shine brighter than others, that he could admit. Didn't they say beauties fade but a beautiful soul remains forever?

Maybe he should try the water first, "Soo-yah."

Hearing her name being called, Soo turned to face Yo. She raised her brows in question.

Yo was hesitant for a while before blurting out with hopeful eyes, "Can I court you?"

The moment those words came spurting out of his mouth, Wang Yo regretted his whole existence. He should just kill himself.

Hae Soo was shocked beyond words. Did he say what she thought he said? She knew Wang Yo had always been blunt but not to this extent of bluntness! What should she say?!

'Oh sorry Yo, but I was pining over your brother since over a lifetime ago!'

So she settled to gaping like a fish, speechless.

An awkward silence past between them, minus the odd choking sound from Ta-jin outside.

“We had arrived, Your Highness.” Ta-jin announced, but the snicker in his voice could not be concealed.

Inwardly he thought, he should take Yo to the brothel soon. Real soon. This boy needs all the help.

Maybe he could take him tonight?

Yes. Tonight is good.

...

Standing in front of the Hae residence was Minister Hae and his daughter Hae Myung Hee, the later was anxious to see her little cousin. The moment she heard that Hae Soo’s procession was attacked by bandit on the way to Songak, Myung Hee had begged her father to search for Soo but father told her that Soo has been saved by the third prince. Her worries has been turn down by degrees after that.

She was betrothed to the eight prince Wang Wook a few months back, so she had meet the third prince. By the look of him, she knew that Hae Soo was in a good hand.

“Unnie!” an excited looking Hae Soo jump out of the carriage, wearing a simple hanbok. Her hair was in a simple braid. The third prince come out right after her, wearing a serene face but his red ears could not be mistaken.

Seeing both his daughter and niece excitedly chatting to each other, Minister Hae turned to Wang Yo whose gaze never leave Hae Soo’s smiling face. Interesting.

“Greetings, wangja-nim.” Hae Ming bow slightly. He might be older than Wang Yo, but the other is a prince.

Accepting the bow with his own, Wang Yo acknowledge the older man, “Good day, Minister Hae.”

“Thank you for your benevolence, wangja-nim. I could not imagine what could have been to little Soo if Your Highness Third Prince didn’t interfere.” Again he bow deeply to Wang Yo but was held back by the price.

“No need to thank me, Minister Hae. It was a coincidence that I had encountered Hae Soo on the road. Anyone in my situation would have done the same.” Yo smile bashfully. He notice Wook’s betrothed, Hae Myung Hee approaching both him and Minister Hae with Soo clinging to her. Not wanting to look at Soo’s face, Wang Yo turn back to Minister Hae.

Smiling in delight, Hae Myung Hee greets the prince, “Greetings, wangja-nim. I want to thank you for saving my little sister and for taking care of her these past days.” At the same time, she took a glance at Hae Soo. The girl was clearly avoiding Wang Yo’s lingering eyes. Hm...

Smiling back at Hae Myung Hee, Yo retort, “It was nothing Miss Hae. Soo was not a burden at all.”

Ta-jin who has stayed as a silent bystander had to forcefully swallow his laugh. God save this boy. He really out there affectionately called her Soo in front of her uncle! Was this an indirect proposal! Goodness Yo!

Hae Ming heard the way Wang Yo unintended called his niece by name, totally in ease. He met Myung Hee’s surprised glance. Taking a swift glance at Hae Soo, the girl was utterly oblivious, as if it was a normal thing for a prince to call her casually.

Clearing his throat, Hae Ming invited the prince inside for tea.

“I’m afraid that I have to disappoint Minister Hae. Father-wang was expecting me in the palace hall.” Yo could see the understanding in the minister’s face before he bow in goodbye.

“Of course, wangja-nim. I shouldn’t delay you.” Hae Ming echoing Yo’s movement with ease.

Nodding off to Hae Myung Hee, Wang Yo bid his goodbye, “I shall be going Miss Hae...”

And finally, his eyes meet Hae Soo’s doe like one. “Hae Soo.”

Hae Soo nod in acknowledgement but quickly divert her eyes elsewhere. Her shock of hearing his somewhat confession didn’t wear off yet.

As Wang Yo retreat back to his carriage, Hae Soo remembered the bag of tea she had brewed especially for him. Ta-jin has told her that he preferred wine so she only brew the tea for Yo. Next time she would sneak something for Ta-jin, Soo promised herself.

Setting her pace towards him, Hae Soo called “Yo-ah!”

Wang Yo stop abruptly and sharply turn to her.

Quickly, Soo realized her mistake, this is Songak for goodness sake! Who in their right mind would call a prince by the name! She really didn’t want to turn to her uncle right now. The old man probably had the fright of his life!

“I... I mean... wangja-nim!” Hurriedly she walk to Wang Yo, facing his insufferable amusement. She could see that Yo was having the time of his life.

“Yes, Miss Hae?” looking down at the girl in front of him, Yo was clearly amused but also curious. The girl was rummaging into the pouch on her waist for something.

Taking out the small bag from her pouch, Hae Soo presented the bag to him, "I brew you some tea, wangja-nim. Share it with Ta-jin would you!"

Just a few step from the pair, Ta-jin could hear the exchange clearly. Taking a step closer, jabbing Yo's side painfully, he said in low voice, just enough for the other two to heard him.

"You heard her bastard! Share it with me."

Glaring at his bodyguard, Yo could only scoff in annoyance.

Smiling at the exchange, Soo finally bid them goodbye, "Until then Ta-jin." Waving a little at him which he only reply with a nod. Turning back at Yo, she meet his dark gaze.

"Until then, Wang Yo."

...

"The third prince seek an audience, Pheya." Jo-sangseon inform the monarch of his son arrival.

Wang Geon caress his cup before his gaze landed on the entrance of the hall.

"Let him in."

He was dying to know his third son's adventurous rendezvous in Seokyeong.

King Taejo wasn't a suspicious man to begin with, especially to his sons.

But hearing that his own brother Wang Gyu had spent quite some time with his dreadful cousin in Seokyeong. Naturally, Taejo become suspicious.

And Yo had spent the entirety of the court break there. He also heard that Wang Yo had spent quite some time with Hae Ming's niece. The rich heiress.

He knew Shik Ryeom wanted Yo on the throne, Taejo know how influential the man was. He had hoped his cousin has chosen Mu sides, but he also knew how Shik Ryeom adored Yo.

He didn't expect Wang Gyu to team up with Shik Ryeom. While his brother seems harmless, he knew how ruthless the man can be. What he didn't get was... why did he chose to support Yo?! The one who was actively participating for the fight for the throne right now was Mu and Tae.

He would never jeopardize Mu's position for the throne!

And Yo...

Yo never once seems like he cared.

Or does he?!

He afraid, if the rumour of Yo and the little Miss Hae turn out to be true...

Wang Yo would be unstoppable.

“His Highness Third Prince has arrive!”

Did Wang Yo desired the throne greatly?

## Chapter End Notes

Starting from this chapter onward, the politic schemes and palace dirty play will be increasing.

Let me know what you guys think!

# Chapter 7

## Chapter Summary

Angst. Some serious daddy issue.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Wang Yo has been kneeling on the palace hall for quite some times. His father neither dismiss him nor talking, but Yo isn't senseless either. His father-wang might not saying anything, yet but halting him from leaving the hall, Yo know the king was suspicious of him.

And Yo absolutely knew what has been bothering his father.

Staring down at his son, Taejo observe Wang Yo. His third son had just entered the court this year, after his coming of age. Only talk when he was talked to, only stand when he was asked to. Never paying much attention to others.

