SPELLBOUND

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Based on Harap Alb fairy tale by Ion Creangã

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FADE IN

EXT. IVORY KINGDOM - DAY

A beautiful autumn forest covers the surface of a big hill.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Once upon a time there was an old emperor who lived in the Palace of Ivory. As he had only daughters, he decided to offer his throne to one of his nephews...

In the distance, a white gorgeous palace surrounded by white dwellings and white solid walls offers a splendid landscape. The view gets clearer and clearer.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

... who lived far away from him, at the other end of the world.

EXT. GREEN KINGDOM - DAY

The view moves above the clouds at the opposite side of the earth: a beautiful green palace shows up, though it's not as gorgeous as the Ivory one. It's smaller and not that luxurious.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

They never met, they did not know how they looked like, what they did, what they liked to do. The emperor sent word to his brother, king of The Green Kingdom, to notify him about his wish.

The city swarms with people who rush from one corner to another.

EXT. GREEN KINGDOM - FOREST - DAY

The youngest prince, JEREMY, 18, is in a forest nearby the palace and looks cheerlessly at his brother who comes home ashamed. He watches his father who looks disappointed.

Jeremy sighs and droops his head. He sits on a rock and becomes thoughtful.

Suddenly, an old hunched woman/Goody appears in front of him. He rises his head and looks at her mystified.

WOMAN/GOODY

What bothers you, little thing? Expel the grief that came over your heart, for the luck smiles upon you from everywhere.

JEREMY

What do you know about me, goody? Leave me alone!

The woman looks at the glass ball she holds in her hands and she is surprised. She follows some marks with her forefinger.

She babbles something that can hardly be distinguished and that makes Jeremy wear a curios face.

GOODY

You'll go this way... and then stop at this fountain... you'll meet this and that on your way... and you'll reach...

The woman becomes more surprised, makes a pause and squints at Jeremy while she whispers.

GOODY (CONT'D)

... the crown!

Jeremy frowns and wants to say something, but the woman shouts while looks back at the glass ball and points somewhere else on it with her forefinger.

GOODY (CONT'D)

Ha! In order to succeed you'll need your father's bridegroom horse, clothes and weapons.

Then she smiles with content and adds.

GOODY (CONT'D)

Goody knows best.

Jeremy looks at her baffled.

JEREMY

His horse and --

GOODY

Bridegroom clothes and weapons. You'll go to the stable and will put in the middle of it a tray full of embers. The horse who eats from it will be the one that will bring you to Ivory Kingdom.

She gets hold of his elbow and forces him to stand. She pushes him gently.

GOODY (CONT'D)

Now, go!

Then she holds him back.

GOODY (CONT'D)

But give some alms to the old goody. You never know...

(her eyes look nostalgic)
... when you need me again.

Bewildered, Jeremy draws his ragbag and gives her two golden coins. The woman gazes at him as he goes away.

EXT/INT. RED HASHAM PALACE - DAY

The view of an expensive and rather churlish palace shows up and, as it comes closer and closer, it reveals a very tall tower in the middle of it.

In a big room, full of all kind of things a lady would need, a PRINCESS/TULIP, 18, whose face cannot be seen, talks to her companion, Hanna, a lovely white female horse.

The princess shakes a metal box. Hanna asks her.

HANNA

What's that? You look at it everyday.

PRINCESS

It's magic lettuce. Evergreen. If planted, it never withers.

HANNA

Where do you have it from?

PRINCESS

It's an expensive gift from prince Harold.

The princess grabs a book from a shelf, opens it and looks into it.

PRINCESS (CONT'D)

Hanna, look what they say here: "I'll get married when you'll be able to fly again".

HANNA

Nonsense! I'll never be able to fly again.

They hear footsteps. The princess hides the book under the bed quickly. Emperor SIGMUND breaks in and says.

SIGMUND

My dear daughter! We've got suitors. Behave as usual and everything will be all right!

EXT. GREEN KINGDOM - DAY

The city bustles of people, children, animals and bagmen. Jeremy rides his horse trotting on an alley that leads to the palace.

He passes through the crowd, while the people go about their business, they barely stop or bow their head.

He directs towards the entrance of the palace.

INT. GREEN KINGDOM - EMPEROR'S CHAMBER - DAY

Jeremy enters the palace. He creeps in the emperor's chamber. His older brothers are also there, but don't notice him.

One of them tries on some wigs, the other sits on an armchair in front of him to nod or shake his head.

The king, surrounded by a few advisers, seems to be very engrossed with reading a scroll.

Jeremy stops and bows down in front of the king. The king doesn't look at him. Jeremy clears his throat. The king sighs, still holding his eyes on the scroll.

JEREMY

Father, I know my request may look audacious.

His father frowns and this makes Jeremy's voice shake.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

But, allow me to do what needs to be done in order to make you proud of your heirs.

The king moves his eyes on Jeremy and arches his eyebrows distrustfully.

The two brothers become aware of what happens and turn their head towards Jeremy. The king stares distrustfully at him, then, after a few seconds of silence, tells him.

KING

Your brothers trained years for this. Yet, when they encountered the first hindrance, they turned back frightened. The two brothers look ashamed, but glower at their father whose eyes turned back on the scroll.

KING (CONT'D)

What makes you think you can defeat the bear?

JEREMY

I suppose that as compared to other hindrances that may occur on my way, the bear is just a snack.

The two brothers laugh. The king ponders a few moments. Not a smile on his face. He fixes Jeremy with his eyes and says.

KING

Nothing gives me the assurance that you will succeed.

Jeremy looks disappointed.

KING (CONT'D)

But I cannot oppose to your determination.

Jeremy's eyes brighten. The two brothers glare at Jeremy.

JEREMY

Thank you, father.

Jeremy stands up, bows his head a few times, and turns to leave. He stops, ponders a bit, then takes heart and turns faced to his father.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

If you don't mind... can you borrow me your bridegroom horse and clothes and weapons?

KING

(laughing)

Maybe you can find the clothes and the weapons in the attic. But the horse? Who could know where his bones went rotten?

JEREMY

I just need your acceptance. Do you give me the horse or not?

KING

(baffled)

You hunt for dead horses to take their horseshoes?

The king laughs, then, as he sees Jeremy doesn't even smile, he becomes serious, though still ironical.

KING (CONT'D)
Certainly, son, if you find my
horse, then... take it!

INT. GREEN KINGDOM - STABLE - DAY

Jeremy enters the stable holding an old trunk in his arms. He looks at the horses in the stable.

He puts down the tray of embers. He opens the trunk. He takes out some old and musty bridegroom attire full of moths and dust.

He shakes them out and coughs because of the dust. He dresses himself with them.

Suddenly, a very skinny, dirty white ugly HORSE approaches and stretches his muzzle to the embers. Jeremy is busy with the stuff in the trunk.

The horse stumbles over something and makes a noise. Jeremy notices the horse near the tray.

He stands up quickly and chases him away. The horse doesn't manage to eat anything. Jeremy shouts angrily.

JEREMY

Go away, crock! Don't expect me to turn you into a noble stallion just because you burn your tongue with embers!

The other horses that are in the stable rise their head while chewing some hay and look curiously at the skinny horse.

They look at each other and frown, then smile with contempt.

INT. STABLE - MOMENTS LATER

Jeremy takes out of the trunk some old and shabby reins, a whip and a saddle. He looks at them curiously. He touches them slowly and begins to cleanse them.

A brown horse looks at the skinny horse and makes a sign with its head that indicates that Jeremy is busy and that the horse can go and eat embers.

The other horses laugh scornfully. The skinny horse approaches again and tries to eat of the tray. Jeremy squints at him, then stands up and chases him away, but the horse manages to take a mouthful of embers.

Jeremy glares at him disappointed. He takes the whip and scourges the horse three times while shouts.

JEREMY

You foolish hack and stupid jackass! You are not a horse, understand? You're a rotten wretched mule!

The other horses begin to laugh.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Dare it one more time and I'll make you acquaintance with the mace!

INT. STABLE - MOMENTS LATER

Jeremy takes out some decrepit weapons, but he keeps an eye on the skinny horse. He takes out a bow, some arrows, a falchion and a mace.

He becomes very absorbed with them as he touches each of them. He takes the falchion and stands up making a certain gesture that shows superpower and distinction.

He pretends he fights while gives a peculiar shout after every movement he makes. It's obvious he's an amateur.

When he looks back, he is stunned. He lets his hand down and looks dejected and open-mouthed.

The skinny horse ate almost all the embers and now he chews breathlessly while looks at Jeremy. Then he takes the last piece of embers, swallows it and licks his muzzle.

JEREMY

(pretending resigned)

Ok, I see.

Then he changes his face and shouts.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Good-bye, pretty horsy! Better on foot than make a fool out of myself with such a Rosinate.

The horse shakes himself and neighs. The wind begins to blow and dark clouds gather suddenly followed by thunders and lightnings while the horse turns into a white beautiful stallion. The other horses look astonished.

At the same time, Jeremy's old and shabby attire turn into new, shinny and neat clothes. The horse also acquires the ability of speaking.

EMBER

Mount my back, master!

Jeremy looks astonished. His face shines. He smiles open-mouthed. Then he jumps on the horse.

EMBER (CONT'D)

And hold tight!

Jeremy puts the snaffle in the horse's mouth and smiles looking self-controlled.

He wants to stroke the horse's mane, but the horse makes an unexpected movement: he suddenly loosens its wings and the next second he flies up to the sky.

Then he flies back to the ground while Jeremy screams with fear and excitement at the same time.

Then the horse flies up to the moon and then flies down to the stable, then flies up again, to the sun, and back down, while Jeremy keeps crying blue murder.

As soon as the horse touches the ground and stops, he asks.

EMBER (CONT'D)

So, what do you think, master?

Jeremy gasps and says.

JEREMY

Whoo! I feel... whirling...

The horse grins.

EMBER

I had to take my revenge.

JEREMY

We've cleared the score now. So, can you take it easier next time?

The horse smiles and says dutifully.

EMBER

From now on, I'm in your power.

Jeremy smiles gently and strokes the horse.

JEREMY

I'll call you... Ember.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - DAYBREAK

Jeremy rides his horse on a forest foggy road.

They reach a bridge and when they step on it, ready to cross it, a big shadow of a bear appears from behind.

Jeremy turns the horse immediately and dismounts. He draws his falchion and though he looks scared, he takes heart and directs with determination towards the bear.

He clenches his teeth and raises the falchion. He approaches the bear. His hands tremble. He is ready to hurt the bear, but he suddenly hears his father's voice.

KING

Don't!

Jeremy stops and goggles his eyes. The king takes off the bear cloth which covers his body and goes on.

KING (CONT'D)

Well, this is my spawn!

JEREMY

(surprised)

Father? You disguised... into ... a bear?

The king approaches and tells him.

KING

Had your brothers known it was me behind this bear rag!

Jeremy sheathes his falchion. The king goes on in a grave yet friendly voice.

KING (CONT'D)

Now, son, you'll be on a long journey.

The king strokes the horse and adds.

KING (CONT'D)

You've chosen a good helpmate. It used to defend me from many jeopardies. Remember what I'm telling you right now: beware of the red man and mostly of the barefaced.

Then he looks at Jeremy's falchion and adds.

KING (CONT'D)

This is an Excalibur. You can use it to make a spell, but only once in a lifetime, so use it when you really are at bay.

The king hugs Jeremy. The prince kneels and says.

JEREMY

Father, give me your blessing!

KING

My son! Be strong, be brave, be upright! Be blessed!

EXT. ROAD ALONGSIDE A LAKE - DAY

Jeremy rides his horse alongside a lake. In front of him there is a big hill covered by a forest. He stops and looks ahead. The forest looks endless.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Jeremy creeps into the forest. He looks to the left and to the right. He hears some rustle and quickly draws his sword scared. Ember stops and asks him.

EMBER

What was that?

JEREMY

I don't know.

They go on and they hear the rustle again. Jeremy draws his sword again.

EMBER

I hope you won't draw the sword every time you hear something.

JEREMY

It's not just "something".
Listen!

They both make absolute silence. Jeremy listens open-mouthed. Ember pricks up his ears. Nothing.

When they want to relax, suddenly an arrow flies fast and violently before their eyes and stops into a tree. Jeremy shouts while Ember neighs and raises his front legs.

Jeremy grasps the Ember's neck and closes his eyes tight. Then he opens one eye and looks up, down, to the left and to the right.

In front of him is a barefaced/THORNE, 35, holding a bow in his hand and a bag of arrows at the back. The barefaced looks at him gently but cunningly.

THORNE

Well, well! What do we have here? A <u>very young</u> prince and a... <u>spellbound</u> horse? That can talk and fly?

Jeremy looks confused and afraid at the same time.

JEREMY

How do you know?

THORNE

(laughing)

You obviously need someone to help you on your way.

Thorne bows his head in front of the prince and adds.

THORNE (CONT'D)

I can be your faithful servant.

Jeremy frowns.

JEREMY

No! I don't need a barefaced. Er, I'll travel by myself. Er, yes.

Jeremy spurs his horse at once and they leave quickly. Thorne watches them rancorously.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - CROSSROADS - DAY

Jeremy rides on and reaches a crossroads. They stop.

Jeremy looks confused at the seventh directions: the first road is rocky and rough, no trees or grass on the sides. The second one is an avenue, very hard-packed and shaded of trees of all kinds on both sides.

The third one is sandy and there are palm trees here and there on both sides. The fourth road looks rather like a narrow foot path with tall grass and taller than man giant flowers on both sides.

The fifth road is actually a wooden bridge across a big river. The bridge touches the water.

The sixth way is a windy road that leads towards high cliffs, the seventh road is paved with white earth and with all kind of huge mushrooms on both sides.

JEREMY

Now, horsy, which way?

EMBER

I'm not a walking encyclopedia, I'm just a spellbound horse that can talk and fly.

JEREMY

You are quoting the barefaced?

EMBER

What?

JEREMY

Then he'd better said you were a dictionary... or a map... or a travelling guide.

THORNE (O.S.)

You don't need to turn your horse into a map as long as you have one.

Jeremy looks up and sees before his eyes the barefaced dressed otherwise.

JEREMY

Another...

THORNE

Well, this is the land of the barefaced. Don't hope to meet people of... your kind here.

JEREMY

All right. Then that means I'm in danger and I should avoid you as much as possible.

THORNE

And when it's not possible?

Thorne smiles ironically, arching his eyebrows.

THORNE (CONT'D)

Come on, don't be silly! I know these lands here even blindfolded, this is how I earn my living.

Jeremy looks at the crossroads, then chooses the second road, the one shaded with trees on both sides.

JEREMY

This way, horsy!

