



Prologue

Conditional Love

SNOW'S STEPMOTHER WASN'T ALWAYS evil, you know. There was once a time when she cherished her stepdaughter deeply. The two girls would spend many days window shopping in Sapphire City, dining at the finest restaurants, and buying bows and dresses for young Snow White. Their small kingdom was right on the outskirts of Sapphire City, so they spent much time here. But Snow's favorite activity with her stepmother was picking wildflowers in the fields outside of their castle.

"Look, Mama! I found a yellow one for you," Snow giggled as she ran into her mother's arms. The Queen was the only mother Snow had ever really known. Her birth mother died when she was a year old from a tragic illness that ravaged her body. All she had was her father for a long while.

Until one day, he brought her home a new mommy.

Snow White and her Stepmother adored the King. They lived a very happy life together...for the most part. The Queen always knew that Snow White was the sparkle in the King's eye. She couldn't help but feel jealous of the young girl. She had to compete for attention from her own husband.

As if her insecurities hadn't already eaten her alive.

Snow White's pale skin and raven-black hair caught the eyes of many. She was a beautifully flawless young girl. The Queen felt a sense of pride watching the king lift his daughter in the air and spin her around. They both laughed as he did so. However, the Queen's jealousy and anger only grew stronger with each passing day.

One night, after the King and Queen were in the throes of passion, she looked him in the eye. "Will I ever be as beautiful to you as Snow White," She asked.

The Queen's eyes were deep and saddened. She felt her beauty had diminished in Snow White's presence, but she would never admit this to the king. What would he think? She stared at her husband longingly, waiting for him to console her. But the king remained silent. He was taken aback by her question.

"You are the most beautiful woman I know, inside and out. There is no comparing you to our daughter; you are both the apples of my eye and the reason I breathe," He lovingly told her.

This was not enough for the Queen. She secretly longed for her husband to tell her she was more beautiful than Snow White would ever be, but it was not the answer she received. She climbed off her husband and sobbed on the edge of the bed. She was nearly inconsolable.

The king slid over to her side of the bed and held her. He couldn't help but feel confused. "What is wrong, my love," He asked her.

"I-I Just don't feel beautiful. I fear you will stray from me. Especially as we age." She cried.

The King looked away when she said this. The atmosphere of the entire room changed. The Queen knew then, and there the king had already strayed from their marriage. She quickly shifted from sad to furious and found it hard to control herself. It wasn't long before the rage consumed her. If looks could kill, the Kingdom would have perished.

Years of love have been forgot. In the hatred of a minute.

The Queen swung around instantly, and her open palm crashed into her husband's cheek with such force that it knocked a tooth loose. "YOU SON OF A BITCH," she screamed at him.

The king moved back in shock. He thought she would never figure it out. He thought he was in the clear. Now, he feared for their marriage and what would happen to Snow White. Could she handle losing another mother?

The Queen quickly slid on her robe and stormed out of the room. The king let out a sigh of relief as she left, a sigh of relief that was a little too loud. The Queen turned on the ball of her foot and lunged back at her husband. He was frozen in shock and fear. The look in her eyes made her seem crazed. He had never seen this side of his love.

Before he knew it, she was standing over him and she had him pinned down. Something in her rage made her easily able to overpower the king. No matter how he fought or struggled, he couldn't free himself from her grasp. "Wait! What are you," he yelled.

"You will get what you deserve," she glared at him in disgust. The king watched with his eyes widened as her

fist came crashing into his face, over and over again. He was in disbelief.

He would never hurt her, so he let the punches keep coming.

...and thus, the whirligig of time brings in his revenge.

He closed his eyes; he couldn't bear the sight of his wife so angry. This only made her angrier. "Why won't you look at me," She cried. "I must be horrific to look at if you can't look at me!" Tears were streaming down her red, hot, angry face.

The King took a deep breath and opened his eyes. It was hard because he had been pummeled by his own wife. "Do to me as you will," he breathed. He held his breath in anticipation of her next blow. But what came next was unspeakable.

The king watched as her hands descended upon his throat. She grabbed his neck and squeezed as hard as she could, shoving his Adam's apple inward. She could hear choking noises coming from her husband, but her rage wouldn't let her stop. The Queen laughed as she saw her husband struggle to breathe, he must have turned fifty different shades of red and purple.