Yo was not as timid as Mu, nor brash as Tae. He was calm and intelligent, cunning at times too but never once outshine his brothers. If he, as a king was to choose between the three of them, of course Yo would easily inherit the throne. Without a doubt.

But as a father, he would never let anyone, even his own sons to surpass Mu. Wang Mu, his first born, the one who had fight by his side for Goryeo. He had built Goryeo just for Mu to flourish it even further. His other sons just have to take turn after that. If ever.

If Wang Yo ever think to overthrown Mu in the fight for the crown, he as a king would put an immediate stop to it.

“How was Seokyeong, Yo-ah?”

His voice was pleasant to the ears, too pleasant. Since when his father ever pleasant to him? Yo thought in disdain.

“As usual, nothing much had happened, father.” Yo wasn't one for lovely pleasantries, especially to the likes of his father, the king. It was never a father and son relationship between them, just a king and his royal subject. A little pawn in the game of power. A lamb waiting to be sacrificed.

He knew why father favoured Tae, foolish Tae. He almost want to spat.

Tae was a foolish man. He was never a treat for Mu, not even a hairbreadth. It was save to favour him. Tae was brash, was foolish, was everything a king shouldn't be.

But not he, Wang Yo was the biggest treat in his father's eye.

"I heard you were there with a certain... Miss Hae?" Taejo observe Yo's every movement.

Wang Yo's whole body when rigid when Soo was mentioned. Dread gripping his heart.

"I encountered her being surrounded by bandits alone on the road. It was a duty of mine to save the people on your behalf, Pheya." Yo had to switch his approach in maneuvering his father's trap. Now, he wasn't the son, having a heart to heart with his father. He was a prince, ducking a treasonous threat looming over his head.

If he ever took a wrong step, even a little. Yo was afraid for his head.

"What a good son you are, Wangja-nim." Sipping his tea, the king's gaze never left the stilling figure of the prince. He felt a flash in irritation just by seeing the boy.

"A good son indeed... so tell me, Wangja-nim."

Yo gaze never left the floor. Taking a deep breath, he brace himself for the blow.

"Do you want the throne, Yo-ah?" the tone was jovial, but the hatred in Taejo's eyes couldn't been concealed.

He had expected the accusation, he wasn't supposed to feel anything. But the moment those words spurting out of his father's mouth, it hurt. It hurt so much.

His visions blurred with unshed tears.

"Do you think so little of me, father?" it was a mere whisper, but Taejo heard it none the least.

Laughing in disdain, Taejo retort, "What so little about you, Wangja-nim?! That beloved uncle of yours in Seokyeong? Your mother Yoo clan? That brother of mine, Wang Gyu?! That rich girl you bought to Songak!"

The hall was booming with the king's voice, splatting with hatred.

Wang Yo was still on the spot, kneeling. He will never let his father see how his words affected him. Braving himself, Yo took a deep breath before lifting his chin to meet his father murderous gaze.

"I am a prince before I am your son, Pheya. My loyalty will always be to you and the crown prince."

His throat constrict painfully, "Please, trust me, Pheya."

Taejo look down to his son.

Should he trust this little snake?

The nerve of this boy.

“Why should I trust you, Wangja-nim?” the venom dripping from his mouth.

Yo was held speechless.

Trust.

Trust.

Trust.

“I.... I....”

Trust.

Something inside him snapped.

“Banish me, disown me... anything. I will do anything for you to trust me, Pheya!” he was defeated.

“I... I will spend my days away from Songak. Seokyeong... I will return to Seokyeong! I will never step a foot ever again in Songak, Pheya! Anything.” He couldn’t feel anything but pain.

He couldn’t even feel the tears wetting his cheek.

‘Why can’t you trust me, father.’

But Taejo was bursting with anger, his fury sprang to life.

“SEOKYEONG?!” he spat in disgust. The tea cup in his hand has been thrown across the hall.

The sound of the cup crashing into a million pieces shook Yo to the core.

“Do you think I will let you huddle in the dark with your beloved uncle, Wangja-nim?” it come as a threatening whisper, one that make Wang Yo cower in fear.

“I will kept you here, in Songak, in front of my eyes. I am watching you every move Wang Yo. If you ever touch Mu...”

"I will crush you....”

“Your person...”

“That Ta-jin...”

“That Hae Soo...”

“I will crush them all.”

Yo's whole frame shudder, his balled fist turning white, the fingers digging his palm were drawing blood. His chest constricted in pain.

He wanted to scream.

Not Ta-jin.

Not Soo.

Not HIS persons.

“Dismiss.” With a wave of Taejo's hand, Wang Yo stand on his shaky legs. Existing the hall, Yo made a vow.

Vowing to himself.

No one.

Not even his father can touch HIS persons.

Not as long as he lives.

## Chapter End Notes

Kinda forgot to tag the story as Angst. Oh well.

Not gonna lie, I felt bad for Yo myself, but I'm evil like that.

So... tell me what you guys thought! Love hearing from you guys!

# Chapter 8

## Chapter Summary

Hae Soo is actually clueless about tea. Wang Yo is a certificate stalker. Wang Eun and Wang Jung are trouble. and Ta-jin had enough of babysitting.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The summers was coming to an end. Hae Soo had not meet Yo and Tajin for weeks since they send her home. She didn't mind, at least it gave her time to settled herself within the Hae household.

Hae Myung Hee still treated her as a sister, someone she could coddle and protect. Minister Hae was a father figure, stern but also very gentle to both of them. He was also an overprotective guardian, to Hae Myung Hee and to an extent, Hae Soo too.

Soo would never forget the conversation between the father and daughter duo and her over tea, that day of her arrival. She could feel her cheek burning still and her uncle was a really blunt man who also shameless to the core!

“Tell me Soo-yah, do you like the third prince?” that question sending Hae Soo into a choking fit over her tea. What kind of question is that?! What made the whole scene bizarre was Minister Hae's very interested expression.

Myung Hee who was patting Soo's back calmly retort, “Don't be absurd father. The other is a prince!” seeing that Hae Soo has recover from her choking episode, she add teasingly.

“Besides...” Myung Hee elegantly lift her cup.

Taking a sip from her cup, she dropped the bomb, “Isn't tea symbolize the foundation of a relationship?”

Hae Ming's laugh explode in instance. Who didn't saw how Soo forgot all her etiquette and call out the prince by name just to give the man a bag of tea? Goodness! He almost had a heart attack hearing the girl calling the prince like that, but seeing Wang Yo's amused face appeased his shock almost immediately.

Hae Soo could only stare crudely between her uncle and Myung Hee. Tea... foundation of... RELATIONSHIP?! What kind of nonsense was that?!

“It's just tea?!” Soo said in bewilderment. She doesn't recall other hidden meaning of giving tea as a gift. Is there any meaning?

Still very much amused at her cousin's innocence, Myung Hee took pity on her, "Goodness Soo-yah, you gave him tea! Do you know what does it mean?"

Pouting, Soo shake her head.

Muffled the laugh with the back of her hand, Myung Hee look at her little cousin, "Tea as a gift, Soo-yah, is a start of a relationship. Implying, that you accept his courting."

Hae Soo was stunned. Her mind had stop working at this point.

Snickering lightly, Hae Ming saw how shocked Soo was, "The third prince might not thought of that, Soo-yah. It was just a gift of good intention, he will understand." He soothed her worries.

Smiling he add, "Wang Yo is great in conduct, if you are interested in him, this uncle of yours will personally send the dowry to him." Hae Ming couldn't help himself.

"Uncle!" Soo shriek in horror. This is too much! Luckily, the man's word soothe her worries. It would be very troublesome if Yo really thought that she accepted his proposal back in the carriage.