Ember takes the way indicated by Jeremy. Thorne shouts while they leave.

THORNE

All that glitters is not gold! I don't know where you want to go, but that way ends up at river Pergo.

Jeremy ponders a little. Yet he doesn't stop. He frowns and says to himself.

JEREMY

At... a river?

Then he takes heart and says to himself again.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Why should I believe you?

He spurs the horse.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Get up!

Ember begins to trot. Thorne adds laughing with contempt.

THORNE

Fool! You're gonna meet tens of crossroads on your way!

EXT. FOREST - RIVER - DAY

Jeremy rides his horse. They pervaded a long way from the crossroads. They can spot the river. As they come closer, Jeremy realizes that the road ends up there.

JEREMY

(to self)

So, he was right.

The horse frowns and says.

EMBER

That doesn't mean he is trustworthy.

JEREMY

(sighing)

If I keep wandering to-and-fro, trying to find the way by myself, it will take me forever to reach Ivory Kingdom.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - CROSSROADS - NIGHT

Jeremy approaches the crossroads on horseback. He looks ahead and doesn't know what way to choose. He says.

JEREMY

Now, where are those barefaced? Only if I had taken the second one when I had the chance!

Thorne is hidden behind some trees and glares at Jeremy smiling cunningly.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - CROSSROADS - NIGHT

It's dark. They halt in the forest, near the crossroads. Jeremy unloads the luggage and makes a fire. He gobbles something.

Ember looks at him hungrily. Jeremy doesn't notice. Then Jeremy takes some apples from his bag and begins to eat.

Ember swallows in vain. Jeremy looks at the horse and notices he salivates.

JEREMY

Oh, I'm so sorry! You're hungry.

Jeremy draws a metal tool and takes some embers from the fire. Then he stretches it to Ember's muzzle.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Here!

Ember makes a face and says.

EMBER

I prefer apples.

Jeremy makes a face, then gives the horse some apples while he adds.

JEREMY

I thought you preferred embers.

The horse begins to scoff and answers.

EMBER

Actually that embers I ate in the stable did not taste and look like fire to me.

JEREMY

Oh, no? Then what did it taste and look like?

EMBER

Hay. Fresh hay.

JEREMY

(laughing)

How so?

EMBER

Magic? Made by Goody?

Jeremy looks at him wonderingly. Then he smiles.

JEREMY

Do you know..."Goody"?

EMBER

We work together for several years.

Jeremy looks at him again wonderingly. The horse stretches, yawns and smacks its lips, then begins to look very tired and closes its eyes slowly.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - CROSSROADS - MORNING

The morning warm sun beams caress Jeremy's face. He opens his eyes slowly. He looks at Ember, then stands up. He strokes the horse and tells him.

JEREMY

Wake up, crock! We have to move our boots.

Ember opens his eyes suddenly and asks thrilled.

EMBER

You still call me a "crock"?

JEREMY

(laughing)

Of course not, I just wanted you to wake up quickly.

Suddenly Thorne shows up, again dressed otherwise. He stares at them and says.

THORNE

What?

Jeremy stares too and answers.

JEREMY

"What"...what?

THORNE

You reached to this point accompanied by no guide? I wonder if you really care for your life.

Jeremy looks at him wonderingly. Thorne shakes his head and adds ironically.

THORNE (CONT'D)

Why do you take on you more than you are able to bear? I know these places here backwards, yet still get lost sometimes... and you think you can do it yourself? With no guidance? Hem!

JEREMY

Actually... I...

Ember looks at Jeremy frowning. Jeremy bends down to his ear and whispers.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

I'm in control. He doesn't seem to be in bad faith. He just needs some tip.

Ember neighs with disapproval. Jeremy appeases him.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

I'm a good bargainer.

Then he clears his throat and says loud.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Ahem! 5 silvers would be enough?

Thorne has a sparkling in his eyes and pretends humble.

THORNE

Enough, my lord! Yet it's something than nothing.

Jeremy looks down his nose at the horse.

JEREMY

You see?

EMBER

You'll never tell him who you are and where we're going and why --

JEREMY

Ok, ok, I won't.

Ember makes a face. Jeremy understands why.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

I promise.

EXT. ROCKY ROAD - DAY

They all move away from the crossroads on the rocky road. They can hardly walk, they step heavily through the boulder stones. It's very hot. The sun shines hard and makes them sweat.

JEREMY

Why are you so sure that this is the right way? You don't even know where I'm going.

THORNE

I don't know where you're going, but I know that all the other ways are "see you later" roads. **JEREMY**

(confused)

"See you" --

THORNE

Cul-de-sac, blind alleys, dead end streets.

(ironical)

I guess a prince goes further than that.

Ember frowns and looks worried at Jeremy. Jeremy looks at Ember too, then at his royal weapons and clothes while Thorne goes on.

THORNE (CONT'D)

Of all those roads, this is the only one that leads to another crossroads.

EXT. ROCKY ROAD - DAY

They struggle to make their way through the hot painful rocks. Suddenly Jeremy feels the road under his feet becomes smooth and a bit slippery.

EXT. ROCKY ROAD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

FROSTY, a weird creature, wearing an afghan from top to bottom, long fur sleeves, fur cap and boots lays down in the sun enjoying the heat. Yet he shivers with cold.

He hears the noise made by the three travellers and raises his head suddenly. He notices Jeremy wiping away his sweat and breathing hard because of the heat.

EXT. ROCKY ROAD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Suddenly the rocks cover with ice and the air becomes fresh and cool. Jeremy looks at Ember wonderingly.

With every cold breath, Frosty makes everything around freeze.

When Jeremy and his company approach, Frosty smiles with innocent and kind unaggressive eyes.

Thorne glowers at him, then squints his eyes at Jeremy. He notices Jeremy looks amazed at what happens. He "warns" him.

THORNE

Good heavens! I know this abomination. Don't look into his eyes and don't touch him!

JEREMY

(arguing against)

He's just smoothed the way for us.

THORNE

I didn't expect you to say something else. All that glitters is not gold.

Jeremy looks distrustful, but afraid at the same time.

THORNE (CONT'D)

Evil intentions hide behind good deeds.

Jeremy becomes afraid and tries to hide his face from looking at Frosty.

THORNE (CONT'D)

His purpose is to turn people into ice statues. We must hurry!

Ember squints at Frosty as they pass by him. Frosty waves his hand at him and smiles friendly.

Ember tries a shy and doubtful smile, but Thorne notices that and grabs him by the head turning it ahead and pointing the direction with his forefinger.

THORNE (CONT'D)

Do you want to end up in Frosty's Ice Museum?

Frosty is left behind. His face turns sad and disappointed. He shivers.

EXT. CLOSE TO THE SECOND CROSSROADS - DAY

They walk on and approach another crossroads.

THORNE

I am thirsty. Can I have some water?

Jeremy draws his water bag and gives it to him.

JEREMY

Sure. Here you are!

Thorne takes a sip and begins to spit the water from his mouth immediately. Jeremy and Ember look at him discontent.

Thorne turns the water bag upside down and spills all the water. Jeremy looks stunned and stops walking. Ember stops too. Jeremy shouts angrily.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

What on earth are you doing?

Thorne stops too.

THORNE

It's musty and hot...
 (keeps spitting)

And rancid... and stinky.

JEREMY

On such a heat, even if it smells like pee, it still fits the bill. Damn it!

Ember looks angrily at Thorne while Jeremy covers his head with both hands and fumes with anger.

EMBER

Why do I have the feeling that Frosty would have served us?

JEREMY

Now... what are we going to drink in these wastelands?

THORNE

That was not drinking water.

JEREMY

(shouting)

Do you have better water?

THORNE

(shouting)

I do!

EXT. SECOND CROSSROADS - DAY

They reach the second crossroads and go through the middle of it while the prince and the horse look around artless.

Without saying a word and without stopping at all, Thorne takes left. Jeremy and Ember follow him frowning.

JEREMY

This road leads to --

THORNE

Water.

Jeremy and Ember look at each other distrustfully.

THORNE (CONT'D)

There's a well where we can draw fresh cool water. It's not far from here.

They keep walking. Thorne asks Jeremy.

THORNE (CONT'D)

Can you see that oak tree?

The prince looks in the distance.

JEREMY

Yes.

THORNE

There's the well. Now I need to know where you want to go, because the next crossroads has 14 directions and I can't read your thoughts.

Jeremy hesitates a while, then says.

JEREMY

My destination is... Ivory Kingdom.

EMBER

Period!

JEREMY

Er... yes, period.

THORNE

Heigh-ho, horsy! I'd really like to watch you two somewhere from above and laugh at your choices. There are 14 directions. Which one would you pick, huh? Do you still think it's wise to keep your cards so close to your chest?

EMBER

If you want my honest opinion, the answer is yes. I don't trust you at all. You're the same Matt with another hat, aren't you? You changed your clothes hoping to fool us.

THORNE

(laughing)

I pity you for being so paranoic. Obviously you suffered many disappointments. Certainly the mares left you every time the spellbound broke and you turned skinny and ugly, am I not right?

EMBER

Shut up, smooth face! I guess it's very frustrating to have no use for a razor, like every man has. Huh? Right, puss? No mustache, no beard, almost no eyebrows, no hair at all! A real male! Ha, ha, ha!

JEREMY

Hey, hey, hey! Will you stop being rude? Look, we're there! Oh, I'm so thirsty!

EXT. WELL - DAY

They finally reach the well and stop there. The well is a large and broad basin surrounded by oak trees. The water can be reached either by means of some stairs or by means of a path.

The water looks very fresh and cool. It is so clean that the bottom of the basin can be seen. It is full of small colorful pebbles. Thorne approaches and invites them.

THORNE

Come on! Dare!

Ember grins, makes a step back and taunts him.

EMBER

Ladies first!

Thorne frowns angrily and climbs down the stairs.

EXT. WELL - DAY

Thorne shows his happiness.

THORNE

Whoo! It's so cool! Whoever dug this fountain should be blessed by God! Oh! It's amazing!

Jeremy and Ember look down astonished. Thorne kneels and drinks water from the well and says something after every sip.

THORNE (CONT'D)

Oh, my goodness... fresh cool water... I'm in heaven... My throat... was burning... but now... it's freezing.

The horse and the prince swallow in vain while keep looking down. Jeremy shouts at Thorne.

JEREMY

Come on, man! You're leaving us here salivating! Fill the water bag and bring it up! We die with thirst!

THORNE

Then why are you staying with your tongues hanging out? Get in the well! Come down! Have some chill!

Thorne relaxes and lies down on the stairs while adds.

THORNE (CONT'D)

I'll take a nap right here! I just can't help it! You'll sunbathe while I'll "cold-well-bathe".

Jeremy's face sweats hard. He swallows in vain. He looks at Ember whose spittle flows from his mouth.

JEREMY

Come on, Ember! Let's freshen up a bit! What bad thing could happen?

Jeremy leaves his weapons on the grass and climbs down the stairs, while Ember goes down on the path.

They reach the water and begin to drink greedily. Thorne glimpses cunningly at the two.

INT. WELL - DAY

Jeremy keeps allaying his thirst, then begins to fill his water bag. Suddenly Ember neighs alarmed.

Jeremy turns his face and looks up as he sees a big lidded covering the well and Thorne rolling the handle of a big wheel. Jeremy asks suspiciously.

JEREMY

What are you doing?

Then he begins desperately to climb up the stairs while the lidded covers the whole surface of the well.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

You traitor! You bastard!

EMBER

I should have killed you when I had had the chance, hairless hooligan!

THORNE

You should have trusted your intellect, "horsy"!

HORSE

Evil intentions hide behind good deeds, huh? Scub! Scullion! Lousy!

EXT. OUT OF THE WELL/IN THE WELL - DAY

The lidded closes the well with a strange noise. On the lidded there's a sign that reads: "Warning! Danger! Do not cover the well unless it runs dry".

Thorne lets off the handle of the wheel. Then he takes Jeremy's falchion, climbs on the lidded and shouts.

THORNE

Now, dear prince, you'll tell me who you are and why you're going to Ivory Kingdom.

JEREMY

I won't tell you anything, ruffian! I'll wait until someone passes by and wants to drink water.

THORNE

I don't think you really want that, you viper brood!

In the well it's dark, but the sun beams still come in and the things inside can be distinguished. As soon as Thorne says the last words, the level of the water begins to go up.

Jeremy gets a fright. Ember begins to climb up the path neighing. Thorne laughs. The level of the water stops going up.

THORNE (CONT'D)

Why disappoint your poor father?

JEREMY

I already did. By hiring you, villain!

THORNE

Then don't grieve him with your death!

JEREMY

Stop using crafty words! This time won't work!

Suddenly the level of the water goes up again. Jeremy climbs up and reaches the top of the well. Ember is already there. The level of the water stops.

EMBER

This rotten barefaced will drown us!

JEREMY

If only I had the falchion on me!

The two stare at each other frightened and resigned. The level goes up again and they get wet. They scream and try to save themselves. They shiver with cold.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

It's so cold!

Thorne asks Jeremy again.

THORNE

Save your life, blunderhead! Who are you and where are you going?

Thorne gets no answer. The prince is up to the belly in the water and looks at Ember who is covered by water up to the neck. He tells him.

JEREMY

We have no choice, Ember! I'll tell him! After all, what harm can he do us if he knows the truth?

Ember looks at him resigned. The water goes up again and covers Ember's head who strives to drag it out of the water. Jeremy is up to the neck in the water. He shouts.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

I'm the son of Green the King and I'm going towards Ivory Kingdom to be crown as emperor.

THORNE

Aha!

(to self)

I thought so!

Jeremy looks at Ember who struggles to survive and yells angrily.

JEREMY

Now, remove the lidded at once! We're drowning here!

THORNE

Not before clearing up the things, num-nuts! (MORE)

THORNE (CONT'D)

From now on, your name will be Harap Alb and you'll be my servant and I'll be the prince. Is it clear?

The prince is astonished. He looks at Ember who almost drowns. He can hardly breath too.

JEREMY

It is clear!

THORNE

Swear!

JEREMY

I swear!

THORNE

Swear on your horse!

The prince shouts impatiently while takes a last breath and has his head covered by water.

JEREMY

I swear on my horse!

The lidded begins to open and the sun comes in the well. At the same time, the water begins to go down and Ember can breath.

EXT. WELL - DAY

While the prince and the horse get out of the well coughing and shivering with cold, Thorne shouts with joy.

THORNE

Now \underline{I} 'm prince Thorne and you're Harap Alb, my real name!

Then he frowns.

THORNE (CONT'D)

If only you were not able to say the truth about you!

He raises up the falchion while the prince goggles his eyes and shouts.