After several minutes of strangling the King, he went limp. He wasn't breathing, he was gone. The Queen melted over her dead husband's body. "What have I done," she cried. She gently closed his eyes and kissed him on the cheek. "I'm so sorry," the Queen sighed. She covered him with the blanket to make it look like he was sleeping. She cried for some time but then found herself

running down the hall toward a sleeping Snow White's room.

She looked in the doorway at her beautiful sleeping child. Suddenly, she was wracked with fear and guilt. She could hardly breathe. All she wanted to do was snuggle Snow White for comfort. Snow was always a light sleeper and spotted the Queen staring at her from the corridor.

"Muh, Mommy," she yawned. "What are you doing here?"

"Can I sleep with you tonight, Snow," The Queen asked as she crawled into bed with her raven-haired daughter.

"Yes, mama. I would love that," Snow cooed at her mother.

The Queen snuggled close to Snow that night and held her tight. She knew the horrors that would arrive in the morning. She wasn't ready. The warmth and love emanating from Snow White helped her to fall asleep instantly.

The worst is Death, and death will have his day.

The morning sun's rays and the sounds of roosters in the field woke the Queen and Snow early the next day. The Queen had a pit in her stomach that she'd never be rid of. *Murderer*. The word rang in her mind. The king's death would plague her until her own demise.

"Let's go wake Daddy," Snow jumped on the bed excitedly.

She loved jumping on her father in the morning to wake him.

The Queen's expression fell. "Why don't we let him sleep in? Let me make you some breakfast," The Queen said as calmly as she could. She'd be lucky if Snow White missed the shakiness in her voice.

"Mm, mm, breakfast," Snow's eyes lit up. She loved making breakfast with her mother. She grabbed the Queen by the hand and led her down the corridor to the kitchen. The two ran for the kitchen; giggles filled the halls as they raced.

"Mommy, can I pour the batter in the pan from the ladle," Snow inquired.

"Yes, baby. This is your day. Go ahead and pour the batter," The Queen mustered.

Snow White dipped the ladle in the batter. Her small hands struggled to hold the ladle, and batter drips were sprinkled all over the counters. The trail of batter stopped when it reached the pan, where Snow White managed to make a jagged-looking pancake.

"Great job, Snow," the Queen said as sincerely as she could. She had a lot of cleaning to do after breakfast. The distraction was well-needed after the events of the previous night. She needed to figure out how to approach the situation best.

Cleaning always allowed her to gather her wits.

The two ladies sat at the long table where the family always dined. They feasted on eggs, fresh fruits, pancakes, and orange juice. These were all of Snow White's

favorite things to have for breakfast. When Snow finished her last bite of pancakes, she asked a dreaded question.

“Why hasn’t Daddy woken up yet, mama?” Snow asked, sounding concerned. “Is he sick?”

The Queen was mortified. She didn’t know how to respond to her daughter’s question, so she thought it best not to answer at all. She began to gather plates and bowls from the table to bring them to the sink. Snow trailed behind her and grabbed the silverware and other dishes from the table. She loved to help Mama clean.

“Thank you, Snow,” The Queen said sweetly. “Why don’t you go pick me some flowers so we can set them on the table to look upon?”

“Yes, Mama,” Snow said proudly. She ran off to get dressed and headed out into the field in front of their home. She knew to stay close; she was always told to stay close if no adults were with her.

Snow ventured into the field as far as she could go. She found flowers of many colors. She found one in pink, yellow, orange, purple, white, and blue. Snow White was very proud of her findings. She gathered them into a bunch and headed back to the castle. She skipped along as she hummed the song Mama always sang to her. She hummed to the tune of You Are My Sunshine.

The Queen was in the kitchen, cleaning vigorously. She was at a loss for how to tell Snow that her father was dead. Let alone tell her a lie about what had caused his death. She was silently sobbing to herself and deep

in thought. She didn't see Snow White entering the kitchen, holding a bouquet of flowers she had asked for.

"What's wrong, Mommy," Snow White asked nervously.