Soo sigh in relieve. Thank goodness! That impromptu request really shock her to the core.

Myung Hee send an apologetic smile, "Sorry for teasing you, Soo-yah."

Hearing that, Hae Soo scoots closer to Myung Hee, clinging to her.

"It's alright. If you didn't tease me, who will?" Hae Soo felt a touch of melancholic in her heart. She remember clearly, how Myung Hee had took her last breath as Wang Wook carried her at that snowy land. It tug her heart painfully. She swore to take care of Myung Hee in this lifetime.

Patting the hand clinging to her arm, Myung Hee grin in amusement. Soo is the little sister she never had, of course she must treat her as a sister should. Especially regarding boys.

"Besides," both girls turn to Hae Ming.

Looking back at the girls, the minister nonchalantly add, "That symbolism only applied if he asked to court you. If not, it just tea."

Hae Soo's smile instantly drop.

Luckily, both her uncle and cousin dropped the subject, not realizing how affected Soo was. Thank god, Wang Yo didn't shown up in front of the Hae's gate with dowries or something. Soo would have to drown herself for the umpteenth time just to get herself back to Seoul.

Hae Soo shudder in fear just thinking of that.

Drifting back to the present, Hae Soo frown. Just this morning, a palace messenger arrived with invitation for both Hae's girl.

If Hae Soo recalled correctly, it was almost time for the Charyeon, the end of summer festival. The invitation in her hand was indeed for the Maypole dance.

Hae Soo couldn't help but snicker in horror. Maypole dance is something she had never tried, not even once. She does remember the symbolic though. Fate intertwined, of a man and a woman like the how the silk ropes on the pole intertwined as you dance thru the night. How ironic.

Only the unmarried will be invited, but Myung Hee is betrothed to the Eighth Prince. It was a compulsory for the two of them to show up together. That had left Hae Soo alone.

Or she thought.

...

"You seriously need help, Yo." Ta-jin eyed the prince in disgust. It has been weeks since the last time they saw Soo but Yo, freaking Wang Yo had stalked the girl almost every day and he, as the faithful servant had to follow him everywhere.

Dressed like a commoner, Yo blended in well. He could passed as a common guard of a noble household easily but Ta-jin didn't approve this nonsense one bit. What so hard to just walk out to Soo and say 'Oh, Soo-yah! You gave me tea, are we courting? It will save the time for both of them, mostly him, rather than this stalking for weeks.

"This is the last time, I promise! Just need to send her the notes." Yo tried to convince him but Ta-jin clearly doesn't buy it. He said that three weeks ago, that lying bastard!

Ta-jin could clearly see Hae Soo's petite silhouette from the distance. Soo and the elder Miss Hae were clearly shopping, oblivious to the fact that Wang Yo has been trailing her. Damn, that Hae Myung Hee is pretty. Too bad she's engaged to Wang Wook.

Dragging his sight to the eyesore in front of him, Ta-jin fight the urge to beat the crap out of Yo. The prince was the definition of a love sick puppy, his sight never left Soo, not even once. He could taste the bile rising to his throat.

Calm, Ta-jin. You're above all of this.

Taking a deep breath, Ta-jin snapped "We've been standing here for three hours! THREE HOURS! Those girls are shopping, Wang Yo! Shopping! Do you know how long women shops?! Do you even know what shopping is?!"

But Wang Yo is a petty bastard, who stalked girl. Girl, not girls. He held no remorse in his body,

"I pay you. Go stand there." Tilting his head towards the wall behind Ta-jin, Yo goading the bodyguard with a devilish smirk. They had been standing on a narrow alley, between a tea

shop and a salt merchant warehouse. Completely hidden.

And Ta-jin was indeed provoked, “YOU!”

But their little jabbing was disturbed by a loud ruckus, a very loud familiar ruckus.

‘Jung and Eun.’ Yo thought regretfully.

“HYUNG-NIM!”

God help him.

Turning to the loud voice, Yo could clearly see his two little brother running towards him. Well, he is indeed their older brother, and he act like one too.

“You brat, did you guys skip lesson again today?!” he ridiculed, as he march toward the two of them with mock calmness.

Ta-jin sigh in exaggeration. Now he had to babysit three royal brats. Great. Just great.

...

“What do you think, Soo-yah?” handing Soo the jade hairpin, Myung Hee turn to see the girl response. The hairpin was carved into the cloud pattern, the jade was cool and smooth to the skin.

“I like it, it’s simple.” Soo nod in approval. Looking around, Hae Soo reach out for a hairpin donned with red cherry blossom design.

But the ruckus outside the store caught her ear even more.

“Stop, hyung-nim!” an oddly familiar voice caught her hearing. Soo turn to the store entrance.

“It’s hurt, hyung-nim!” another voice caught her interest. It sound like someone. With her curiosity picking up, Soo abandoned the hairpin and walked out of the store. She swore, those voices were familiar.

Stepping out of the store, Soo’s gaze landed on the alley just across the street.

Across the street was the unlikely trio of Wang Yo, Wang Jung and Wang Eun, wrecking ruckus on the narrow alley. Hae Soo thought she saw a glimpse of Ta-jin, looking around acting like he didn’t know any of them.

Her sight land on Jung and Eun, once again. A painful thought tug her heart, but her melancholia didn’t last long. Those two start shrieking right away, with Wang Yo’s hand full of ears, with that, Hae Soo hastened toward to them.

...

“Hyung-nim! You’re worse than mother!” Jung spat in vengeance, he regret following Eun to greet Yo. Look how did it end up! Being treated like a kid in the middle of the road!

Sending a deadly glare toward Wang Eun, Jung hissed, “This is your fault, Eun!”

Releasing his hold on Jung’s ear, Wang Yo smack the back of the boy head, “Hyung-nim, Wang Jung. That your brother!” this boy was spoiled too much. If mother couldn’t school him, he will. Definitely.

Eun sticking out his tongue for Jung to see, but clearly not a good decision, Hyung-nim pull his ear even more. Wailing painfully, Eun give Yo his most pitiful eyes, “Hyung-nim, I didn’t do anything?!”

Didn’t do anything his ass, Yo scoff. This two will be the death of him. Goodness.

Pulling their ear more painfully, Yo scold “Didn’t do anything? Do you think I’m stupid Eun?! You, Jung and Baek-ah were supposed to attend Historical class. Now where’s Baek-ah?!”

His group of troublesome brothers aren’t complete yet. It was supposed to be Eun, Baek-ah and Jung against the world, or by the looks of it, against him. Eun might be oldest, by mere months, but Baek-ah was the sensible one.

Jung knew he was in trouble, but if he and Eun were going down, it’s his job to drag Baek-ah too. He took a glance at Eun, well, the evil glint in Eun’s eyes said it all.

“He’s at the Gyobang, Hyung-nim.” Jung said it with a smirk. Oh god help Baek-ah, Hyung-nim is fuming.

Hearing Jung’s words, Yo turn to Ta-jin who was picking his nail by the wall, totally ignoring the trio, “Ta-jin! Go get Baek-ah at the Gyobang.” The bodyguard couldn’t resist to roll his eyes and curse out loud. These brothers will be the death of him. With an insincere salute, Ta-jin went to fetch Baek-ah.

“Yo?”

All three of them turn to the voice. Hae Soo stand awkwardly, facing the weird scene. Wang Yo was acting as a mom to his brothers, what a weird thing to see.

Releasing both his brothers free, Yo grin awkwardly, “Soo-yah!”

Eun and Jung share a suspicious glance. Yo? Soo-yah?

Did they hit a jackpot today?

Looking down at Eun and Jung who were kneeling on the ground, Soo send Wang Yo a questioning glance.