JEREMY

No!

Thorne shouts angrily.

THORNE

I wish you couldn't say the truth and obeyed me as a loyal servant!

Suddenly, little shinny stars begin to surround the falchion.

Jeremy and Ember look stunned and dejected while Thorne looks surprised. He shouts with joy jumping and hopping.

THORNE (CONT'D)

A spell! I made a spell! You're doomed to failure, Harap Alb! You're not able to say the truth about yourself! Say: I'm the prince.

Jeremy tries to say it as he also wants to check out if the spell succeeded.

JEREMY

I'm the... servant.

Thorne laughs. Ember goggles his eyes. He gets very angry and tries to bear down upon the barefaced, but he can't move.

THORNE

You'll move only at my command and you'll go only where I'll tell you to go.

Then, on a terse voice, he says spitefully.

THORNE (CONT'D)

I'm your master!

Ember loosens his wings trying to fly away.

THORNE (CONT'D)

And I'll also get rid of your wings.

The horse's wings disappear. Thorne begins an evil laugh. At the same time, the little stars around the falchion stop shinning. Jeremy looks dejected.

EXT. WAY TOWARDS IVORY KINGDOM - DAY

Thorne rides the horse dressed in Jeremy's clothes, while Jeremy wears Thorne's clothes and walks on foot behind Ember.

They approach the palace. Thorne grins as they come closer and closer.

EXT. THE GATES OF IVORY KINGDOM - DAY

They are close to the gates of the city and Jeremy looks in the distance. He stares at the beautiful palace in all its glory. He <u>looks overwhelmed</u>.

A watchman sees them approaching to the gates of the city. He bows his head as he sees the barefaced dressed like a prince, and addresses him deferentially.

WATCHMAN

Welcome to Ivory Kingdom, my lord!

THORNE

It's so good to finally be here! It was such a long and tiresome journey.

WATCHMAN

Now, my lord, who are you and where are you coming from?

THORNE

I'm the long awaited son of Green the King. My uncle has been expecting me.

The watchman smiles with joy and calls his messenger.

WATCHMAN

Bernard! Run to the emperor and announce the arrival of his nephew, the prince!

EXT. THE CITY OF IVORY KINGDOM - DAY

The emperor welcomes Thorne with joy. His three daughters also show their happiness, they smile and look very excited.

EMPEROR

Welcome to Ivory Kingdom, son!

Thorne handles him a scroll and says.

THORNE

Your Majesty, it's a letter from my father that certifies that I'm his son.

The emperor takes the scroll and hugs him.

EMPEROR

Come! You need to rest. Tomorrow we'll celebrate your arrival.

(MORE)

EMPEROR (CONT'D)

The city will explode of joy and happiness to meet you!

Then the emperor looks at Jeremy and says gently.

EMPEROR (CONT'D)

Your servant will sleep in the basement room. But don't worry for him, the room is very clean and warm, there's a bed, a table and he'll get food abundantly.

THORNE

No, Your Majesty, don't trouble! He's not used to sleep in a room, he sleeps in the stable, with the animals, and eats hay.

The emperor looks very stunned. His daughters also look stunned and frown.

EMPEROR

Oh, no! Not in my kingdom!

Jeremy wants to refute Thorne's words, but he can't say the truth.

JEREMY

It's true. I can't sleep in a room. I eat hay and drink water from the bucket.

Ember looks at him amazed as well as the emperor. Thorne insists.

THORNE

Your Majesty, trust me! I tried for so many times to get him used to a room and to the food a normal human being eats, but I realized that he was a savage being that needed to be understood and accepted just as he is.

Ember looks at him very angrily and tries to contradict him, but he can't talk. He just neighs very loud. Thorne "explains" the horse's behavior.

BAREFACED

My horse is very tired. When it neighs that loud, it means it needs to sleep immediately. As for my servant, don't bother! I guess a monkey would adjust faster to our conditions.

INT. PALACE - THORNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Thorne is in his luxurious room and lies in his comfortable big bed.

He looks around at the beautiful and expensive objects: a hand painted carpet on a wall, a big golden cup on a table, a silver-framed mirror, a see-saw chair, a big fluffy piece of tiger fur on the floor, cosy candles.

He blinks a few times, removes the quilt as he feels hot, then closes his eyes and falls asleep.

INT. STABLE - NIGHT

Jeremy sits down on the ground covered in a blanket. He shivers. A rat runs from one corner to another. Other two follow it.

A cow craps making a peculiar noise. A goat stands and begins to crunch some cabbage right in his ear.

Just next to him, a bee struggles in a web spider, striving to break loose. Jeremy gazes at it, then stretches his hand and releases the bee which flies outside.

He looks disappointed at the starry sky. A tear comes from his eye. He quickly wipes it away with his sleeve. Ember interrupts him.

EMBER

(gently, almost whispered)
I love you, master!

Jeremy looks at him and smiles. He sighs, strokes the horse and hugs it, then closes his eyes holding his hand around the horse's neck.

EXT. IVORY KINGDOM - FEAST - DAY

The city is full of joy. Thousands of people are gathered in front of the palace. They give shouts of acclamation and wave palm-tree twigs.

In front of the palace, on the stairs, the emperor, along with his daughters and Thorne wave their hands at the people.

In the middle, there is a long red carpet which stretches from the stairs to the end of the sidewalk.

On both sides there are two long feast tables full of all kind of food and people waiting hungrily to help themselves.

The sound produced by a bunch of trumpets announces that the people should become silent and listen to the emperor's speech.

EMPEROR

From now on, there's no need to long for an heir to the throne as Ivory Kingdom has been provided with a young and strong new emperor.

The mob cheers. The emperor raises his hands and continues.

EMPEROR (CONT'D)

Rejoice and enjoy the feast in honor of your prince and future emperor, you blessed people of Ivory!

The crowd shouts to the echo.

INT. IVORY KINGDOM - FEAST - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

The music plays. The emperor, together with his daughters and the barefaced align at the royal table. They sit and begin to eat. The people begin to eat too.

INT. STABLE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Jeremy holds his hands on the door of the stable and leans his ear against the door listening with sadness.

He hears the people shouting. Ember comes next to him.

JEREMY

The barefaced purposed to kill us. We must conceive a plan.

Suddenly they hear footsteps approaching. They frighten a bit. They hear the footsteps louder and two soldiers talking and directing towards the stable.

EMBER

They are coming towards the stable. Just jump on me as soon as they open the door and I'll bolt away with you.

JEREMY

(smiles)

No! I'm not a coward, I'm a prince.

(becomes serious)
Those people need to know the truth.

(MORE)

JEREMY (CONT'D)

This awesome city deserves more than a villain barefaced ruler. I won't allow him to trample them!

EMBER

Then let's show them who is who!

The door opens and the two soldiers march in. One of them addresses Jeremy.

1 SOLDIER

(gently)

The prince, your master, wants to show you to the world.

Jeremy makes a face.

2 SOLDIER

Everyone is so eager to admire your valiance.

JEREMY

My... valiance?

The second soldier tells the first soldier.

2 SOLDIER

He's so humble!

INT. IVORY KINGDOM - FEAST - DAY

The music plays and the feast is in full swing. Jeremy, accompanied by the two soldiers and by Ember, walks along the carpet.

As he steps, he watches at the appetizing food on the tables and swallows in vain. Everyone watches him eagerly.

He stops in front of the emperor's table where Thorne waits for him. The emperor smiles at Jeremy. The three daughters also look at him gently and smile.

Thorne wears a false smile. One man in the crowd looks at Jeremy and tells his friend.

MAN

Either he is very bold-hearted or the prince wants to send him on the road to perdition.

The other man nods.

THORNE

Come closer, Harap Alb! These people don't believe how brave you are and what you are able to do!

Ember frowns. Jeremy looks stunned. Thorne stands up and raises a bunch of lettuce from the table. While he begins to speak, the horse squints at the food on the tables.

THORNE (CONT'D)

This lettuce is a rare and expensive plant. As you can see, it is only on the emperor's table.

Thorne takes a bite.

THORNE (CONT'D)

It could be found only in The Bear's Garden. Those who picked it up, did it with the risk of their life.

Jeremy looks at him suspicious. Thorne continues to speak while keeps eating lettuce. The three daughters frown as they don't like his rude behavior.

While Thorne speaks, Ember stretches his muzzle to a big piece of roast. A child notices it and stretches his hand to stroke its muzzle.

THORNE (CONT'D)

What these people don't know is that every time I ask you to do something,

(0.S.)

you always accomplish the task and come home safe and sound.

Ember winks his eye at the child. The child looks very surprised and smiles at the horse. Thorne glares at Jeremy and adds.

THORNE (CONT'D)

Now, go to The Bear's Garden and do not disappoint me!

The three daughters look at each other worried and their faces show discontent. Thorne handles Jeremy a huge sack.

THORNE (CONT'D)

Bring it full!

Ember stretches his muzzle and whispers the child.

EMBER

Put that piece of roast in my mouth!

The child goggles his eyes and takes the piece of roast and puts the bone in Ember's mouth. At the same time, wearing a frightened face, Jeremy answers Throne.

JEREMY

Yes, sir!

The child shouts surprised and happy.

CHILD

He can talk!

His mother asks him embarrassed.

MOTHER

What? Of course he can talk. He's a human being.

CHILD

He can talk! And he can wink his eye!

The people become silent and look surprised at the child.

While everybody pays attention to the child, Ember looks at Jeremy and makes a sign with his head that suggests him to take the roast from his mouth.

Jeremy looks around ashamed, but seeing that nobody looks at him, he quickly takes the roast and puts it in the sack.

Ember takes heart and taking advantage that nobody looks at him, he raises his tail on the table.

Jeremy notices and understands his intention. Jeremy looks at him frightened and shakes his head.

The child's mother feels ashamed. She covers her son's mouth with her hand and apologizes in front of the people.

MOTHER

I guess he's tired. He needs to rest.

Ember makes a face at the prince, stretches his tail and sweeps a great amount of food from the table.

Jeremy has no choice but to stretch his sack and hold it in front of the food to catch it in the sack.

Thorne notices them, looks at them spitefully, but says nothing. The people hear the noise and turn their heads, but the food is already in the sack.

Jeremy grins, bows his head in front of the emperor, mounts Ember and scuttles away.

INT. ROAD TOWARDS THE BEAR'S GARDEN - UNDER A TREE - DAY

Jeremy sits under a tree and gobbles from the big sack of food. He looks at Ember who grazes fresh grass nearby the tree. Jeremy smiles gently while he chews the food.

Ember approaches. Jeremy stands and strokes his muzzle, then sighs and tells him.

JEREMY

How are we supposed to cope with this?

EMBER

C'mon! It's not the first time you cope with a bear. We'll get along!

JEREMY

No, I mean the whole thing. How do I get rid of this goddam spell?

EMBER

There must be a way. Goody would have known.

JEREMY

If only she had been here!

Suddenly bigger and smaller square bubbles appear in the air and break by turns, except for one, which has the size of a fist, and Goody, who is in the bubble, begins to speak.

GOODY

Jeremy, I know what happened. I can only tell you that a young whimsical woman will help you to break the spell. Good luck and don't be afraid of the freaky fellows you'll meet on your way!

Jeremy makes a face and looks confused.

JEREMY

Ha?

Jeremy wants to say something, but the bubble breaks and Goody disappears.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Wait! And where do I find her? Who is she?

He realizes that Goody won't come back and sighs resigned.

Then he notices some bubble leavings in the air and quickly begins to blow them with his lips and a bigger one expands again and Goody appears again and says.

GOODY

She's very stubborn and hard to convince, she's like a tough nut.

JEREMY

But who is he?

The bubble breaks and scatters in the air.

EXT. ROAD TOWARDS THE BEAR'S GARDEN - DAY

Jeremy rides his horse directing towards a mountain chain while Ember talks discontentedly and resentfully.

EMBER

Always women! And on top of it, she's whimsical! And she has the power over your spell!

Jeremy can see The Bear's Garden in the distance. It is very beautiful and full of all kind of plants, flowers and trees, high cliffs with snowy peaks.

JEREMY

Horsy!

EMBER

And you'll fall in love with her and she won't...

A shinny golden river flows from the cliffs to the mountain feet and a rainbow colored waterfall shines in the sun.

JEREMY

Look, The Garden!

EMBER

... and you'll try to convince her that you're the man of her dreams...

Jeremy shouts with joy and great excitement.

JEREMY

It's The Bear's Garden, we did it!

EMBER

... and she will want you to bring her the moon from the sky... it figures!

JEREMY Shut up, chatterbox!

EXT. GAP - DAY

Ember makes a face, then he looks stunned at the view. They both look ahead open-mouthed. But as they look down, they notice that a deep gap shows up in front of them.

Jeremy realizes that the gap sunders their road from the Garden. As they reach the edge of the gap, they notice that the bottom is full of all sort of flower petals.

A sudden warm wind begins to make their clothes and hair wave. The petals begin to raise from the bottom to the top.

As they come closer, Jeremy notices that the petals are huge and thick. Then they hear SOMEONE/BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG humming.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG High, duli-dah, duli-dulidah! High-high-high, duli-duliduli-dah!

EXT. GAP - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Birdie is a very skinny and tall man, dressed weirdly and having his rags made of numerous patches. He lies down on a petal, holding his hands joined at the nape and his legs across.

The petals move slowly from bottom to top and are at the half of the gap. Suddenly Birdie stops humming and stares up. Jeremy and the horse look at him open-mouthed.

Birdie doesn't notice them. He stretches his hand up and, with a sudden and quick movement, he grabs a few birds from a tree and scoffs them alive, all at a time.

Then he stretches his hand again and his hand looks like a very long rope. He grabs another bunch of birds and gobbles them.

He burps long and loud. A feather gets out of his mouth and floats in the air. He stretches his long tongue and catches it, then swallows it.

Jeremy and the horse look at each other and can hardly withhold from laughing. A beautiful <u>blue bird</u> flies cunningly above Birdie's head and poops in his hat.

Birdie becomes very angry. He stands up on the petal and tries to catch it while shakes his hat to cleanse it.

He jumps from petal to petal, but the bird is very agile and flies from side to side, chirps scornfully, sticks its tongue out, makes faces at Birdie, turns with the back and shakes its tail mockingly. Birdie manages to pluck a feather.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG
One day I'll catch you, shitty
creature! You'll beg me to spare
you and I'll nibble every part of
you slowly and tastefully, while
you'll groan with pain, poopy
delicacy!

He uses the feather as a toothpick, then puts it at his hat. Jeremy and Ember burst into laughter and Birdie notices them. Birdie is now on a petal, still at the half of the gap and looks at them.