The Queen broke. There was nothing in the world that could console her. She had murdered her husband in a fit of rage, and she could never tell Snow White what she had done. She grabbed her daughter and held on to her tightly. She held her and just cried. This went on for several moments.

"Mommy, are you okay," Snow's lip quivered. She always cried when she saw other people crying. To see her mother cry was even worse. Her eyes welled with tears, and her voice started to crack. "I love you, mommy. Please don't cry," Snow White began to bawl.

After holding on to the daughter she loved dearly for several minutes. She was able to stop the tears from streaming down her face. "Snow White," She started. "My little bird," she started to sniffle again as she spoke.

Snow White's mind drifted briefly to all the days she and her stepmother spent in the aviary. They both loved the birds; they had different names for each. It wasn't long before she snapped back to reality.

"Is Daddy, okay? Please tell me," Snow White begged. Tears still soaked her small face and dripped all over her pretty yellow dress. She didn't know what to expect, but she feared what her stepmother might have to say. She had never seen her mother cry before.

"Your father..." she trailed off. Tears began to fill her eyes and cheeks again. She couldn't get the words out

of her mouth. But she had to. "Your father passed away last night. I am not sure how it happened, but I found him there early this morning before I came to you." Garbled sobs could be heard from her throat.

Little Snow fell apart. There was nothing her mother could do to console her. As much as she loved her step-mother, her father was her world, and she had lost him.

The next few weeks passed by in a blur. Besides the sounds of sighs and garbled sobs, the castle was silent. Suddenly, the Queen couldn't bear to look at Snow. Her kind face reminded her of the husband she had murdered in cold blood. She remained in her bed quarters for days, leaving the attendants to care for Snow White in her absence.

Snow White asked for her mother every day, but nothing she nor the attendants could say to the Queen would get her out of bed. Snow no longer felt the Queen's love. This only destroyed her small heart even further. She thought her own mother hated her, and she did nothing to deserve it.

Snow White spent countless nights tossing and turning. She had nightmares of getting lost in the forest and her mother never coming to save her. She could feel the Queen's distaste toward her, and she didn't understand why her mother wouldn't spend time with her.

It was years before her mother decided to spend time outside the room. Snow was growing into a beautiful young woman.

They didn't dine together anymore; her mother no longer wanted to make breakfast with her. The woman

wouldn't so much as look at her. When she did, she seethed with anger and jealousy.

Snow hadn't picked up on the jealousy yet, but her mother always despised that she wasn't as beautiful as her daughter. Their relationship had diminished. The Queen no longer took Snow on trips to Sapphire City. Snow was given rags to wear as clothes, and she was constantly forced to do mundane chores around the castle and on the castle's grounds.

It made the Queen even angrier that Snow could move past her grief. She hummed and sang as she swept the paths outside the castle's doors. She sang so beautifully that the birds would land on her hand and whistle with her.

One day, the Queen noticed a young man watching Snow White. This made her loathe Snow White even more. She craved a man's touch and attention, like she had with the king. But those days were long gone. She murdered her husband, and no other man wanted her. She kept this secret from Snow White all these years and prayed that she would never find out.

The Queen watched as the young man stepped from behind the hedges. He didn't seem to mind that she was dressed in ratty rags. Her beauty still lit up the area around the castle. Snow White was not afraid of him. It was like she had already known him. They sang and danced together for quite some time before he kissed her on the cheek and was on his way.

That night, as Snow drifted off to sleep, the Queen snuck away from the castle. She ventured into Sapphire City to find something to take her mind from the at-

tention her beautiful daughter was getting from a man who seemed to care for her genuinely.

The Queen stumbled upon a dusty-looking shop. Even this late at night, the bright neon-colored light in the door said OPEN. She found this interesting and stepped inside the door. She was turned off by the odor of the shop and all the junk lying on the floor. Nobody seemed to be around, so she ventured further.

In the back of the shop, there was a filthy sheet that covered a large, ornate mirror. The Queen took the cloth off the mirror and stared into it. She was taken aback when a face appeared in the mirror that wasn't her own.

"I have been waiting for you for a long time," the face in the mirror told her.

"Muh, Me?" the Queen asked meekly.

"Yes, Queen, you," he answered back.

The Queen had no idea how the man in the mirror knew who she was. She stood there in shock for a few moments before she asked her next question.