“These are my brothers,” Yo tug Eun’s hair, ignoring his protest “This is Eun”

Turning to Jung, he repeated the same action, “and this is Jung.”

“I hate you, Hyung-nim!” always the loud one, Wang Jung. Yo tug his hair even more.

Soo smiled, so this is how it was. Their brotherly bonds before she entered their life. Did she unintentionally shattered this? Jeongjong words rang loudly. Did her mediation ruin everything? Looking at Wang Yo, who despite being angry at his brothers still had the glint on contentment in his eyes. Did she wreck that glint?

or did someone else?

Her reverie was interrupted by Wang Eun, who had tugged the end of her hanbok. Looking down at him, Hae Soo asked in bewilderment, “Yes?”

Looking at her sheepishly, Eun whispered, “Are you Hyung-nim’s girlfriend?” Jung besides him was busy arguing with Yo.

“No. I’m not his girlfriend!” she whispered back, but Eun had the disbelieving look on his face. Staring straight at her, Eun mouthed ‘liar’ to her face. The nerve!

“You little...” Soo was lost for words. Luckily, Yo notice the little interaction and interfere immediately.

Dragging him by the hair, Wang Yo scold “Wang Eun! Are you a pervert? Get back here before I send you to Master Jo!” in a moment, Eun was back to his original spot.

Back to his calm composure, he probe, “What are you doing here, Soo-yah?” well, admittedly he indeed stalked her, but someone should kill him before he admits it.

“I was at the jewellery shop across the street and heard the ruckus. When I realized that it was you, I came to say hi.” She said truthfully. Looking at the two prince kneeling in front of her, Hae Soo uncomfortably ask, “Wangja-nim, are you going to let you brothers kneel here?”

Hearing that, both Eun and Jung looked at her like she was a god gift to them.

Looking fondly at his two little brothers, “Yes, until Ta-jin came dragging Baek-ah here, both of you are not allowed to move. Understood?”

Eun and Jung answered him in a weak chorus of “Yes, Hyung-nim.”

Nodding in approval, Yo took a step to stand besides Soo, “Were you shopping for Charyeong?”

Ignoring Eun and Jung’s puppy eyes directed at her, Hae Soo admit embarrassedly, “Yes, unnie said I need new clothes since this is my first Charyeong.”

“Ah...”

Awkward silence pass between them.

Eun and Jung took a secret glance at the pair.

Now or never Wang Yo. Now or never.

Wetting his lips, Yo summon all his courage, “Are you going with someone?” There. Bravo Wang Yo.

Hae Soo suspect she had been out for too long, it’s getting very hot. Using her hand to fan her face, Soo took a glance at the third prince. He had been staring at her intently, waiting for her answer.

“No.” she answered. Plain and simple.

“Alright.” That make her turn to him.

That’s it? Really?

It was oddly disappointing.

“Soo-yah!” Hae Myung Hee voice cut through her reverie. Her cousin was waving at her from across the street, waving back Hae Soo knew it’s time to go.

Hiding her disappointment, Hae Soo turn to bids her goodbye but what comes next send electric shock straight to her heart.

Yo gently took her hand in his to place a blue brocade envelope before letting her go. The smile in his face was small but utterly sincere. She knew what this envelop means, her cousin had this envelope too. The Eighth Prince personally deliver it to her.

A personal invitation to the Maypole dance, from a prince none the least. Hae Soo could hear her heart thumping loudly.

And he whispered softly, just for her ear, “See you.”

Hae Soo, as if she was possessed, walk away without looking back. The blue envelope tightly held between her fingers. Not realizing Wang Yo lingering glance.

“Hyung-nim is smitten.” Jung whispered.

“I heard you, Wang Jung.”

This is a lot longer than my usual chapter. Oh well.

I took the Charyeong festival and maypole dance reference from The King in Love. My love for Hong Jonghyun is unconditional.

Tell me what you guys think! Love hearing from you peeps!

# Chapter 9

## Chapter Summary

Know your enemy and know yourself. You can fight a hundred battles without disaster. - Sun Tzu; The Art of War.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Hurry, Soo-yah!" Hae Myung Hee's voice called over her from behind the door.

Looking back at the mirror, Hae Soo checks her makeup and readjusts her jade hairpin. Smoothen the wrinkle on her blue hanbok, she grabs the blue brocade envelope and put it on her sleeve. Inside the envelope was obviously an invitation and an unexpected small note, handwritten by yours truly Third Prince Wang Yo.

‘Soo-yah, do you like tea so much, or do you like me.’

That obnoxious Wang Yo.

Chasing away the thought, Hae Soo slide on her embodied shoes and rushed out of her room. Today is the day of the Charyeong festival, but the king had invited their household with several others for evening tea. The Maypole dance will start afterward, meaning she will be meeting Wang Yo at the palace.

Did she actually accept his invitation? Not really.

Did she reject him? Not really, either.

After he gave her the envelope, Wang Yo just vanished from the earth's surface altogether. Not even a glimpse, so Soo stuck with him. Well, if she was being honest, better him than going alone.

Seeing her cousin was ready to enter their carriage, Soo hastened even more but a hand stopped her. Turning to the owner of the hand, Hae Soo comes face to face with Minister Hae's concerned face. "Yes, uncle?"

“The palace is a scary place, Soo-yah. Be mindful of your words, alright?” Hae Ming reminds her. He knew Soo was capable of taking care of herself, but he got a bad feeling. There must be a reason why the king invited his household, and specially requested for Soo’s attendance. But what?

Then something hit him, hard. Looking closely at his niece, "Soo-yah, are you going to the Maypole with anyone?"

Blushing, she timidly nods. Looking at her uncle's stern face, Soo shamefully bows her head. Alright, she's kind of forget to tell Minister Hae about the invitation.

"The Third Prince?"

"Yes."

Thoughtfully, he observes Hae Soo. He didn't mind Soo went to the dance with Wang Yo, but going with Wang Yo equals to declaring something was going on between the two. On the surface, it might be nothing but Hae Ming knew how this will affect Goryeo political scheme. A prince and a rich heiress, did the king knew about this?

Hae Soo could take care of herself, and Wang Yo, Hae Ming couldn't help but sneer. That boy could do more than take care of himself.

"Alright. Be home before midnight." And Hae Ming secretly roots for Wang Yo, over Hae Soo's heart and, if he was being frank. For the throne. Well, no one should know that.

Bowing down to her uncle, Hae Soo scurried toward the shared carriage with Myung Hee. Leaving Minister Hae leisurely stroll behind her.

The evening would be interesting, the old man mused.

...

"Hyung-nim." Wang Gyu greets Wang Shik Ryeom as they slowly make the way towards the palace hall. The older man nod in acknowledgment.

"The weather is nice, don't you think, Gyu-ah?"

"Of course, I shall go hunt soon."

"You do that."

With that, the two separate ways, as if the conversation never happened.

...

Cold washed over Yo as he spotted Hae Soo entering the hall behind Minister Hae, walking side by side with Hae Myung Hee. This is not good.

Turning to Wang Wook beside him, Yo whispered to him, "Did father invite Soo?" the anxiousness in his voice couldn't be concealed. Hae Soo has been seated behind Minister Hae, right next to Hae Myung Hee but across of them is Mu. Father is up to something, Yo could feel it in his bone.

Taking a glance at his fiancée and her cousin, Wook informs his brother, "Father specially requested Minister Hae to bring her along." When he meets Myung Hee a few days back, she told him about the circumstance and he knew Yo somehow invited Soo for Maypole.

Well, he and Myung Hee gossiped about that, yes.