EXT. GAP - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The horse laughs out loud. Suddenly a thin hand with long and gnarled fingers tickles him under his armpits. The horse laughs louder and rolls on both sides shouting.

EMBER

Stop it! Stop it!

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

(stunned)

You can talk?

EMBER

You eat birds... it's funny!

Birdie stops tickling Ember. He stretches one leg and reaches the top of the gap. Then brings the other leg too.

He is barefooted. He is near them, two times taller than Jeremy. He sits down and says.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

As I can see, you want to reach the other side, huh?

Jeremy and Ember grin.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG (CONT'D)

Lettuce, huh?

JEREMY

Quite... yes! Excuse me if I dare to christen you Birdie Length-Long.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Actually somebody else christened me before you did! You obviously need me.

Jeremy changes his face.

JEREMY

I don't know... I prefer to do it myself.

Birdie points towards the sky which looks cloudy and says.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Unless you make haste.

Jeremy looks confused. Ember observes Birdie from top to toe and says loud.

EMBER

Doesn't he look like a freaky fellow to you?

Jeremy looks ashamed of Ember's words and approaches his mouth to his ear.

JEREMY

Of course he does, but it's not nice to say that loud.

EMBER

I guess it's a compliment if you think better.

Jeremy murmurs as if he remembered something.

JEREMY

Freaky fellows...

Then he says loud with joy, pointing towards Birdie.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Freaky fellows! I must not be afraid! You're good people!

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

As good as gold!

They all laugh. The sky gets darker and it begins to rain.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG (CONT'D)

Oops!

JEREMY

What's wrong?

Birdie points towards the gap. Jeremy and Ember look down and see the petals going down.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Oh, no! How are we supposed to cross the gap now? How long do we have to wait until the petals raise again?

EMBER

Until sunshine!?

Birdie makes a face that suggests that he has a faster solution.

EXT. ACROSS THE GAP - DAY

It rains slowly. Birdie is outspread from one side of the gap to the other, like a bridge. Ember is behind Jeremy. They cross over Birdie while he screams.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Ouch! Ouch!

Jeremy steps scared and keeps saying.

JEREMY

I'm not gonna make it! I'm not
gonna make it!

Ember steps horror-struck as the "bridge" is very narrow. He complains and whines at every step made forward.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Shut up, horsy, and move! I will break asunder if you keep pricking me like that with those hooves!

EMBER

You shut up, I guess it's easier to be the bridge!

A dog approaches and begins to lick Birdie's empty feet. Birdie begins to laugh.

EMBER (CONT'D)

Now it's my turn to tickle you!

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

It's not ticklish, it's hard
massage!

EMBER

Then, why are you laughing?

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Hurry, hurry, or I'll pick up your bones from the bottom of this goddam hole! Birdie keeps laughing. The blue bird also stops on Birdie's toes and begins to peck them. Birdie looks exhausted and shouts.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG (CONT'D)

Stop it! Stop it, evil creatures!

Jeremy and Ember stop and look amazed.

EMBER

He called us "evil creatures?"

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Move on, up there! Why the hell did you stop?

Ember and Jeremy goggle at each other.

EMBER

Do you want us to stop or to move?

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

(shouts pissed off)

Damn it! I want you to ...

The blue bird pecks him hard while the dog keeps licking his feet. Birdie shouts long.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG (CONT'D)

Stop!

Jeremy notices the bird and the dog. He urges Ember worried.

JEREMY

Horsy, move or those tykes will fling us all into this damn hole!

EMBER

I'm not curious to know what its bottom looks like!

JEREMY

Then keep moving!

They begin to move on. Jeremy finds a rock, picks it up and is ready to throw it at the dog, but "the bridge" shakes and Jeremy loses his balance and drops the rock.

Jeremy watches the rock which goes down like an arrow until it fades away. He swallows in vain, then picks up another rock and throws it at the dog. The rock hits the dog which runs away squealing.

The bird also runs away. Ember goes on and wonders while tries to keep its balance.

EMBER

I didn't know one could do trick flying without any practise at all!

JEREMY

It's called "adrenalin".

EXT. THE BEAR'S GARDEN - AT THE EDGE OF THE GAP - DAY

Jeremy reaches the other side. The sun begins to shine. The horse finally makes the last step and reaches the other side, then says.

EMBER

I <u>swear</u> I will <u>never</u> do this again.

Birdie, trying to gather himself, says.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Me neither!

But as soon as he says that, he glides and falls shouting.

JEREMY

Birdie!

Birdie falls down on a yellow petal, but the petal rebounds and throws him on a pink petal, then on an orange petal. The blue bird flies above his head and laughs insultingly. Jeremy shouts worried.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Are you all right?

Birdie looks up at the blue bird and gnashes his teeth answering.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

I'm... ok!

Suddenly more birds gather above him and poop in his head and on his clothes.

JEREMY

Thanks Goodness! Now, what?

Birdie prepares to stretch his hands and catch the birds, but his face changes suddenly. He shouts frightened and points with his forefinger behind Jeremy. Bear roars are heard.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Watch out!

Jeremy and Ember turn their head and see two bears fighting. They quickly hide themselves behind a bush and watch the bears who are very aggressive with each other.

They fight hard until one of them kills the opponent. The winning bear roars angrily and beats his chest with his paws to show who's the boss.

Then it leaves and disappears in the Garden. Jeremy and the horse look open-mouthed and frightened.

EXT. THE BEAR'S GARDEN - AT THE EDGE OF THE GAP - DAY

The edge of the gap looks silent. Suddenly Birdie's hands touch it and struggle to climb it. He looks exhausted.

He slips a bit again, but he finally manages to reach the top. Jeremy comes out from the bush and says worried.

JEREMY

Birdie, thanks Heavens you're scatheless! The bear seems very aggressive --

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG And possessive! I've got a plan, but first we'll have to rub off the fur of the dead bear.

The horse makes a face showing abhorrence. Jeremy also looks disaffected and amazed. Birdie explains his idea.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG (CONT'D) The bear will never catch me, but I'm afraid for you two.

Jeremy hesitates a bit, then says.

JEREMY

Ok, then so be it! Let's peel the bear!

EXT. THE BEAR'S GARDEN - AT THE EDGE OF THE GAP - NIGHT

They all sit in a circle and look at the fur they've just peeled. Birdie tells them.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

We'll take separate ways and will try to fool the bear. I will hide myself behind this fur and will go to the waterfall. Ember will go to the river and Jeremy to the lettuce plantation to pick up the herbage. **EMBER**

If I go to the river, it means,
I'm safe?

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG
Our job is to distract the bear
from noticing Jeremy and, at the
same time, to save each other's
life. You judge how safe it is!

Ember says frightened and apprehended.

EMBER

Great!

EXT. THE BEAR'S GARDEN - ALLEY/GLADE - NIGHT

The three walk along an alley and look frightened to the right and to the left. They reach a glade. They look up and see the bear on a cliff roaring. Birdie says.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG Ok! It seems the bear is busy with aggrandizing himself.

They all look at the bear.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG (CONT'D)

This is where we split.

Birdie covers himself with the bear fur and pointing to the right, in the opposite direction from the cliff, he tells Jeremy.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG (CONT'D) The lettuce plantation is that way! When the job is done, we'll rejoin back here. Now, go and don't make any noise! We'll spread each to his point and try

to cover you.

JEREMY

Try?

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Do our best.

EXT. THE BEAR'S GARDEN - LETTUCE PLANTATION - NIGHT

Jeremy is on the lettuce plantation. He looks at the beautiful rows of lettuce which are very fresh and green.

He kneels and looks at the lettuce, he touches it and decides to begin to pick up. But when he tries to break a bunch of lettuce, he can't.

He tries again, but the lettuce doesn't break. He stands up, sprawls his legs and tries lustily for the third time, very determined. Suddenly the bunch of lettuce pulls out.

Jeremy smiles, then he looks astonished. A full row of lettuce begins to pull out itself making a noise, like popcorn bursting. Jeremy looks amazed.

JEREMY

Wow!

EXT. THE BEAR'S GARDEN - RIVER - NIGHT

Ember looks in the direction where the noise comes and realizes it's from the lettuce plantation.

He looks at the bear which still is on the cliff and yawns wanting to lounge and sleep.

Ember makes a wry mouth hoping that the bear won't hear the noise, but as soon as he stops yawning, the bear hears the noise and becomes suspicious. Ember closes his eye tight.

EXT. THE BEAR'S GARDEN - WATERFALL - NIGHT

Birdie makes a sign with his hand. Ember begins to neigh. The bear turns his head from the lettuce to the river direction. He looks confused.

He begins to roar and to direct towards the river. Ember looks scared. Birdie begins to wave his fur and to throw small rocks at the bear. The bear becomes angry and runs towards the waterfall. Ember neighs and the bear stops and looks confused. He doesn't know what to do and where to go.

EXT. THE BEAR'S GARDEN - LETTUCE PLANTATION - NIGHT

Jeremy begins to fill his sack with lettuce and looks from time to time at the cliff to see whether the bear is still there.

He sees motion and becomes a bit scared and picks up the lettuce without watching down, but only to the left and to the right. Suddenly he makes a face and shouts.

JEREMY

Aw!

The bear hears the noise and looks angrily at the lettuce plantation. As Jeremy looks at his hand, he notices that he just grasped a snake by the head. He lets it off crying blue murder.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Ugh! Eek! Phew!

When he looks around, he realizes that there's withered lettuce in each place where there was fresh green lettuce. He looks amazed and confused.

EXT. THE BEAR'S GARDEN - CLIFF - NIGHT

The bear looks very angry and begins to run towards the lettuce plantation roaring. Birdie realizes Jeremy is in danger and begins to wave his fur again and pretends roaring.

The bear doesn't give a damn. Ember becomes worried. He begins to neigh loud to distract the bear, but the bear runs angrily towards the lettuce plantation as if he didn't hear them.

EXT. THE BEAR'S GARDEN - LETTUCE PLANTATION - NIGHT

Jeremy notices the bear and realizes he can't linger anymore. He grabs the heads of lettuce as fast as he can and fills the sack.

Then he begins to run, moving away from the lettuce plantation. The bear is at his heels. Jeremy runs holding his sack at the back and shouting loud.

JEREMY

Here I go! Action stations!

EXT. THE BEAR'S GARDEN - TOWARDS THE GAP - NIGHT

He keeps racing and directs towards the rejoining point. The bear chases him angrily. Birdie and Ember bolt too and the three rejoin and keep racing. Birdie snubs Jeremy.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG Woe! Good gracious! You shouldn't have pulled the lettuce out!

JEREMY

Why?

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG
You should have just cut it or
break it, but not pull the roots,
damn it! The place where you did
so will remain bare forever!

JEREMY

How should I have known? Why didn't you tell me?

EMBER

That explains the bear's wrath!

EXT. THE BEAR'S GARDEN - CLOSE TO THE GAP - NIGHT

They keep running while the bear chases them and roar angrily. They almost reach the gap. Birdie shouts.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Now, listen carefully! The bear will never leave the garden. Don't stop running! When you reach the edge of the gap, jump!

Jeremy and Ember look at each other frightened. Ember asks wonderingly and distrustfully.

EMBER

What?

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG
Just do what I'm telling you if
you care for your life!

Ember begins to laugh ironically.

EMBER

You mean our afterlife!

Then he whispers Jeremy.

EMBER (CONT'D)

What shall we do?

JEREMY

We have no choice but to trust him! Better swallowed by a breathless gap than torn to pieces by a horn-mad beast.

They scamper through wet grass, mud, dry leaves, thorn bushes and finally reach the edge of the gap dirty and exhausted.

EXT. THE BEAR'S GARDEN - GAP - NIGHT

They don't stop at all, but plunge into the big hole screaming.

The bear stops at the edge of the gap and looks at them roaring. He is disappointed and angry. He begins to whine sorrowfully.

EXT. GAP - NIGHT

Silence. Jeremy has his eyes tightly closed. He opens them as he realizes he is safe. His eyes dilate and he looks around surprised and open-mouthed.

The gap is full of planets of all kinds which float around and offer a wonderful view. One is just next to him. He stretches his finger shyly and touches it.

The planet moves away slowly a few inches and rolls sluggishly. When he looks down, he notices that there are clouds all under his feet.

Little stars begin to show up and to make up constellations.

They all admire the landscape which looks like an intergalactic view, as if the world was upside-down. The horse looks amazed and says frightened to the prince.

EMBER

I told you! It's the afterlife!

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG Ember, does that bear look like a ghost to you?

Jeremy and Ember look up at the bear who keep whining.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG (CONT'D) Unfortunately we're still in the real life and we must make a survival plan.

EMBER

A survival...? I thought we just sealed our safety. You said the bear would never leave the garden.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG Right, but he's determined to have his own back.

JEREMY

How?

Birdie looks in the distance, towards the garden, and says.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG Can you see that dry runway through the mountains?

Jeremy answers confused.

JEREMY

Yes.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG
The bear will deviate the river
from its normal course...

Jeremy and Ember seem to understand. Jeremy looks at the dry riverbed and realizes that it ends in the gap.

JEREMY

... to the dry runway.

EMBER

He will flood us?

Birdie makes a face by which he confirms.

EMBER (CONT'D)

Well, that won't be our first flood experience. But what's wrong with everyone? Drowning is the only way to kill someone? Why don't they burn us on the stake, or... or chop our heads, or take our scalp, or eat our brain alive?

Saying the last words, Ember makes a face and becomes frightened of his own words. Birdie and Jeremy also look at him worried. Jeremy asks Birdie.

JEREMY

What's your plan?

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

To be honest, I have no plan.

JEREMY

How long does it take the gap to fill?

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

I have no idea. Anyway, if we survive until morning, we'll fly with the mushrooms.

JEREMY

What?

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

In the morning, lots of mushrooms fly in the air. We grasp their sticks and cross the gap.

Ember and Jeremy stare at him confused and uncertain.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG (CONT'D)

Unless you prefer me to bridge the gap for you.

EMBER

No, thanks!

EXT. GAP - NIGHT

Jeremy watches Birdie for a few seconds, then says.

JEREMY

Birdie, you're such a good friend! Thank you so much!

Birdie smiles friendly and answers.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Thank you, too.

INT. IVORY KINGDOM - THORNE'S ROOM - BALCONY - NIGHT

Thorne is in the balcony of his room and looks rancorously at the stars, rubbs his chin with his hand and says to himself.

THORNE

I hope that fierce bear got you under hand, Harap Alb. (beat) Otherwise, I'll get you yet!

As he turns back towards his bed, he stumbles over Jeremy's falchion which falls down. He curses.

THORNE (CONT'D)

Damn it!

Then he goes to bed.