"How do you know who I am," she asked.

"I have known you for a long while, and you've known me," he answered.

"You're nuts; I don't know anyone inside of a mirror," she spat.

"Take me home, and I shall show you who I am...in time," the mirror replied.

The Queen peered around the shop for signs of anyone who might be working there. When she saw no signs of life, she fell into the trickery of the man in the mirror. Suddenly, she had to have this mirror, no matter what the cost.

The bereft woman covered the mirror with the filthy sheet and rushed out of the store without paying. She was so focused on not getting caught that she didn't notice someone walking in her direction. She bumped into a woman with long, wiry black hair. This nearly made her drop her new, prized mirror. "WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING," the Queen growled. She looked up into the woman's piercing green eyes and found it odd that her skin had a lavender glow.

"Me? You're the one who crashed into me!" Ursula yelled.

The Queen huffed and stormed off with the mirror; she had to return to the castle before Snow White or the attendants knew she was missing. The trek back to her home seemed to take longer than usual. Her arms were tiring quickly from holding the bulky mirror.

The Queen could hear the muffled voice of the man in the mirror. The sheet quieted his voice just enough to make it hard for her to understand him. After hours of traveling with her new companion, she snuck into the castle. The Queen had a secret space behind the armoire in her room. This was the perfect place to hide her new mirror.

There are some secrets which do not permit themselves to be told.

The Queen hung the mirror onto his new home. When she stared at it, she noticed the face would not come to greet her. She stormed out of the room and lay in bed. It had been a long night.

Her eyes flung open early the next morning despite her long evening. She was too eager to eat, so she stepped into her armoire leading to the secret room behind it.

“Are you there,” she asked the mirror.

Smoke filled the mirror before the face that greeted her last night appeared.

“I am, my Queen,” he bowed his head.

“What can you do,” she asked him.

“I can do great things. I can show you the entire kingdom, and I can tell you anything you wish to know.”

The Queen’s eyes darkened as her soul was taken by greed.

“Anything,” she asked.

“Anything,” he answered her.

“Show me, Snow White,” the Queen demanded.

“As you wish, my Queen.”

Smoke filled the mirror once again. When the smoke disappeared, she saw a bright, sunny day. It was then that she noticed Snow White in the mirror. She was doing her chores, as she had always been told. The Queen noticed how beautiful she was becoming, and it ate at her heart even more.

“Mirror, Mirror, on the wall; who’s the fairest of all,” she asked the mirror next.

“My Queen, to be frank, the answer is not you. It is the beguiling Snow White,” his voice rang in her ears.

The Queen’s heart quickly filled with a mixture of envy and anger. She lifted a fist as if to punch the mirror but quickly calmed herself.

She stomped out of the room in a fit of rage. She hadn’t felt this angry in a long while. She had felt this rage when she found out her husband had strayed from their marriage. Grief and anger filled the entirety of her being. The woman he had been with was probably far more beautiful than she.

The Queen spent the day watching Snow White from the tower. Whenever she was watching, it seemed that Snow was doing nothing wrong. The Queen stomped away from her spot at the window and found herself back in the room with the man in the mirror.

She stared at the mirror for some time, not saying a word.

She didn’t have much to say.

“I will show you everything you need to see, my Queen,” the face in the mirror popped into view. It was as if the mirror could read her thoughts.

An evil grin flashed across the Queen’s face. “Even if it’s in the past?” She asked.

“Even in the past, my Queen,” the mirror replied.

“Show me Snow White and the boy she has been spending time with,” the Queen croaked.

The man in the mirror painted a scene of sheer intimacy. Snow and the prince have shared many tender kisses and caresses. The one thing the Queen never thought she would see was appearing in the mirror before her.

She tried to look away, but she couldn't. The heat and passion between Snow and this young man were magnetic. As disgusted with herself as she was, her eyes were glued to the mirror. The Queen watched as Snow lay bare in a field of flowers, with the young man trailing soft kisses from her collarbone and down to the area between her legs.

Snow White arched her back in pleasure, and the Queen grew even angrier than she was before. She hadn't been touched by a man in years. Snow's soft moans made her boyfriend swell with lustful desires. His masterful tongue touched her sensitive parts most expertly as he slid a finger into her.