Wang Yo straightened his stance, but his glance meet Minister Hae's worried one, he didn't like that look. If Minister Hae started to worry over this, then this, whatever his father had cooked up, must be serious. His thought shift toward Mu, who's sitting was right at the front. Them, brothers had been sat by rank starting from Mu, Tae, him, Wook, Won, Eun, Baek-ah and Jung. Father didn't yet release So from banishment in Shinju. It's been years since the last time he meets So, father didn't seem to want to release him anytime soon.

Yo thought enviously, it's better to be banished. So was free from all this political scheme that eats people alive.

Hae Soo took a discreet glance towards Yo, who was lost in thought. He and her uncle seem bothered with something and Hae Soo knew what. Her, her being here bothered them and it bothered her too. It doesn't feel right, Hae Soo was not blind to all these schemes. She knew this is men's play, well except that crazy bitch Yeonhwa.

"The King has arrived!" pushing her thought away, Hae Soo joins the crowd in greeting the king.

Well, shall we see the play?

...

15 minutes pass, with half-hearted praising to the king and full-hearted ass licking by Tae, the party started as uneventful. Just shallow courtesies between the nobles over teas and cakes. Hae Soo scanned the hall.

Directly in front of her uncle is Wang Mu who religiously turning a deaf ear on Wang Tae, who never seems to shut his mouth. Wang Tae... Soo really doesn't know how to describe him except, annoying. The man never once stop talking, bragging over his new manor (?) or something. Wang Yo who sits beside him seems to have a small conversation with Wang Wook.

Well, she needs to admit, Wang Yo positively looks dashing with his dark blue brocade robe, he really does have the bearing of a prince. Now that the Third Prince didn't seem to favor

any sort of eyeliner, Hae Soo could fully appreciate his feature. Sharp noble nose, high cheekbones, a slight pout for lips and his eyes, his obsidian dark eyes. He really doesn't have to wear any sort of eye makeup, his was so expressive and honest. At least, now he doesn't look so evil, those eyeliners make him seem so ruthless.

But Soo's ogling was cut short when the subject of her scrutiny turn sharply toward her.

Turning his eyes elsewhere but him, her wandering gaze met KinTaejo's. Oh, shoot!

"Ah... is that your niece, Minister Hae?" Taejo saw the girl's wandering eyes settled on Wang Yo for quite some time. His eyes steeled, this shouldn't be good. He needs to put a stop to this.

Hiding his weariness, Hae Ming replied calmly. "Yes, Pheya. This is my niece, Hae Soo." He could feel Soo slightly bowing behind him, that's enough. He did not intend to introduce her even future. The man on the throne's leering gaze bothered him.

Wang Tae spy the girl sitting beside Hae Myung Hee, not bad, "So this is the famous little Miss Hae." He gives her a winning smile. Tae had heard about Yo's little rendezvous with her, very interesting.

Hae Soo only slightly bows towards him.

Ignoring Tae's little jab, Wang Yo observes his father. He didn't like the way father look at Soo, not one bit. Cold sweat drenched his back, he really has a bad feeling about the whole ordeal. Suddenly, the old man's leering gaze turns towards... Wang Mu. Yo feel his anger risen.

"What do you think, Mu-ah."

Hae Soo widens her eyes in shock. What does that question mean?! She notices the grip on uncle's teacup tighten, his entire posture stiffen. Peering at Wang Yo, the prince literary had a murderous glint in his eyes. Oh God, she didn't like this one bit.

Baffled by his father's question, Wang Mu cautiously retort. "Miss Hae has a beautiful face and graceful in conduct." He didn't know the girl personally ... and he had heard from Jung and Eun, the girl and Yo seem to have something going on. Surely father knew too, right?

Or he didn't care.

Smiling jovially, Taejo probe Hae Ming. "What do you think, Minister Hae?"

If he couldn't stop the girl's heart, the least he could do is separate them completely. One word and he could crush Yo's little heart completely.

Schooling her dismay, Soo held Myung Hee's hand in a painful grip The King is trying to play her like a pawn. A pawn to destroy and tossed away when she had lost her importance. His intention was clear for everyone to see, but for him or for Wang Mu, Hae Soo really couldn't bother to know. She could only hope her uncle didn't sell her to the devil this soon. She really hopes to not cutting herself up this time too.

Hae Ming lifts his eyes to meet Wang Yo. He knew the King's intention and he couldn't let the man do that to his niece. He won't let Soo being a pawn over the King's political scheme and he would never let Soo be a second wife or even worse, a concubine.

The only thing left to protect Soo, is to put her under someone else wings. A man powerful enough to protect her. He, as her uncle was shameful enough to admit that he couldn't do that. He couldn't protect her from a marriage decree, denying would mean betraying the throne. Only if Soo was betrothed, he could deny whatever disturbing thought the king has. Either marrying Mu or marrying the King himself, he as her guardian would never let that happened.

He could just hope that Wang Yo could understand his reasoning. They don't have to marry, he would never force it on them. Just to protect Soo from this impending doom. With that, he opened his mouth.

Looking straight into the king's face, "I understand your intention, Pheya..." Hae Ming turns to again, met the Third Prince scrutinize, begging that Wang Yo understand his intention and play along.

"...but I'm afraid that I have to refuse."

Fuming, Taejo's smile drops instantly. "Why is that, Minister Hae." His voice steeled. How dare he to defy him, the King?!

Wang Yo stared at Minister Hae curiously. The man had given him a discreetly pleading look, and he had to refuse father's advance. What does he playing at? Spying at Hae Soo behind him, Yo could see her complexion paled significantly.

"Well... the Third Prince and I had discussed over some matter, is that right, Wangja-nim?"

What?!

Schooling his shock, Wang Yo now understands why Hae Ming was looking at him like that. This man is incredible, after this, he will give the man a big clap on the back. But now, he really has to play along. No way in hell he will let father marry Soo.

Meeting the King's murderous gaze evenly, Wang Yo flashes him a huge smile.

"It's true, Pheya. I have asked Minister Hae for Soo's hand in marriage."

Yo could hear something drop somewhere around Jung's seat.

Hae Soo almost snapped her neck, between her uncle and Wang Yo, when did this happen?! This is despicable! Utterly outrageous! Did they planned this?!

But, surprisingly, she knew. This whole half-cooked plan somehow will prevent her from the impending doom. A woman promised to others couldn't be touch by anyone. Even more, Wang Yo is Taejo's son. What kind of father lust after his son's woman?! This is brilliant but despicable.

The hall was silent.

Hae Ming knew Taejo was defeated, for now. Both he and Wang Yo had unintendedly unleashed a war towards the king, well, that will have to wait. He and Wang Yo have a lot to talk about and he could feel Hae Soo's murderous gaze directed at him. He chuckled in amusement.

Hae Soo and Wang Yo doesn't need any Maypole to tie their fate.

It was already intertwined.

## Chapter End Notes

First of all, thanks to Mimi who points out my murderous grammar. I read back and cringe, what a horror.

Worry not, will be posting the beta-ed version soon.

Tell me what you guys think! Enjoy peeps!

# Chapter 10

## Chapter Summary

How can friends not know each other? or even engaged?!

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The air in the study stiffen, Hae Soo and Hae Ming gathered in the Third Prince's study, specially escorted by Ta-jin while the prince himself went to settled some 'things'. Her uncle seems nonchalant about it, clearly enjoying his tea. But it bothered her.

"Why are we here, uncle?" She and Wang Yo had forgone the Maypole dance after the whole fiasco at the palace hall, but she had not seen him after the party ended. It was Ta-jin who had informed her uncle about the change of plan. Myung Hee had left with Wang Wook, but not without a worried glance.