INT. IVORY KINGDOM - THORNE'S ROOM - NIGHT

The falchion casts around a few little magic stars.

EXT. GAP - MORNING

The planets are gone. Jeremy wakes up and he remembers where he is. He looks at the riverbed and notices it's full. Then he looks frightened at the horse and tells him.

JEREMY

Ember, wake up! You were supposed to be on guard! It was your turn...

As he says the last words, Jeremy looks up at the riverbed and realizes it's empty. He frowns, then begins to rub his eyes thinking he doesn't see well.

As he opens his eyes again, he is astonished to spot something very strange. The riverbed fills up again, but is quickly emptied. He goggles his eyes. JEREMY (CONT'D)

What the ...?

Birdie who just wakes up, looks in the distance and sees exactly what Jeremy sees and begins to smile, shaking his head happily.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Thirster! Thanks heavens!

Jeremy looks at him quizzical.

EXT. AT THE FEET OF THE RIVERBED - MORNING

Thirster, is a very strange man, wearing underclothes and old shabby glasses with no lens, almost bald, just a little hair on the sides, short hands and legs, a belly like a barrel.

Every time he speaks, or does something thrilling, he scratches his armpits.

He sits on his knees at the feet of the riverbed and waits for the water to come. He salivates. He looks up and grins.

The water comes like an avalanche, brawling and bubbling. He opens his mouth. His lips become so big and elastic that cover not only his face, but the whole landscape.

He sucks the water at once and keeps sucking the last drops, then gets ready for the next round.

EXT. GAP - MORNING

Birdie teaches his fellows how to cling themselves to the legs of the mushrooms. The clouds begin to melt and they jump from one cloud to another.

Big mushrooms begin to show up from the clouds making a certain noise.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Here they come!

As soon as they splash their head, they begin to fly very fast in the air towards the sky.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG (CONT'D)

We must be nimble! The mushrooms cease to burst as soon as the last cloud evaporates.

EMBER

Great! Why do you always tell us what it's all about in the last moment?

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG To save you from panic!

As soon as he says that, the cloud they sit on melts and they fall on another cloud.

Jeremy looks down and as he can't see the bottom, he realizes how deep the gap is. He swallows in vain. The clouds tail away more and more.

In a cold sweat, Jeremy looks around and stretches his hands to grasp a mushroom.

He screams and manages to cling to a small mushroom. At first, he is afraid, then he begins to laugh happily. He flies in the air and keeps laughing.

JEREMY

I did it! Ember, I did it!

Birdie begins to laugh too.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Good for you!

Then he looks at Ember.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG (CONT'D)

Come, on! You first! I want to see you safe, after that, I'll strike out for myself.

After he says that, a mushroom bursts just under his feet and flies with him, but he doesn't want to let Ember alone and he jumps down.

In his falling, he looks afraid as he sees no cloud to cling to. He stretches his hands but catches none.

The horse and the prince look at him scared and can't do anything.

JEREMY

Birdie!

But another mushroom bursts and, as it flies up, it pushes Birdie up and makes him rebound and land on Jeremy's mushroom.

As it is a small mushroom, it doesn't resist and breaks. Jeremy falls down and lands on Ember. Birdie falls past a cloud which is just above the cloud on which the horse and Jeremy are.

Birdie notices the cloud and stretches his hands. He barely manages to cling to its crag. He grasps it with both hands, but the crag breaks and Birdie falls down on Ember, next to Jeremy.

As they are too heavy and the cloud too thin, it breaks and Ember begins to fall, while Birdie and Jeremy hold tight. They all scream.

EXT. GAP - MORNING

The horse instinctively tries to fly and suddenly his wings loosen and he can fly. Jeremy looks astonished. Birdie also is very amazed. He calls Ember down.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG Oh-my-Gosh! You have wings and you let me ladder like a moron across that gap?

JEREMY

No, no, no! It's the spell!

Jeremy's face suddenly brightens. He goes on.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

(to self)

It means... that I can say the truth about who I am.

Jeremy goes on with a shinny and merry face.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

I am... the servant of the barefaced.

Birdie looks at him uncleared, confused and not surprised.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Aha!

Jeremy realizes he didn't say the truth and his face turns sad. Ember tries his luck.

EMBER

No, no, no! He is the barefaced's servant.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Yeah... I noticed the grammar error myself.

EMBER

No, it's...

JEREMY

It's no use, Ember... Birdie is not a woman.

EMBER

Oh, isn't he?

JEREMY

A "whimsical woman"...remember?

EMBER

Oh, right! Yet something happened.

JEREMY

It looks like it!

EXT. ALLEY TOWARDS IVORY KINGDOM - DAY

Jeremy is on his way back towards Ivory Kingdom, accompanied by Ember, Birdie and Thirster. Jeremy holds the bear's fur on his shoulder.

They all direct towards the palace. A forest man stops and goggles at them. They make a few more steps and notice another two men staring at them. One of them even takes his hat off.

EXT. IVORY KINGDOM - DAY

The huge wooden gates of the city open and they let Jeremy and his fellows pass. Jeremy is on horseback.

The city bustles of people who stop and stare at them as they go forward. Most of them take their hats off, some of them even bow in front of him. Jeremy hears them whispering.

1 MAN

He killed the bear.

2 MAN

He filled the sack with royal lettuce.

1 WOMAN

He's so brave!

2 WOMAN

The prince will be so proud of him.

As he goes on, Jeremy notices that many people begin to crowd behind him. They keep murmuring.

3 MAN

He killed the bear!

4 MAN

He's got his fur.

Jeremy looks frustrated. Suddenly he turns towards them and says.

JEREMY

Hey, it's not what you think... I just...

Everybody stops and stares at him amazed. They smile at him and at each other and, as if they didn't hear him, they begin to speak louder and louder.

1 MAN

You did it!

2 MAN

How did you manage to cross the gap?

3 MAN

And fill the sack with lettuce?

4 MAN

You killed the bear. You're a hero!

5 MAN

Our hero! You can be our hero!

Suddenly more and more voices say the same thing.

CROWD

You're our hero!

EXT. IVORY KINGDOM - DAY

The royal family shows up in the royal balcony. The three daughters look very happy with what they see.

The old emperor also looks satisfied. The people cheer and shout with joy behind Jeremy.

EXT. IVORY KINGDOM - DAY

Thorne appears at the balcony of his bedroom. Jeremy covers his back with the bear fur and this makes the crowd shout even louder.

Then he takes a head of lettuce out of his sack and raises it so that Thorne may see it. The crowd cheers. Thorne looks angrily. Jeremy raises the whole sack. The people shout and acclaim.

EXT. IVORY KINGDOM - DAY

Thorne and Jeremy are face to face. Thorne glowers at him for a few seconds. Then he looks defiantly at Birdie and at Thirster and tells Jeremy.

THORNE

I can see you geminated on the way. Who are these freaks?

THIRSTER

(scratching his armpits)
Can I have some water?

JEREMY

They are my friends...

Jeremy hesitates a while.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

...Your Majesty.

A woman holds a baby in her arms and the baby prattles moving to-and-fro and slobbering.

THORNE

Ha! "Friends"!

Thirster stretches his lips and scratching his armpits, he sticks his tongue out to catch the baby's slobber. The baby laughs and stretches his little hands and grasps the big lips slobbering even more.

Thirster sucks all the slobber. The people make a noise that show abhorrence. Some women break out.

WOMEN

Gross!

Thorne looks at Thirster disgusted. Thirster grins.

THIRSTER

(scratching one armpit)
I'm so thirsty!

Thorne looks at Jeremy and tells him.

THORNE

Just as savage as you...

Thorne keeps looking at him disgustedly and defiantly. Birdie slaps Thirster, but as soon as does so, a flock of birds fly above them.

Birdie suddenly stretches his hand, catches a few birds and devours them. The crowd shows its amazement and disgust.

This time Thirster slaps Birdie. Thorne takes the floor and, looking straight in Jeremy's eyes, he says loud so that everybody may hear him.

THORNE (CONT'D)

Birds of a feather flock together!

INT. STABLE - NIGHT

Jeremy, Ember, Birdie and Thirster are in the stable. Thirster and Birdie accuse each other of what happened.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

It's your fault! You should have
forbear!

THIRSTER

No, it's your fault! What you did was more obvious... and more inhuman.

EMBER

It's both your fault and his fault. Jeremy was on the verge of expelling that malignant and treacherous stupid barefaced.

JEREMY

Hey, don't quarrel! Fate willed it! I just wonder where and when I'll find that woman...

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG
But who's that sinner? He's the one
who rules this awesome city?

Ember answers resigned.

EMBER

He's... our master.

INT. IVORY KINGDOM - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Chloe, the youngest daughter, shows up on the corridor. She holds a plate in her hands covered by a kitchen towel.

Her sisters follow her. The three smile at each other and nod their head.

INT. IVORY KINGDOM - EMPEROR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The emperor wears his night attire and kneels next to his bed, praying. The scroll from Thorne is opened before his eyes.

There's one candle lightened. He is interrupted by a knock. He opens his eyes suddenly.

The three daughters enter their father's bedroom. They look at each other, then Chloe takes heart and breaks the silence.

CHLOE

Father!

EMPEROR

Chloe, you scared me!

CHLOE

I'm sorry, father. Er... we... would like to talk to you.

EMPEROR

Of, course, my dears. Certainly!

The three come closer and help their father stand up and sit on the bed.

CHLOE

Father, we'd like to be honest with you. We are concerned about Harap Alb.

JASMINE

Our cousin treats him inhumanly.

AGNES

And, by the way, we are suspicious concerning our so-called "kinship" with Thorne.

CHLOE

He can't be our cousin.

JASMINE

Harap Alb looks rather like one of
us. And he's good and kind and
brave...

CHLOE

We think he's actually the prince we expected. He's our cousin.

EMPEROR

Oh, my dear daughters! I thought it was only me who thought so.

He begins to kiss them and to hug them sighing.

EMPEROR (CONT'D)

I feel so relieved! Thank you for taking this load off my mind! Now, how can we be sure of it?

The three look at each other and smile. Chloe draws the plate and uncovers it. The plate is full of bones and left-overs.

CHLOE

We left this plate of food in the stable and we watched to see what happens.

The emperor looks inquiringly and impatiently.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

They all ate hungrily... including Harap Alb.

The emperor nods satisfied.

EMPEROR

My only question is: Why doesn't Harap Alb tells us who he really is?

AGNES

We never asked him.

EMPEROR

Why don't we do this right now?

EXT. STABLE - NIGHT

The three daughters approach the stable. They notice there's silence inside. They stop and look through the wooden walls. Everybody inside sleeps.

CHLOE

Tomorrow morning!

The other two nod.

EXT. IVORY CITY - SENTRY POINT - MORNING

Two guards of the city look in the distance as they hear some peculiar noise. They can spot a bunch of soldiers directing towards the city on horseback. They sound the alarm.

The gates of Ivory City open and a big cohort of soldiers from inside approach the sentry point.

EXT. IVORY CITY - SENTRY POINT - MORNING

The general takes the floor.

GENERAL

What's going on?

GUARD MAN

By the clothes they wear, they must be soldiers of Sigmund's army.

The general shouts to his soldiers.

GENERAL

Stand firm!

The soldiers align.

EXT. IVORY CITY - SENTRY POINT - MORNING

The general looks better and he can see a white flag being waved by the other soldiers bunch.

GENERAL

It seems they come with peace.

GURAD MAN

Yeah, it seems so.

EXT. IVORY CITY - SENTRY POINT - MORNING

Sigmund's soldiers approach. They are close enough. One of them dismounts unrolls a scroll and reads.

SOLDIER

Emperor Sigmund has finally decided to marry his daughter. Every prince from every part of the world is invited to fight for her hand. He who wins, shall be given the emperor's daughter and half of the kingdom, but all those who fail, shall be sent to death.

The guard man whispers in the general's ear.

GUARD MAN

It's a trap!

The general takes the floor.

GENERAL

Well, thank you for the invitation, we have no prince available at this time.

SOLDIER

All right then. You have little time to change your mind. The action takes place in seven days by now, which means your <u>brave</u> prince...

The other soldiers of Sigmund'S army begin to laugh scornfully.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

... must set on towards Red Hasham Kingdom to-day.

The quard man tells the general.

GUARD MAN

This is another trick of emperor Sigmund to get rid of the princes of the world.

The general nods and answers him.

GENERAL

No one will get the girl, they will all die, just as it happened years ago when he organized that silly duel for Caramel Castle.

EXT. IVORY CITY - FEAST - DAY

The city looks like holiday. A big feast is given. All the citizens are gathered. They all eat all kind of good food and listen to the music played by a brass band.

The royal table is full of relish. The emperor and Thorne are in the middle. Next to the emperor, there are the three daughters. Next to Thorne there are three knights.

The emperor looks very happy as well as his daughters. Suddenly he takes a glass of wine in his hand, stands up quaking a bit, then takes the floor.

EMPEROR

Dear citizens of Ivory Kingdom! I'm sure you ask yourselves what we celebrate today. Well, we certainly don't want our future king to reign without a queen.

Thorne smiles satisfied.

EMPEROR (CONT'D)

He needs someone to inspire him, to help him, to love him, to make him stronger, to give him heirs.

Thorne keeps smiling with joy. The crowd cheers.

EMPEROR (CONT'D)

And that someone can't be just whomsoever. It seems the fate blessed him today with a great challenge. The magnificent Red Hasham Kingdom expects him to fight for the hand of princess Caprice.

The crowd cheers. Thorne's face turns worried. The emperor addresses Thorne.

EMPEROR (CONT'D)

We believe in you. It's your chance to show your courage to the people of Ivory Kingdom. We hope in you and we know you won't let us down!

The mob cheers to the echo. The three daughters applaud and look happy. Thorne looks confused. His face is pale.

EXT. IVORY CITY - FEAST - DAY

Thorne stands up. A long moment of silence.

THORNE

When I was little, my mother, the queen of Green Kingdom - may she rest in peace - had been kidnapped by Sigmund's soldiers and... tortured.

The mob gazes at him amazed and sorrowfully.

THORNE (CONT'D)

She was pregnant and...

(sorrowfully)

... they raped her.

(sobbing)

I watched everything they did to her. She was full of blood and was begging them to spare her. I watched the baby being aborted. I watched her creeping and dying and I was not able to do anything.

Tears come from Thorne's eyes.

THORNE (CONT'D)

Since then I became so bitter against any cruel action, against anything that involved blood and suffering.

The emperor looks at him amazed and sensitized as well as his daughters. Many women in the crowd begin to cry. Thorne goes on.