The Queen's jaw dropped. She was jealous of the attention her daughter was receiving. This prince was doing things she had only dreamed of the King doing to her. She could hear Snow's arousal growing as the prince had his way with her. Their kisses became more passionate and intense, and she watched as her daughter peeled the clothes off the prince, unable to wait any longer for his love.

Her face scrunched as the prince's member entered her. *Was this her first time?* The passion escalated quickly. The prince was definitely not gentle with his princess. He thrust deeper and deeper into Snow as she screamed

in pleasure. The Queen watched Snow melt before her eyes. Right before he looked as if he was going to climax, he pulled out. Snow took him into her mouth and stroked him with her tongue and teeth teasingly. The young man's eyes nearly rolled to the back of his head as he exploded in her mouth.

At least someone was getting laid.

"When was this, mirror man," she inquired. She had to know everything.

"It was but a few months ago, my Queen," He answered her honestly.

The Queen found herself loathsome of both Snow and her Prince. Horrid ideas began to pop into her head as the night carried on. She could no longer let Snow be the fairest of the land, and she couldn't bear to see her daughter fall in love when she was a lonely crone.

As the Queen slept that night, she dreamed of Snow White's death. She awoke multiple times in a puddle of sweat. She was unsure of why her brain would show these horrific things to her. She couldn't bear to look at Snow White, but she didn't want her dead. *Or did she?*

The sun peeked through the curtains in her room to deliver a fresh new morning. The Queen's anxiety had her nerves frayed. She had to see Snow White up close. She had to forbid her from seeing that prince ever again. It was time to put this to an end before Snow got pregnant. Before Snow White could take her throne from her and become Queen.

The Queen spoke curtly to one of the attendants. The attendant ran off quickly to find Snow White. When

Snow arrived in the throne room, the Queen's anger was palpable.

Her myriad of negative emotions darkened the environment around them. Snow White shuddered.

"Snow White," the Queen began. She had to look away from her daughter as she spoke. "I see you have made a friend in the prince from nearby lands."

"Yes, Mama," Snow spoke sweetly. "He is a wonderful young man; I can't wait for you to,"

The Queen rudely interrupted her. "You must never see him again. He is not a good match for you. What would your *father* think," the Queen's words were like daggers in Snow's heart. The Queen smiled darkly as she watched Snow White break.

Snow White instantly began to sob and ran out of the room. She was in love with the prince; she could never stay away. Snow couldn't believe the cruelty she experienced from her mother. *What had made her act in such a manner?*

The Queen sat tall on her throne. She was very proud of being the person who shattered her daughter's heart into tiny pieces. She wanted Snow White to feel as miserable as she did. The darkness in her eyes would never see the light of love again. Her once love-filled heart was now shriveled from hatred and envy.

Snow White avoided her mother for the next few weeks as much as possible. She had never felt so angry in her entire life. Her mother wouldn't even give the prince a chance. The young girl was beside herself. Snow White spent many days crying herself to sleep, hoping her

mother would change her mind. She felt as if her mother didn't love her anymore. Surely, if the Queen loved her, she would never treat her this way.

As Snow carried on with her chores, she thought of her prince. She could still feel his warm breath on her neck. She could feel his crotch grind against hers. She longed to be by his side. She wanted nothing more than to lie with him again. *But this could never be so. The Queen would sooner have her killed.*

Days flew by; Snow White could feel herself spiraling further and further into the darkness in her own mind. She had never felt like this before; she hoped that this feeling would subside soon. Without the prince, though, she didn't see how this was possible.

One day, while the Queen was out in Sapphire City, Snow snuck away from the castle grounds. She had to see her prince again. As she walked through the forest, she sang the song they used to sing together. She had heard the crunch of footsteps in the leaves; her heart raced excitedly, thinking of her prince.

Her eyes widened in terror when the Queen stepped out from behind a tree. The look in her eye was so dark that Snow nearly fainted. The young girl was terrified. The Queen carried with her a rope and a gag. The evil woman tied Snow White up, gagged her, and dragged her back to the castle she used to call home. She locked her in a cell and hid the key so the attendants couldn't find it.

The castle no longer felt like home; it was now a foreign place to Snow White.