The king had been silent after Wang Yo's unofficial announcement, which was a blatant lie. One that had been started by her uncle, which she knew for her benefit but others don't seem to know that. Soo knew why, people saw them entered Songak together, saw them on the street together, and rumors were created. For them to announce courtship, engagement, or even marriage, isn't that normal?

And she saw something. Something malicious in Wang Yo's eyes when he stuck the King with his words.

"Well... he is a prince before he is a man. He is not a simple as he seems, Soo-yah. If he is good to you, be grateful. You don't want to be on his bad side." Hae Ming calmly stated. He realized the moment he mentioned Wang Yo in front of the King, meaning, he is on the prince's side. He had chosen Wang Yo over the King and that had indeed provoked a war within the palace circle.

Hae Soo realized something, that man is indeed Wang Yo. The Wang Yo that she knew, but not as malicious nor murderous but as cunning and meticulous. He just happened to hide those under the exterior of youth and innocence.

The door opened to reveal Wang Yo, walking towards his seats. Hae Soo sees something that she had never seen from him, the authoritative aura, all-powerful and noble. Something only a real prince could bear.

Making himself comfortable on the seat, Wang Yo coldly stares at Minister Hae for a long time before opening his mouth. "Tell me, Minister Hae, did you just sold Hae Soo to me?"

That earned a gasp from Hae Soo. What?!

Shifting on his seats, Hae Ming calmly retorts, “To be honest, Wangja-nim, I only wish for Soo to be saved from the palace schemes. It is not in my intention to pull you in but I couldn’t think of anyone else who would be able to shield Hae Soo.” Minister Hae let out a sigh, he knows, this whole fiasco might bring a whole lot of trouble for all of them but for now, this is the only thing he could do.

And he knows what Wang Yo is capable of. If he didn’t, how could he trust the prince with Hae Soo’s life?

Soo’s eyes never left Wang Yo’s figure, it was unnerving how he seems so alien yet so familiar. It was a perfect mold of both personas that she knew, the kind man who helped her on the roadside and the man who had killed right in front of her. A shade of grey, nor black or white.

Ta-jin was right. Wang Yo is an enigma. You could only see what he let you see, now she knew.

Wang Yo’s sight dart for a while to Hae Soo, the girl looks at him like he was a stranger. In a sense, they are indeed strangers who had not known each other very well yet. She had not known all of him, not that he had allowed her to. She knew Yo, an idle looking prince, carefree and careless. She had not known Wang Yo, a prince who would do anything to survive and protect what he loves.

A pity that they’re back to being stranger now. He could only hope Hae Soo is willing to get to know him, the real him because both part of him, really like Hae Soo. Initially, Wang Yo sigh, he really had no luck in women.

Darting back to Hae Ming, he calmly stated, “Worry not. I’ve asked someone to dart father’s thought away from Hae Soo, for the time being at least but you just dug your own grave, Minister Hae.”

Thoughtfully, he continued, “I could not help you with that. You just announced to the whole world what sides are you in, mine, but I had no sides, Minister Hae. Therefore, I could not help you.”

Hae Ming only nod, he could handle himself but he remembered something, “How about the engagement, Wangja-nim?”

Soo’s ears peak up at that, she’s really curious, what is Wang Yo’s plan about that. If he let out that, they’re not in any sort of romantic relationship, the King will have all of their head but if they went on with that lie...

Hae Soo steeled herself, “I believe, that matter is between the Third Prince and me, uncle.”

Facing Soo who was staring down at him, Wang Yo smiling in approval, “Indeed it is, Hae Soo.”

Turning to Minister Hae, who was indeed intrigued, “Speaking of which, Minister Hae. Such a nice dress, can I steal Soo for a while?”

...

Hae Soo felt defeated, why was her fate was so intertwined with the royal family? First, she falls for Wang Wook and then for Wang So but marry Wang Jung instead! Now, she had to feign engaged to Wang Yo?! What kind of preposterous is this?

But... maybe... her fate is intertwined with Wang Yo. Fate, if it was connected, it doesn't have to be romantic. You don't meet people by mere accident, paths are crossed for a reason. Her path and Wang Yo's are crossed in this lifetime, if this path, however intertwined it will be might, could prevent any bloodbath, any heartbreak, any loss. Hae Soo will take it, however muddy it might be.

But she had things to settle with the prince first.

“So... tell me, Wangja-nim, what is your intention?” if the man was ready to unsheathe his shell, Soo too will do the same.

Smiling, Wang Yo is grateful. At least Soo is not out for his blood or something. Maybe there's hope after all.

“I take care of what is mine.” They're out in his garden, under the moonlight. He glances at Hae Soo, Yo was a bit remorseful, they could have been at the dance if not for his father's petty scheme. Now, Soo has to waste such a pretty dress, pretty make-up, and pretty hair. Pretty much everything.

Soo was startled by his statement, “I am not yours. I only belong to myself!” She eyed him evenly. She would not let a man belittle her like that. She is her own person.

Baffled, Yo retreat, “No! Nothing like that. You are my friend, Hae Soo. Which is short in supply, truthfully.” He really does not have a lot of friends. Acquaintance? That, he had a lot. Enemies too, unfortunately. That is why he valued them greatly, they're his person.

A friend. Soo thought ruefully, “But friend knows each other, Wangja-nim. I don't know if... I have known you enough.” It was a sad truth, she didn't know Yo. Not then, not now. She had never even tried back then. What if she had known him better? Will it change a thing?

“And I don't think you knew me either.”

Her answer makes him ponder. It's true, they're almost stranger, met because of a hapless circumstance. He had never truly revealed himself to her, and it was mutual. But he will settle the engagement first.

“Let's talk about the engagement first, shall we?”

Regarding that, Soo had made up her mind. She knew what she wants. She wants safety, protection but she also knows, all of it could only be achieved by keeping up the façade. Soo tilts her head to see Wang Yo clearly, and she wants to know him better too.

“We are engaged until my coming of age. Until then, we will have to figure out the outcome together.” She smiles at him. A sincere one.

Seeing her smile send him warmth, until her coming of age. A year from now. It seems like a long time but might be over in a blink but, in the meanwhile, he will cherish it. He will cherish her.

“Alright.” He agreed. “...but on one condition.”

Curiously, Hae Soo turns to face him, “What?”

“Can I be your friend?”

Looking at the warmth in his eyes, and the sincerity in his voice, Hae Soo agree.

“Yes.”

## Chapter End Notes

Sorry! The chapter is a bit late, a lil bit busy nowadays. Let's just hope I manage to finish this before college start.

Love hearing from you guys! Hope yall enjoy the chapter! (Yes, I back track their relationship.)

# Chapter 11

## Chapter Summary

Kill or be killed, what choice does we have?

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

6 months later

“Choose! Which one?” Hae Soo points at the two sets of jewelry, one with rubies and the other with pearls. Both are exquisite but Soo is not going to buy both just because her fake-fiancée asked her to.

Pretending to think rather than to actually think is a skill set Wang Yo had developed over the years. Besides, asking him to choose jewelry? While he had developed a fondness over earrings as of late, jewelry for women is not his forte. Especially for dowry.

But he sort of like rubies, “Take the one with pearls.” But Myung Hee looks like a pearl kind of girl.

Hae Soo asked the merchant to pack up the set, satisfied with Yo’s choice. Rubies look a bit fierce for her soft-spoken and elegant cousin, so pearls will do. Her cousin’s wedding will be held in a month, Soo thought it’s a good idea to personally add up Myung Hee’s dowries and she will not let a servant do it. Myung Hee is her sister, not some stranger and she had dragged Wang Yo for that.

“Pack up the other one too and put it on my personal tab.” Yo add, appearing nonchalant about it.