THORNE (CONT'D)

When my father asked me to accomplish this tremendous task, that is to come here, to you, in order to become a successor to the throne of this beautiful city, at first I refused him, knowing that this is for someone whose childhood had not been stigmatized, someone who is brave enough to reign above an awesome city like yours... (MORE)

THORNE (CONT'D)

like ours... I want you to know that I love you so much... All I want for this city is welfare and peace.

He bursts into crying. The people begin to cry too. Some of them shout.

1 MAN

He doesn't deserve a fate like this!

2 MAN

You're our prince, we love you!

Then they look at the emperor and begin to entreat him.

3 MAN

We don't want him to suffer again!

4 MAN

Please, make your request void!

1 WOMAN

All we need is peace.

2 WOMAN

Don't send him to death!

The emperor looks at them almost resigned.

EXT. IVORY CITY - FEAST - DAY

Suddenly Jeremy's voice is heard.

JEREMY (V.O.)

I'll do this for him!

They all look at him. The crowd becomes even more sensitive. Many begin to cry and to applaud.

THORNE

He's the best servant in the world. What am I supposed to do without him?

EMPEROR

No, I won't allow this! I understand the prince can't go. But we'll give cause to ridicule to send a servant instead of a prince.

JEREMY

Your Majesty, I beg you, let me go! I promise everything will be all right. Please, I <u>must</u> do this!

EXT. IVORY CITY - NIGHT

Jeremy and the emperor are at the gates of the city. They are face to face. The emperor looks at him gently and tells him.

EMPEROR

That woman is very whimsical.

JEREMY

(smiles)

That makes the trip even worthier, isn't it?

EMPEROR

She refused many suitors. Actually she doesn't want to get married. Are you sure you want to do this?

JEREMY

I have no doubt.

EMPEROR

All right, son.

The emperor gazes at him.

EMPEROR (CONT'D)

Please, answer me one question.

JEREMY

Yes, Your Majesty.

EMPEROR

Don't be afraid to give the right answer. I promise nothing wrong will happen.

JEREMY

Of course, Your Majesty.

The emperor hesitates a while.

EMPEROR

Are you the prince we have been waiting for? Are you my brother's son?

JEREMY

(smiles)

No, Your Majesty, I'm not.

The emperor nods disappointed.

EMPEROR

You've got a good heart. Go in peace and come back safe and sound!

JEREMY

I promise!

The emperor draws his sword, gives it to him and adds.

EMPEROR

Make us proud of you!

Jeremy takes the sword, smiles friendly, mounts his horse and departs together with his fellows. The emperor watches them until they disappear, while an autumn landscape begins to shape.

EXT. IVORY KINGDOM - PATH IN THE MOUNTAINS - DAY

Jeremy and his fellows get through a long, narrow and windy path through the mountains. As they begin to climb down, the path gets wider and wider.

When Jeremy looks up in the distance, he notices the shore of a sea. He smiles satisfied.

JEREMY

We're there. Look! The sea!

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

We're not there unless we cross it.

Jeremy looks in the distance, searching with his eyes.

JEREMY

There must be those sailor men the emperor talked about.

EXT. IVORY KINGDOM - SEA SHORE - DAY

They are just at the sea shore. The waves run foaming and dash in the shore. Thirster looks at the sea disappointed. Then he calls Birdie down.

THIRSTER

You said it was a lake.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

I said it was water.

EMBER

But, c'mon you can try! Just take a mouth!

THIRSTER

I know what it tastes like! It's bitter and salty.

He stares at the water.

THIRSTER (CONT'D)

No, I can't do it! I'm sorry!

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Yeah, sure! Baby slobber tastes better.

THIRSTER

At least it's sweet.

Jeremy notices some sailor men in the distance.

JEREMY

Hey, look, there!

He scoots towards there.

EXT. ON THE SEA - SHIP - DAY

They are all at the board of a big ship crossing the sea. The captain approaches him.

CAPTAIN

You were lucky to catch the last ship. I hope you don't have to turn back soon.

JEREMY

Actually I do. As soon as possible.

CAPTAIN

You'll have to wait about six months.

Jeremy looks astonished.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

The ships will land at the other shore until spring.

JEREMY

Impossible! I have to turn back at
Ivory Kingdom with princess
Caprice.

The other sailor men stare at him mistrustfully. A fat sailor man, standing a few inches further, busy with rolling some rope, shouts.

SAILOR MAN

Then maybe you'll want to take the shortcut.

The other sailor men begin to laugh. Jeremy asks the captain.

JEREMY

What's the shortcut?

The captain smiles and taps him on the shoulder.

EXT. ON THE SEA - SHIP BERTH - NIGHT

Jeremy and his fellows are gathered in their berth. Thirster is half-asleep.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

So, how do we get back?

JEREMY

We've got three options: wait six months until the ships sail again...

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

(waiting)

Yeah...

JEREMY

Make our own ship...

They all begin to laugh. Thirster startles and wakes up, then falls asleep again.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Or... take the shortcut.

EMBER

That is...?

JEREMY

A blazing volcano.

Each of them shows their astonished face. Thirster also suddenly opens his eyes. He breaks the silence.

THIRSTER

I guess we should first focus on stealing the girl... after that we'll think of how to get back.

EMBER

Steal?

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

(smiling)

He's sleeping. Don't you see?

Jeremy sighs.

JEREMY

Everything becomes so tough.

EMBER

Don't give up! Thorne is a jerk, he must not reign upon Ivory Kingdom.

JEREMY

I'm not much different from him.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG What are you talking about?

JEREMY

He is a mature jerk, while I'm a young good man. At this time none of us is able to rule a city.

EMBER

It's an inappropriate reason to give up!

JEREMY

I'm not talking about giving up.

Birdie and Ember look worried at Jeremy.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

I'm just saying that it's such a big responsibility to reign a city like Ivory Kingdom. Maybe that's why I have to go through all these...

Birdie smiles and nods his head.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Now I guess you are a step ahead over Thorne.

Jeremy and Ember look amazed at Birdie.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG (CONT'D)

He's a bad master, you're right to rebel against him.

JEREMY

No, Birdie, you don't understand --

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

(smiling)

Or maybe I begin to.

EXT. SEA SHORE - RED HASHAM KINGDOM - DAY

LENCE, a strange human being, one-eyed, wearing tresses, beard and moustache, tall enough and brawny, helps FAMISH to find something to eat.

Lence has a hoarse and hasty voice and doesn't finish his words when he speaks. He can see everything, even the most hidden and distant things.

Famish is fat and moves slowly. He wears a tarboosh that is too small for his head.

He drops it every time he bends down and puts it back stuffing it on his head and saying "you twerp!".

Lence shouts as he sees a hare behind a rock.

LENCE

Here!

FAMISH

Where?

The hare runs and stops next to a bush.

LENCE

There!

FAMISH

Where?

The hare hops and moves away.

LENCE

You lose it! You lose it!

FAMISH

Lose what?

Famish bends down and looks through his legs. His tarboosh falls down.

FAMISH (CONT'D)

You twerp!

He puts it back and stuffs it on his head. Lence sees the hare in a tree.

LENCE

There! Sod it! You lost it again!

Famish gives up and sits down under a coconut tree, gasping hard. He whines.

FAMISH

I'm starving!

A coconut falls from the tree and bumps into his head, then falls down along with the tarboosh.

FAMISH (CONT'D)

You twerp!

Then he grins as he sees the coconut, quickly stuffs the tarboosh on his head, then grabs the coconut and gobbles it with its peels. Then his face turns sad again.

FAMISH (CONT'D)

I'm starving!

He stands and begins to shake the coconut tree. Lots of coconuts fall down. He grins.

EXT. SEA SHORE - RED KINGDOM - DAY

Famish is surrounded by lots of coconut peels. Jeremy and his fellows stare stunned at Lence and Famish, while behind them, in the distance, the sailor men dock the ship they travelled by. Birdie asks Thirster.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Is this your brother?

Thirster stares. Jeremy and Ember laugh out loud. Thirster begins to laugh foolishly pointing at Famish.

Famish, with coconut remnants on his cheeks and mouth, grins and asks.

FAMISH

Have something to eat? Anything?

Birdie stretches his hand to Famish. When Famish looks at Birdie's hand, he goggles his eyes and grins when he sees the hare he was chasing earlier.

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - PATH IN THE FOREST - DAY

Jeremy and his friends, along with Lence and Famish, approach Red Hasham Kingdom while crossing a dark dreadful forest.

They stare to the left and to the right as they glimpse in the distance human bodies that hang by the trees.

EXT. IVORY KINGDOM - SEA SHORE - DAY

Frosty looks confused at the sea. He has a map in his hands and follows the way with his forefinger. It crosses over the sea and stops at Red Hasham Kingdom.

Suddenly he hears some noise. A bunch of about 10 soldiers approach on horseback. He looks scared and quickly hides behind a cliff.

HEAD SOLDIER

Oh, no! The last ship is gone! We missed it!

SOLDIER

What do we do?

HEAD SOLDIER

There's no other way to reach Red Hasham Kingdom. Let alone we should be there as fast as possible.

Frosty listens to them attentively. He shivers.

EXT. IVORY KINGDOM - SEA SHORE - DAY - SAME

Frosty stands and shows up with shy movements. The soldiers notice him and stare at him.

FROSTY

(stammering and shivering) I could help you.

The head soldier rises his hand and wants to say something, but Frosty gets a fright and covers himself from his hand.

The head soldier frowns. Then he says pointing to his sword.

HEAD SOLDIER

(kind voice)

When I want to hurt people, I use this.

EXT. IVORY KINGDOM - SEA SHORE - DAY

They are all behind the cliff Frosty hid before and stare amazed at a big ship that looks rather like a covered sleigh, at which six huge husky dogs, as big as elephants, are harnessed, shivering with cold and eager to pull.

1 SOLDIER

You suggest us to wait until the sea freezes?

The soldiers laugh.

FROSTY

(shy)

Do you believe in miracles?

The soldiers stare silent.

EXT. IVORY KINGDOM - SEA SHORE - DAY

The dogs run readily on the frozen sea. The sleigh-ship slides lively hosting both Frosty and the soldiers along with their horses.

HEAD SOLDIER

I don't know how you did it, but I'm certainly not having a dream. How much do I owe you?

FROSTY

100 matches.

HEAD SOLDIER

(smiles)

Done!

FROSTY

Each.

The head soldier looks at Frosty who shivers with cold.

HEAD SOLDIER

(laughs)
All right!

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - ALLEY TOWARDS THE PALACE - DAY

Jeremy and his company approach the palace. The breathtaking view in front of them makes them stare.

There are tens of long beautiful rows of colorful tulips that stretch from the end of the alley to the palace.

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - PALACE - DAY

They are in front of the palace. Jeremy notices a big red tulip in a pot. He approaches and looks at it.

JEREMY

How can I go to the princess empty-handed?

He tries to break it, but he can't. He struggles again and pulls hard. He pulls it out with its roots.

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - ROYAL CHAMBER - DAY

Two big doors open all of a sudden. A soldier marches in and addresses the emperor.

SOLDIER

Some... idiots... Your majesty!

SIGMUND

(ironical)

Of course! Show them in!

Emperor Sigmund wears a long beard, expensive clothes, a chain around his neck and a big ring on his small finger.

The soldier makes a sign and the guards let Jeremy and his fellows pass. Famish and Lence are also with them.

Sigmund frowns and smiles with contempt at the view.

Jeremy makes a few steps forward, kneels and bows his head. Than he stands. His fellows stop behind him, weird in eager rivalry.

Sigmund chuckles ironically, then his face turns angry as he notices the tulip in Jeremy's hands.

SIGMUND (CONT'D)

You dared to break... er, er... to <u>pull out</u> the... the... the flower?

Jeremy looks at the tulip confused and ashamed.

JEREMY

I'm sorry.

SIGMUND

(angry)

Why are you here? What do you want?

JEREMY

(shy but determined)
The princess.

Sigmund begins to laugh scornfully.

At the same time, Birdie notices the <u>blue bird</u>. His eyes glitter with anger.

He stretches his hand to catch it, but the window pane is so clean that he didn't realize it's closed. His fist breaks the window.

Sigmund cuts off laughing. He points with his small finger to Jeremy's friends and says.

SIGMUND

So, we are weirdo... but violently determined.

He stands up and climbs down the stairs. He looks down his nose at them and adds.

SIGMUND (CONT'D)

We're not going home without the princess.

The loyalties begin to laugh. Thirster also begins to laugh stupidly and to scratch one of his armpits.

Lence raises his hand to make him shut up, but he unwillingly hits Famish on the head and causes his tarboosh fall down.

SIGMUND (CONT'D)

(shouts ironical almost syllabified)

You audacious!

Famish bends down and after grabs his tarboosh and stuffs it on his head, he shouts.

FAMISH

You twerp!

Sigmund frowns with anger. One of his soldiers draws his sword and directs towards Famish.

Sigmund makes a sign with his hand and the soldier sheathes his sword and withdraws.

SIGMUND

Well, the tournament is over. You arrived too late!

Jeremy looks worried and wants to say something, but the emperor overlaps.

SIGMUND (CONT'D)

But how can I refuse the most "courageous" people in the world?

Jeremy's face brightens.

SIGMUND (CONT'D)

You'll be given a task. Either you accomplish it in due time, or you're all dead.

The emperor addresses his servants, but fixes Jeremy with his eyes.

SIGMUND (CONT'D)

Let's begin acting!

FAMISH

I'm starving!

THIRSTER

I'm dying with thirst!

The emperor laughs ironically.

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - GUESTS KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Jeremy and his friends sit at a big table full of all kind of food.

CHIEF SERVANT

You must eat and drink everything.

The sixth look at each other and goggle their eyes. They can hardly help from laughing.

JEREMY

Eat and drink...

CHIEF SERVANT

Everything.

Birdie looks at Famish and Thirster, then he begins to laugh out loud. The others follow him. The chief servant frowns.

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - KITCHEN - DAY - SAME

Birdie whispers something in Lence's ear. The whisper goes from mouth to mouth until it reaches Jeremy. At the end, Jeremy nods to Birdie.

They all begin to eat and drink except for Famish and Thirster who grin and salivate and who rub their hands expecting.

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - KITCHEN - DAY - LATER

Jeremy addresses the chief servant.

JEREMY

Well, we've had enough. Thank you for this beautiful dinner. Now, will you tell me the task I must accomplish in order to get the princess?

CHIEF SERVANT

That's the task!

Jeremy's friends look amazed and relaxed.

JEREMY

Eat and drink everything?

The chief servant looks on the table. There is still food left.

CHIEF SERVANT

No gobbet left! Or else... you know the punishment.

The servants bring even more food on the table, five times than the initial amount. The chief servant grins.