But Hae Soo is not having any of it. “Is it for your mother?” She knew Wang Yo visits his mother, Queen Yoo, every other week after the court session with Jung in tow.

His face devoid of any emotion, “No.”

Hearing his answer, Soo becomes suspicious. Not for his mother... than... who?

“Is there any mistress that I didn’t know, Wangja-nim?” her voice was grave as she stares down at Wang Yo, or rather stare up? She didn’t mind Wang Yo having some sort of mistress, girlfriend, friend with benefits or anything. Hae Soo is not a jealous woman. Yo could have any girl that he wants...

But not while she is in the picture.

Hearing her accusation, Yo burst out laughing. Mistress? What kind of nonsense is that?! But he enjoys Soo's little jealousy episode, at least she cared. Even for a little bit.

Sobering up under Soo's fuming glare, "I like rubies, just for your concern."

But his answers make her even more suspicious. "That is not the answer to my question, Yo-ah." Soo is not relenting. They have been engaged for half a year now, Soo likes to feel that she knows Wang Yo, the real him, and knowing him meaning, she should know if he had any sort of romantic entanglement other than her.

'Wait. Are we romantic?' Her and Yo? Soo marvel at that.

Smiling at his fiancée, 'fiancée', Yo not so secretly like that word. "You are not the only one who is adding up dowries, Miss Hae. As of mistresses, well, my fiancée doesn't like that." He teases her. Well, he is indeed adding up dowries, for her, but Soo didn't have to know that. She told him, until her coming of age, but Yo likes to have hope. If it crushes him, well, let it crush him, at least he had this little bit of happiness out of their sham. Just let him pretend that this is real.

Standing up straight, Soo tries to hide the smile that slowly creeping out of her lips, "Flirt!"

Their whole engagement makes Soo realize that Wang Yo is a flirt, suave and charming but sometimes awkward, too. Often, Soo has to remind herself that their relationship is not real. It was too easy to forget her standing in this whole ordeal, she and Wang Yo were not supposed to have any romantic entanglement in this life or another. But something bothered her.

Did their fraud of an engagement somehow hinder Wang Yo from marrying his supposed wife? A noble lady from the Park clan, if she recalled. Did he actually know the lady?

Her reverie was interrupted by an alarmed voice, calling out to Wang Yo. It's Eunuch Kim. She remembers him, Yo's head eunuch. She had met him the first time she went to the Third Prince's household. The man appears to have running all the way to the store, most likely finding the prince all over the place. Ta-jin is nowhere in sight since Yo had sent him on an errand. Glancing at Yo, he held the same look of curiosity as her.

"Wangja-nim!"

Wang Yo felt that something is not right, Eunuch Kim is the head eunuch of his household. He didn't leave his post if there is no significant event, the only reason Eunuch Kim personally ran all over the place to find him must be related to the palace matter. He didn't like this change of event.

"What is it, Eunuch Kim?" he asked the man.

Glancing at Miss Hae, his master's fiancée, Eunuch Kim realizes that the prince trust Miss Hae enough. Taking a deep breath, Eunuch Kim carefully informs the Third Prince, "Wangja-nim, the Second Prince Wang Tae was found dead in his residence."

Instantly, Hae Soo found herself gripping Wang Yo's arm, hard.

Wang Yo was in shock. He and Tae were not close at all, they are strangers who shared the same blood, that's it. He didn't treat his Hyung-nim like a brother should, unlike the way he treated Jung. Tae was brash, arrogant and so full of himself. To be found dead in his own residence, Yo knew, it was no accident nor suicide.

Someone was aiming Tae. Someone who was aiming for the throne, and they are trapping him, Wang Yo too. Father would accuse him, with Tae gone, Wang Yo would stand directly right behind Mu, the Crown Prince. He knew this is not the doing of someone who is opposing him.

The mastermind behind this was obviously his uncle.

But first, he will have to close every hole that will be used against him.

"Find Ta-jin. Protect the household, do not let anyone enter or leave the compound. Burn everything that should be burned, hide everything that should be hidden, and change everything in colors, our household is mourning." Yo instruct in a cold voice. He will not allow father to point this out on him.

He felt Soo's worried glance, her hands still tightly gripping his arm. His eyes soften.

Turning back at Eunuch Kim, who was ready to run back home. "Escort Miss Hae back to the Hae residence."

Soo's worries did not dissipate. "Yo-ah, are you alright?"

He smiles, dejected, "Kill or be killed, Soo-yah. What else is the option?"

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It takes a few months until the poison deems effective, but it worth every single second of it. There is no side effect, no hallucination, no blood, no nothing. The victim's heart will stop abruptly, like a heart attack, almost painless.

Wang Shik Ryeom smile in delight. Tae is gone, after months of agonizing waiting, the boy is finally dead. He could not guarantee for Yo to not be suspected, Taejo would find any ways to point it out to him but he had hoped. He trusts Yo to found his way out of the whole ordeal, the boy is capable enough. He had enough support from the circle of Songak, Wang Shik Ryeom made sure of that.

And now that Tae is gone, the Queen would not let Taejo took out her only chess piece for the time being. Jung is too young and he will not talk about So, Queen Yoo might as well kill herself before she let So to be king. Wang Yo is her only choice.

But what worried him the most is Wang Yo.

The boy mentioned much time before, over and over again. He did not want the throne, did not want the power. Well, for now, his nephew did not know what it was to feel helpless. Powerless to the things falling apart all around him. Yo did not know that.

Wang Shik Ryeom grin. Well, if that will make Yo consider the throne, what he had to lose to make that happened?

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Entering the palace hall, the whole place was a mess. Wang Yo sees his mother wailing on the floor, clearly falling on deaf ears of the King who is glaring murderously at him. Jung is trying to console mother but useless, mother is inconsolable for now. Hastened his pace, Yo quickly bows down before the King.

“Yo-ah! They kill your brother!” the Queen pushes Jung away, hysterical, targeting him to... what? What did mother expect him to do? They don’t have any physical evidence that Tae was murdered. No one knows the real reason for Tae’s demise.

He does suspect his uncle but what evidence does he have?

And to be honest, he was impartial towards his mother. The woman birthed him, alright but that’s it. While deep inside, he does want mother to treat him a bit different but most of the time, Wang Yo was detached. Poor Tae, mother was hysterical just because she lost her chess piece. The one she spent years of hard work over.

Taejo stared down at Wang Yo. He did not have any proof to point this disaster to Yo, who would be the perfect candidate for a schemer. The boy had motives, by taking out Tae, the chance for him to succeed the throne become more possible. Taejo just needs the perfect evidence to trap Wang Yo.

And doubt is the perfect seed to disaster.

“Asking the culprit will result in nothing, Hwanghu!”

## Chapter End Notes

a little time skip. yay!

Tell me what you guys think! Love hearing from you guys! ~~

# Chapter 12

## Chapter Summary

Tae is dead, but blood need to be paid by blood.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Asking the culprit will result in nothing, Hwanghu!”

Wang Yo stilled at those words. Father is really adamant in making him a culprit, to overthrow him. Very well, two could play the game. But before he could retort his father, Queen Yoo’s shriek startled everyone at the hall.

“Yo will never kill his brother! Don’t you dare to accuse him, Pheya?!” the Queen is now standing, disheveled but once again regain her bearing. Her face full of menace as if ready to straggled Taejo if he ever laid a finger to her children. Jung besides her could only stare, wide-eyed.

Yo didn’t know what to feel. Grateful? Or more... dreadful? His mother only ever did things for herself, live for herself and not for others, even her children. He knew the facts long ago, even learn to not be offended in his mother’s conduct but her defending him? Yo is right to be suspicious.