Jeremy smiles at Famish and Thirster.

JEREMY

Have fun, guys!

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - KITCHEN - DAY

Famish and Thirster gobble and lap up everything. Thirster empties barrel after barrel of wine. Famish stuffs with roast and mashed potatoes.

The chief servant stares astonished and open-mouthed.

Thirster spouts his friends' glasses of wine. Famish sucks the marrow in the bones, then engorges the bones, burping loud.

The chief servant makes a face. The other servants stop from their work and stare speechless.

Thirster and Famish begin a game of burping. They eat and drink and burp by turns to show who can do it louder and longer.

They improvise a "burping song" releasing rhythmical oral sounds.

Thirster reaches his hand to take the last bottle of wine, but he can't reach it. He stands.

His legs quake, he can hardly stand on his feet. He falls down, stands up again and quakes, but manages to grab the bottle and quaff it.

Famish searches with his eyes to find anything to eat, but can't find anymore.

FAMISH

I'm starving! Why don't you bring us something to eat?

He sees a bone under the table, bends and snatches it. His tarboosh falls. He stands and takes it.

A servant is right in front of him. Famish's faced the servant and stuffs the tarboosh on his head.

FAMISH (CONT'D)

(angry)
You twerp!

The chief servant stares speechless. He retreats from the kitchen.

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - KITCHEN - DAY

There is silence in the kitchen. Emperor Sigmund frowns at what he sees. He arches his eyebrows and rubs his chin.

Thirster, totally drunken, shaking on his feet, raises his forefinger and says almost angry.

THIRSTER

That's all? A few barrels of wine and a mouthful of bones?

SIGMUND

I hope you didn't think you can win a princess by eating and drinking.

Jeremy goggles his eyes. The emperor turns his back and says.

SIGMUND (CONT'D)
Tomorrow is the big day!

Jeremy wants to say something, but Sigmund hits the floor with his royal truncheon and this makes Jeremy startle and shut up.

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jeremy and his friends are gathered in a small bedroom of the palace. They all sleep except for Jeremy. He is at the window and stares at the sky, then at the tall imposing tower.

Suddenly, he spots the princess at one of the tower's windows. She stares at him with sly and cunning eyes. Jeremy frowns.

Suddenly, the blue bird that troubled Birdie, lays on her shoulder. Jeremy stares, frowning more.

Then he sees something moving at another window and looks towards there. It seems to be the same princess, with the same clothes, but this time her eyes look warmly and gently, even sadly.

Jeremy looks confused. He compares the two princesses with his eyes and becomes captivated by the second one.

After a few seconds, he looks back at the first window and the first princess is not there anymore.

Than he looks at the second window, but she's also gone. As he looks better, he can distinguish a finger print on the steamy window pane. It's a letter: "T".

JEREMY

(to self)

Τ.

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - CELLAR - DAY

Jeremy and his friends are in a cellar waiting for directions. A huge heap of sand mixed with poppy grains is in front of them.

CHIEF SERVANT

You must separate the poppy grains from the sand grains until morning.

Jeremy goggles his eyes.

JEREMY

What? Who succeeded to get through this task?

CHIEF SERVANT

(grins)

Nobody.

The chief servant withdraws. Jeremy looks worried and disheartened. His fellows also look astonished. Jeremy takes a handful of sand and shakes his head disheartened.

Thirster approaches his face to the heap of sand and fixes his glasses "to see better". He begins to separate the grains.

The others stare at him and sigh. Suddenly some buzz noise breaks the silence. It becomes louder and louder.

Through the small holes of the walls and the floor, a colony of bees begins to invade the cellar.

Jeremy and his friends become scared and wave their hands to defend from them. But the bees crowd on the sand heap and begin to separate the sand from the poppy.

Among them, Jeremy recognizes the bee he released from the spider web. The bee flies and sits on his finger. He smiles open-mouthed.

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - CELLAR - DAY

Sigmund strives to hide his teeth gnashing at what he sees: two piles in front of him, one of sand, the other of poppy grains.

JEREMY

(politely)

Now, I should be given the princess and go!

SIGMUND

Not yet! Tomorrow is the big day!

The emperor turns his back to leave, but Jeremy takes heart, makes a step forward and says.

JEREMY

Your Majesty!

The emperor stops, but is still backed.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

I can't leave without the princess.

The emperor laughs.

SIGMUND

Who said you can leave?

He turns faced Jeremy.

SIGMUND (CONT'D)

You'll stay here and fight until you succeed. Right?

Jeremy stares at him speechless.

JEREMY

Yes, but --

SIGMUND

What? I'm cheating?

The emperor fixes Jeremy with his eyes while Jeremy stares at him daring not to say anything.

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - EMPEROR'S ROOM - DAY

The emperor rubs his chin angrily. He addresses the chief servant.

SIGMUND

Confine those turpitudes into the copper house and make sure they are ashes until morning.

CHIEF SERVANT

Yes, sire!

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - FOREST - NIGHT

About 20 soldiers march with torches in their hands. They guide Jeremy and his friends in the forest. Lence whispers Birdie.

LENCE

Man, this doesn't sound good to me. They carry us in a forest... at night. They will execute us.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

I don't know, Lence.

They exit the forest and walk on. Jeremy looks ahead and sees a copper house on a lake.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG (CONT'D)

I smell another ridiculous "task".

JEREMY

Like building a similar copper house?

CHIEF SERVANT

(disgusted)

Just sleeping in it.

Birdie looks at Jeremy.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

I told you!

INT. IVORY KINGDOM - THORNE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Thorne has a razor in his hands and tries to "shave" himself looking in a silver framed wall mirror. He is clumsy. It's obvious the first time he does this.

He hears a knock at the door. He hides the razor under the pillow and answers.

THORNE

(frightened)

Veg I

(fake kind voice)

Come in!

A servant steps in with a tray in his hand.

SERVANT

Your breakfast, sir!

Thorne looks at the tray and all he sees is a glass of water.

THORNE

I asked for deer roast, yellow wine and marshmallows.

SERVANT

Not in the mourning days, sir.

THORNE

(laughing distrustfully)

Who's dying?

SERVANT

The emperor.

Thorne's eyes brighten.

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - LAKE - COPPER HOUSE - NIGHT

They are all in the copper house which consists of a small and cramped room. There's only one window, as small as a shoe box.

They lean themselves against the walls and stare at each other silent. Jeremy stare at them for a while.

JEREMY

(resigned, in a low and sorrily voice)

Guys, I have a bad feeling. And...
I'm so sorry you're all into this.
You helped me a lot... I just
wish...

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Jeremy! You help us too.

THIRSTER

Yeah... you have to steal that girl and everything will be as it used to be.

Jeremy makes a face. Ember squints at Thirster open-mouthed. Lence shrug his shoulders.

EMBER

For my part I don't want to be as I used to be.

JEREMY

Wait! What do you mean, Thirster?

Thirster stands up all of a sudden and shouts.

THIRSTER

It's hot!

JEREMY

What is hot?

Birdie jumps too on his feet and screams.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Ouch! Ouch!

LENCE

Oh my Gosh, it burns!

EXT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - LAKE - COPPER HOUSE - NIGHT

The chief servant stands with his hands crossed on his chest and glowers at the house which catches fire as the soldiers go around it with their torches and set fire on it.

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - LAKE - COPPER HOUSE - NIGHT

The sixth beings frighten and panic.

FAMISH

They're burning us!

JEREMY

Let's gather in the middle! The middle is cold.

They crowd in the middle, but can hardly breath. They sweat with hot.

FAMISH

It's getting hotter and hotter.

EMBER

I can't breath.

THIRSTER

Where are my glasses?

Thirster bends down and searches for his glasses. He causes Lence to touch the walls. Lence pushes Thirster slowly and tells him.

LENCE

Hey, Uncle Dudley, back off a bit, you made me touch the walls.

Birdie struggles to huddle himself, but every time he moves, one part of his body touches the hot walls.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

I hate being so tall!

They begin to cough as the smoke infiltrates into the room.

JEREMY

Goody! Please, show up! This is not how it's supposed to end!

Birdie touches the wall with his bare feet and gives a shout.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Holly cow! Who has some spare shoes?

Jeremy stares at him a few seconds, then struggles to take his boots off.

EXT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - HILL - NIGHT

Away from the house, on a hill close to the palace, the chief servant, together with the other 20 soldiers watch the house ablaze.

The emperor, accompanied by his guards, rides his horse trotting. He stops and looks at the house satisfied.

CHIEF SERVANT

It's done!

EMPEROR

Good! I wanted to see it myself.

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - LAKE - COPPER HOUSE - NIGHT

Everybody fainted except for Jeremy who can hardly breathe and who looks hopelessly around. He whispers.

JEREMY

This is not how it's supposed to end!

He faints. The next seconds the interior of the house begins to freeze by and by.

EXT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - HILL - NIGHT

The emperor watches the house ablaze a few more seconds, then spurs the horse and trots back. The others follow him.

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - LAKE - COPPER HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is frozen. Birdie opens one eye slowly and looks around. Lence also wakes up and squints his eye confused.

FAMISH

I'm so cold!

LENCE

At least you feel otherwise than hungry.

Thirster tries to distinguish the things around. He notices his glasses hitched in the horse's tail. He grabs them and puts them on. He goggles his eyes and smiles satisfied.

Birdie shudders.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

(shivering)

What on earth happened? They are givin' us alternative bath?

EMBER

I'm so cold.

FROSTY (V.O.)

I'm cold too.

JEREMY

Frosty?

They all stare at Frosty.

FROSTY

(deferentially)

Yes, Highness! I was trying to light some fire to warm myself when I saw the house ablaze and I felt blessed. Soon disappointed when I saw people in it.

They all laugh. Thirster begins to lick the walls covered with ice.

THIRSTER

Water! Water! There's no place like water.

LENCE

(shivering)

I'm cold.

FROSTY

I know what it feels. Don't worry! I've got matches.

He shows them a big sack full of matches.

FROSTY (CONT'D)

And I've got a ship. I can take you from here.

Jeremy startles and looks frightened.

JEREMY

Oh, no! Caprice! I must take Caprice!

EXT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - NIGHT

They climb the hill and direct towards The Red Kingdom. As they march, Frosty approaches Jeremy and whispers.

FROSTY

Your majesty, why are you wearing the barefaced's clothes? Are you hiding from something?

Jeremy looks astonished. He stops a few seconds and stares at him.

JEREMY

Frosty... I'm not hiding anything.
(shaking his head and
closing his eyes tight)
I'll explain later.

Lence asks Frosty.

LENCE

Why do you call him "highness"?

FROSTY

Because he's a prince. I saw him wearing prince clothes and having a barefaced as his servant.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

(smiling)

I thought so.

Birdie stares at Jeremy.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG (CONT'D)

Jeremy, you're a prince, right?

JEREMY

No.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

You don't want to admit.

JEREMY

I'm not.

EMBER

He's not.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Or you can't.

JEREMY

Can't?

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Can't admit. Can't say the truth.

Jeremy stares at Birdie.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG (CONT'D)

You can't say the truth. That's what you're spellbound to.

Jeremy stares at him without saying anything. Birdie nods.

THIRSTER

Yeah. Like I'm spellbound to thirst forever.

All of them begin to laugh.

LENCE

(ironical)

Yeah, sure, and like I'm spellbound to squint forever.

Frosty smiles to self gently.

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - EMPEROR'S BEDROOM - DAY

A rooster crows. Others join him. Sigmund wakes up sluggishly. On his bedside table his rich breakfast expects him. He takes a cookie and puts it in his mouth then stands up.

He glimpses at the window and his face turns absolutely surprised. He stares for a few seconds. Then he rubs his eyes. He grabs a bell and rings it desperately.

The chief servant shows up immediately.

SIGMUND

Where's my daughter?

CHIEF SERVANT

In the tower, your majesty.
 (shrugs his shoulders
 baffled)

As usual.

SIGMUND

Get the girls ready!

The chief servant stares at him amazed while the emperor looks through the window.

SIGMUND (CONT'D)

It's time!

The chief servant looks through the window too and his eyes goggle as he sees Jeremy and his friends at the gates of the palace. The emperor casts a bossy look at the chief servant.

CHIEF SERVANT

Yes, your majesty!

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - EMPEROR'S CHAMBER - DAY

Jeremy and his friends are gathered in the emperor's chamber. The emperor observes them silent. His eyes look slightly kind. He stares at Jeremy.

After a long moment of silence, the emperor takes the floor.

SIGMUND

Well!

Another moment of silence. The emperor stares at Jeremy again.

SIGMUND (CONT'D)

You look like a hero to me. A brave man. You convinced me that with someone like you...

(MORE)

SIGMUND (CONT'D)

(his voice shakes)

... my daughter... is safe.

Jeremy stares at him speechless.

SIGMUND (CONT'D)

I'll give you the princess... but...

A moment of silence.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

"Tomorrow is the big day!"

Everybody laughs, including the servants and the chief servant. The emperor just gives a short smile.

SIGMUND

Let's do it today!

Jeremy looks distrustfully.

SIGMUND (CONT'D)

If you can guess which of them is the real one, I'll give her to you with all my heart.

The doors open and a girl creeps in. She looks just like the gentle princess Jeremy spotted at the window two nights ago. She has a lavender in her hand.

Another one steps in. She is identical and has a calla in her hand.

They are followed by five more identical girls, each wearing a shy smile and having a different flower in their hand: a water lily, a daisy, a poppy, a snowdrop, a lily-of-the-valley.

Jeremy stares at each of them. He looks at his friends. They shrug their shoulders.

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - EMPEROR'S CHAMBER - DAY

As Jeremy stares at their flowers, his look changes as if he realized something. He asks the emperor.

JEREMY

Can I talk to them?

EMPEROR

Why not?

Jeremy directs towards the girl with a daisy in her hands. He asks her.

JEREMY

What's your name?

The emperor looks surprised and afraid.

GIRL

Daisy.

Jeremy smiles. He looks at the girl who has a snowdrop in her hand and says.

JEREMY

You've got beautiful eyes, Snowdrop.

The girl flushes and droops her head. The emperor rubs his chin and frowns discontent, expecting.

Jeremy turns his face to the emperor. The emperor arches his eyebrows waiting anxious. Jeremy smiles for a few seconds.

SIGMUND

Well?

JEREMY

Your majesty... your daughter is (looking at the girls)
... not among them.

The emperor gawks at him. He looks paralysed. He gets on his feet and says.

EMPEROR

Where is she?

Everybody looks stunned. Jeremy takes heart and fixes the emperor with his eyes.

JEREMY

Your highness, you asked me to identify the girl, not the place where she is. I don't believe you want to break your word in front of your loyalties.