Taejo darts his murderous glare from Wang Yo to his wife. How careless was he? The King mused. Of course, he forgot about his own wife. A woman who will sacrifice everything to be on top, never below others. Tae is dead, he could not help her, but Yo is alive. Yo could be powerful for her. How could he turn a blind eye on this?!

“Brothers killed, Hwanghu. Only the most powerful lives, you should know that!” the King is fuming, he could not fight her. The support of the Yoo clan is too important to lose. He could touch Wang Yo previously because the Queen favored Tae, but Tae is not in the picture anymore. Her support will fall on Yo fully once Tae took his last breath.

Taking her stance, the Queen gravely announces, “My Tae is gone but you choose to shamelessly blame Yo! My Yoo clan will not be humiliated like this!”

Jung who was silent the whole time nervously glance at both of his parents. Father accused Yo Hyung-nim of killing Tae Hyung-nim. That’s unbelievable, Tae Hyung-nim had enemies who are willing to kill him for instance. His brother was brash and sometimes very unlikeable, it was not a surprise to find him poisoned to death.

Hesitantly, Jung voiced out, “Pheya, Tae Hyung-nim had people who are envious of him. Someone probably plotted against him!”

Yo couldn’t believe it, he doesn’t have to defend himself this time. His mother and Jung had taken his sides. Well, no surprise in Wang Jung, the boy is loyal to the core, Yo thought proudly. But he will need to plead for his innocence himself too.

“Pheya, Second Prince Wang Tae is my blood brother. You have raised me to be good to my elder. What kind of person am I to murder my own brother in cold blood?” Yo plead, but initially, he smirks in triumph. He just pinned the blame to his own father.

‘You have raised me?’

Isn’t that blaming the king for not raising him correctly? If Wang Yo does actually killed his brother, which means, Taejo, as a father didn’t raise his son right.

Both Jung and Queen Yoo take a surprise turn at Wang Yo, flabbergasted by his bold statement. The statement might sound like a pleading but why does it sound so wrong?

Gripping the edge of the table hard, Taejo try to surpass his anger, how dare him! How dare his own son tricked him this way?! If he as a father accused Wang Yo as the culprit, isn’t it like digging his own grave? This sly fox!

Taking a deep breath, he tries to control the tremor in his voice. “The matter will be investigated future.” He announces gravely. He will let Wang Yo go for now. With a flick of his wrist, the King dismissed all of them.

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Existing the hall, Yo told Jung to proceed with the funeral with mother, he will be there as soon as possible. Some things should be done and he needs to find the person. Walking through Damiwon’s hallway, Yo makes his way to the head court lady’s chamber. He needs to find Oh-sanggung.

Making sure that no one had seen him, Yo sneaks into the chamber. Oh Soo-yeon makes no indication that she knew someone had entered her chamber, busy sorting some scrolls at the far end of her little study. Clearing his throat, Wang Yo announces his arrival.

“Oh- sanggung?” the woman takes a glance at him for a while before turn her focus back to the task at hand. Putting the scrolls back into the drawer, Oh Soo-yeon gives the prince her full attention. Bowing slight, the court lady urges the prince to take a sit.

“I heard about the Second Prince passing, condolence on my behalf, Wangja-nim.” She starts, taking a sit on the tea table alongside the prince. The court lady didn’t offer him tea or anything.

Yo give the woman a small smile, remorseful. “Thank you.” They are silent for a few moments before Oh-sanggung concerned eyes dratted at him.

“Your father is wary of you, Yo-ah. I could only do much before he got suspicious.” She gravely informed him. She let out a long sigh, the King had been suspicious of Yo for a while now. She had tried to soothe his anger and suspicious thought, but she could only do much. Back then, when Yo unceremoniously announces his engagement to Minister Hae’s niece, the only thing that held back the King’s urge to kill him was her.

Oh Soo-yeon knows why the King is extremely guarded against Wang Yo. It was not the boy, not entirely, but that person in Seokyeong, he is the one Taejo was afraid of. Wang Shik Ryeom had supporters all over Goryeo, even in Taejo’s court, half of those men were his. Taejo couldn’t touch him, not even a bit but the moment Wang Shik Ryeom visibly announce that he favored Yo, all hell breaks loose. Such a powerful person, the King had hoped that his cousin would somehow support the Crown Prince, but no. That is why he was wary of the Third Prince and now, that Wang Yo had gathered the Hae clan’s support, the matter is getting out of hand.

Then, this happened. One slip, the King would not hesitate to pinout any traitorous accusation against Wang Yo.

The Third Prince let out a weary sigh, he knew what father thought of him. He had accepted that a long time ago but once the fact had been said, he still feels the unexpected pang. “He will never trust me.” he might seem calm but the sorrow could be heard in his voice. “I accepted that. I do.”

Taking a deep breath, his eyes locked with the court lady’s brown orbs. “But I am no murderer. I did not kill Tae! How can I kill my own brother?!” his outburst surprise Oh-sanggung and even himself.

Sensing his turmoil, Oh Soo-yeon soothingly pats his hand, “I know, Yo-ah, and I’m sure he knew too.” She tried to reassure him, knowing that it was fruitless. This father and son relationship has been tainted for too long. She could only hope that the King isn’t going to drag Yo down completely. The poor boy.

Forcing a smile, Yo met the woman’s warm gaze, he changes the subject, “I should have bought Soo with me, you will love her.” Maybe next time, Yo promised himself.

That had drawn a smile on her face, teasingly, the court lady retort. “Your fiancé, Wangja-nim? You’d promised me that six months ago.” Yo let out a small laugh. Well, he does promise to bring Hae Soo but the timing isn’t right.

“Well...” he gives her a boyish grin, guilty. They share a moment of comfortable silence.

“Do not leave Songak for a while, especially for Seokyeong. Lay low and tell Minister Hae to do the same. If you did not move, the King will not too. He is wary of your uncle, remember that, Yo-ah.” She advised quietly. That is the only thing she could offer, nothing else. Wang Yo is like the son she never has, even though he is the son of the woman who took her child away. Isn’t a mother’s instinct to protect her son?

Nodding quietly, Yo knows the only thing he could do right now is to stay low and not to stir his father's doubt even more. But something bothering him, the last time his uncle come to Songak was six months ago. Did he send someone over to poison Tae? Or someone else in Songak is the culprit? Uncle Shik Ryeom had connections all over Goryeo, even more in Songak. It is nothing odd if someone had to scheme it for him, but who? Who was ruthless enough to kill for him?

“Can you keep an eye for me? For anyone suspicious around the King?” he wanted to know, who the schemer is. That way, he could keep an eye on them. Keeping them away from him and others. This time, the victim was Tae, if he isn't careful enough, it could be Jung, or Eun, or Wook. The possibilities are countless and Yo will not let that happened. He couldn't forgive himself if that happened.

Earning a reassuring nod from the court lady, Wang Yo bid the woman goodbye.

He needs to conduct the funeral, Tae's funeral, now that the title of the head of Yoo's clan befalls upon him. He could not believe it. Tae is dead. His own brother is dead. They might not be close, but Tae is still his brother. His own blood.

Those people lurking in the dark have the nerve to destroy his kin.

Well, an eye for an eye. Blood should be paid by blood. They dared to kill his brother, his family.

It just fitting for him to kill theirs too.

## Chapter End Notes

I'm in some sort of slump, thus the late update! but fear not, I'm posting a YoSoo shots! YEAY! Been a while since I wrote one. If you guys are interested, just check out 'If It Is You' a two shots under my YoSoo's shameless shots.

ps: sorry for the late update! tell me what you guys thought!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!