Everybody around looks at the emperor. The emperor makes a sign with his hands and the chief servant orders his subalterns.

CHIEF SERVANT

Bring her in!

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - EMPEROR'S CHAMBER - DAY

The doors open and the guards bring a princess in.

SIGMUND

It's very hard for me to part with her, but you deserve her. If you catch her!

JEREMY

What?

The princess suddenly turns into the <u>blue bird</u> and begins to fly here and there. Jeremy looks stunned. He runs from corner to corner to no end.

EXT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - AROUND THE PALACE - DAY

The bird flies outside. Jeremy runs outside too. Everybody follows him. Suddenly Lence shouts.

LENCE

There! There!

JEREMY

Where?

LENCE

There! You lose it! You lose it!

JEREMY

I can't see her!

LENCE

You lose it! On the roof!

JEREMY

(angry)

On the roof?

Thirster takes off his glasses and gives them to Jeremy. Jeremy frowns.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Leave it to me!

Birdie stretches his hand on the roof. He approaches his fingers slowly. He almost catches the bird, but she tails out.

LENCE

Under the rain shadow!

Birdie stretches his hand. The bird flies.

LENCE (CONT'D) In the cup! You lose it!

Birdie strays his hands, each in different directions, then verge them both to the same point. The bird gets out of the cup and flies away while the hands bang.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Damn it!

LENCE

In the kitchen, under the green chair!

Birdie's fingers search under the green chair while Lence gives directions.

LENCE (CONT'D)

A bit forward! To the left. Two fingers forward! You lose it!

The bird flies.

LENCE (CONT'D)

In the stable!

Birdie's hand searches in the stable.

LENCE (CONT'D)

A bit to the right. Ok, forward, forward...

The bird moves a little forward. The fingers follow her.

LENCE (CONT'D)

That's it! Forward!

The bird moves ahead slowly. Birdie's hand follow her.

LENCE (CONT'D)

Now!

The bird flies away laughing, while Birdie's hand plunges with determination into some soft fresh cow droppings. Birdie withdraws the hand screaming disgusted.

LENCE (CONT'D)

On top of the hill!

Birdie looks around and sees tens of hills.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Which hill?

LENCE

In the tree! On the tower! You lose it! You lose it! In the tower! Under the table! Behind the blanket! At the window!

Birdie's hands run from one corner to another.

LENCE (CONT'D)

Behind the mountain!

The bird rests behind a mountain and grins evilly. Suddenly a gnarled hand covers her and she's caged.

The bird begins to peck his fingers and Birdie can hardly hold it. He loses it.

The bird flies and while she looks back at him grinning mockingly, she bumps into a window pane and falls down.

Birdie cages it again with his hands and holds her beak closed. He brings her to his mouth, then gives up.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG Let's say today is your lucky day.

He gives it to Jeremy. The bird is hurt. Her leg bleeds. She coughs and slowly turns back into the princess. As her leg still bleeds, Jeremy takes her in his arms.

The people cheer and applaud to the echo.

Jeremy stares at her and notices her sly and cold eyes. He looks confused. He stares at the other princesses and at their flowers.

SIGMUND Well, you can kiss her!

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - EMPEROR'S CHAMBER - DAY - FLASHBACK

As he stares at them confused, Jeremy remembers the night he saw the first princess with sly eyes, holding the blue bird on her shoulder.

Then he remembers the blue bird which bothered Birdie at the gap, then the second princess with gently eyes and the letter T on the window pane.

He remembers Goody telling him "She's whimsical", "she's very stubborn, like a tough nut."

Then again remembers the gentle princess and letter T.

INT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - EMPEROR'S CHAMBER - DAY - PRESENT DAY

Jeremy looks confused. He turns suddenly to Sigmund who waits impatient. Jeremy puts the princess on an armchair.

JEREMY

She's not the real princess.

Everybody stops applauding and cheering. The emperor gawks at him. After a few seconds of silence, he tells him.

SIGMUND

You've got one chance to guess her name. Then, I swear she's yours.

Jeremy thinks. He tries his guess.

JEREMY

T... Tulip!

Sigmund gawks a few seconds... then faints.

EXT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - PAVILION - DAY

The better sort of Red Hasham Kingdom are gathered in a luxury pavilion and rejoice. Jeremy gazes at Tulip and smiles at her.

Tulip smiles at Jeremy too. She gazes at him continually. She doesn't let him out of her sight.

Jeremy looks somewhere else, then back at her. Her eyes are on him. He looks frustrated.

JEREMY

I thought your name was Caprice.

TULIP

Everybody thinks so. Caprice is my shade.

(sighs)

She always replaced me. To fool the suitors.

JEREMY

Who is she and the other so-called princesses?

TULIP

Common girls. Father hires a hag to turn them into me every time he needs that. The girls enjoy the spellbound for three days.

The emperor toasts.

SIGMUND

Today... in honor of my dear daughter... and of my...

(sobs)

beloved wife... we clink glasses for happiness, welfare, health and peace. May these pour abundantly on Tulip and never relinquish her!

The people rise their glasses, clink them, drink and cheer.

JEREMY

Do you love... your father?

TULIP

I do.

JEREMY

Is he as cruel as he wants to seem?

TULIP

Whatever answer is right. My mother's passing anguished him so much that he decided to isolate me and never marry me as I became his only comfort.

JEREMY

He confined you in his heart!

Tulip stares at him a few seconds.

TULIP

You almost released me from there.

Tulip keeps staring at him. Her eyes look at him demanding. Jeremy gazes at her for a few seconds.

Tulip suddenly embraces his neck with her hands and kisses him. Jeremy prolongs the moment. They hug tight and kiss and the world becomes theirs.

Everything around looks as if it was another land. They smile at each other. Jeremy strokes her cheek.

EXT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - PAVILION - DAY - SAME

Jeremy and Tulip are suddenly interrupted by a soldier.

HEAD SOLDIER

Harap Alb! We've been looking for you for a couple of days.

Jeremy looks at him and recognizes that the uniform belongs to a soldier of Ivory Kingdom.

HEAD SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Our emperor sent us to bring you back. He's dying... and he wanted you to...

JEREMY

He's dying? Oh, no! Wait here!

Jeremy takes Tulip by the hand and directs quickly towards Frosty.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Frosty, what is easier for you to freeze: a big sea or a blazing volcano?

Frosty smiles gently.

FROSTY

Neither of them.

Jeremy frowns.

JEREMY

What? Frosty, I'm not joking, it's very urgent. Please!

FROSTY

I would be glad to help. But the spell is broken.

JEREMY

The spell is broken?

Frosty points towards the other friends who did not realize what happened yet.

Birdie is reduced to normal size, Lence has two eyes, Frosty does not shiver anymore and begins to take off his over coats. The blue bird sits on Birdie's finger. He smiles and lets it go.

On top of it, Jeremy's friends wear knight clothes.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Did you know about that?

FROSTY

Yes, but I couldn't say it as well as you couldn't say the truth about you. Thirster also knew, but... (chuckles)

He probably didn't know we didn't know... Birdie also knew.

Jeremy approaches Famish and asks him.

JEREMY

Are you hungry?

FAMISH

No, thanks, I've had enough.

As soon as he says that, Famish realizes what happened. Jeremy notices Thirster in a corner.

Thirster squints around to make sure nobody notices him and empties his glass of wine on the ground. Then he taps his belly suggesting he is full up.

Jeremy's eyes brighten. He whispers.

JEREMY

I know!

He searches his horse with his eyes and spots one in a corner. That can't be his horse... Or, yes! Ember is the crock that used to be. Ember looks sad.

EXT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - PAVILION - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Jeremy stares at Ember gently and sadly. He wants to go to him, but he hears Sigmund speaking.

SIGMUND

Harap Alb!

Jeremy turns his face and answers.

JEREMY

Yes, your majesty!

Everybody makes silence and listen curiously.

SIGMUND

Until now I didn't care for your origin and parentage. But now, as my daughter is in your hands, I must know. So what kingdom do you belong to?

JEREMY

My names is Jeremy... actually. I'm the son of Green the emperor and the heir to the throne of Ivory Kingdom.

HEAD SOLDIER

(to self smiling gently)
If only our emperor had heard you.

SIGMUND

A! Ivory Kingdom! Strong army, solid walls, rich treasury, fertile fields, wise advisers! I'm solaced.

He takes a sip of his glass and goes on.

SIGMUND (CONT'D)

And it's only the sea that separates us.

JEREMY

(to self)

Sometimes it's too much.

EXT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - PAVILION - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Suddenly, Tulip's face brightens. She stares at the sky.

Hanna flies above. Then she directs towards the ground. She lands and smiles at Tulip who runs to her and hugs her.

TULIP

Hanna!

HANNA

Well, you were right. I can fly and you are married.

Tulip smiles.

EXT. RED HASHAM KINGDOM - PAVILION - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Jeremy approaches smiling. Hanna looks at Jeremy and tells him.

HANNA

Do you need to reach fast anywhere?

Jeremy looks amazed.

SIGMUND (V.O.)

Well, I can lend you my royal chariot.

Jeremy looks back astonished.

SIGMUND

But I'll need some lettuce instead.

HANNA

Father!

JEREMY

Done!

EXT. IVORY KINGDOM - SENTRY POINT - DAY

The Ivory city is silent. A sentry man looks in the distance. He spots a flying horse directing towards there. He frowns.

EXT. IVORY KINGDOM - SENTRY POINT - DAY

Hanna is harnessed to a big chariot. As she approaches, the sentry man can distinguish Jeremy, Tulip, Ember and Jeremy's friends in the chariot. They all wear beautiful royal clothes.

EXT. IVORY KINGDOM - SENTRY POINT - DAY

Jeremy dismounts, helps Tulip to dismount too, takes her by the hand and salutes the sentry man.

The sentry man bows his head in front of him.

JEREMY

Am I too late?

SENTRY MAN

Your majesty, we're so happy you're finally home.

INT. IVORY KINGDOM - DAY

They enter a huge chamber. Jeremy's eyes look gently when he sees the emperor's daughters who smile at him. Chloe runs to Jeremy and hugs him.

CHLOE

I knew it!

The other two sisters do the same.

Jeremy fills with joy and big surprise to see the emperor sitting on his chair. He is there alive and on top of it, he looks ten years younger.

Jeremy runs to him and bows in front of him.

JEREMY

Your Majesty!

EMPEROR

Don't call me like that! I'm your uncle! Stand!

The emperor stands too and hugs him. All the others gaze at them.

EMPEROR (CONT'D)

A hag wanted to separate me from this world sooner than I had to. She aged me ten years. You broke the spell! And you are my nephew!

The emperor looks at Jeremy's friends.

EMPEROR (CONT'D)

And look at your friends! You're all so... fresh!

Jeremy's friends laugh. The emperor looks back at Jeremy and tells him.

EMPEROR (CONT'D)

Your family is here.

Jeremy fills with joy to see his father.

JEREMY

Father!

But he frowns a bit as he sees him arm in arm to a woman. When he looks better, she seems to be Goody, but she looks beautiful and younger.

His father hugs him. He looks deep into his eyes and tells him.

KING

I'm so proud of you.

Jeremy stares at Goody and goggles his eyes as he recognizes her figure. A tear comes from his eyes.

JEREMY

Mother? I thought you were... dead.

GOODY

I was spelled to wander the woods and never be recognized by my family.

She comes closer and kisses him on the forehead.

GOODY (CONT'D)

But God gave me a brave son!

Jeremy hugs her.

GOODY (CONT'D)

With that kiss, you managed to break the spell to every cursed being you met on your way.

The emperor of Ivory Kingdom takes the floor.

EMPEROR

Now you'll get what you deserve.

A servant brings the emperor a crown. The emperor takes it and intends to put it on Jeremy's head. Jeremy smiles.

The emperor's hand almost touches Jeremy's head when Jeremy stops it.

JEREMY

No! I don't deserve it yet. Maybe after ten-fifteen years from now.

The emperor looks surprised.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

I'm pretty sure. And I'm happy there's a veteran here who can teach me a lot of things.

The emperor smiles.

EMPEROR

The veteran is glad to teach to his mature son. (beat) I want to show you something.

EXT/INT. STABLE - NIGHT

Jeremy and the emperor direct towards the stable.

JEREMY

It's amazing how this spell affected my life.

They enter the stable. The emperor shows him a rat in a cage.

EMPEROR

You know, sometimes nothing is so bad as not to be good for something. Thorne turned back to his natural state too.

They look at him. Jeremy approaches and tells the rat.

JEREMY

Well... I think I learned something from you too: all that glitters is not gold, is it?

The rat shows its teeth at him.

EMPEROR

Punish him as you like!

JEREMY

I think fate already punished him.

EXT. THE BEAR'S GARDEN - LETTUCE PLANTATION - DAY

While flying, Hanna sprinkles the last lettuce seeds in the place where Jeremy once pulled their roots.

Ember gazes at her. Jeremy strokes Ember's mane. They smile at each other.

The bear stares wonderingly.

JEREMY

Don't worry, bear, we're retrieving the damage!

EXT. IVORY KINGDOM - FEAST - DAY

The city explodes with joy. Everybody enjoys the big feast in honor of Jeremy.

Jeremy's family and his friends along with the emperor and his daughters are gathered at the royal table. They talk, eat and laugh.

EXT. IVORY KINGDOM - FEAST - DAY

Ember stares at Hanna. He looks overwhelmed with her beauty. He approaches her and looks like fallen in love with her.

EMBER

You know... there's a reason why the spell didn't break completely on me.

HANNA

That is...?

EMBER

To be able to tell you how beautiful you are.

Hanna flushes.

EMBER (CONT'D)

What should a stallion do to win your heart?

Hanna hesitates and makes a face.

HANNA

Maybe... bring me the moon from the sky.

Ember moves around her overwhelmed.

EMBER

No problem!

Suddenly, they are interrupted by a brutal noise. Famish, Lence and Frosty stand and jump on a table. They draw their swards and threaten.

FAMISH

Stay back! Don't move!

Everybody freezes. Jeremy looks stunned.

LENCE

One movement and the royal family is dead!

Birdie jumps on the table too. Thirster throws him a magic wand. Birdie catches it. He begins to twist it and to utter a magic formula.

BIRDIE LENGTH-LONG

Here and there, cover all, Make them short or very tall, Turn them into strangest freaks Let them look like porridge mix.

A moment of silence. The people look speechless and motionless. The fifth knights drop their hands and exhale.

FROSTY

Come on, people, it's supposed to be funny!

Jeremy's face relaxes. He begins to smile.

JEREMY

Guys, I was afraid you'd lost your sense of humor along with the change.

Everybody relaxes and begins to laugh.

THE END