

What if . . .

*What if it's possible to wash away your regrets,
the pain crusted into stubborn stains?
If only you could scrub away the hurt,
would that make you feel better?*

*If that most painful memory could be forever gone,
would you finally be happy?*

THE DREAM

Somewhere on Earth was a village where spring faded into autumn, and after autumn, spring returned once more. Spin the globe round and round and you'd eventually see it, the size of a speck of dust. Yet nobody knew of its existence. The village was home to mysterious plants and trees, and people who held powers beyond imagination. Beautiful people you'd easily mistake for fairies, only they didn't have wings.

Life in the village was like a bed of flowers. Dazzling blue sky, the weather never too hot or cold. The harvest was bountiful, and the laughter, endless. The villagers all had kind eyes and a warm heart. Hate, pain, sadness – such feelings didn't exist. Never would you hear a sharp word exchanged. It was always peaceful.

Possessing wondrous powers, the villagers were a beacon of light, bringing warmth wherever they went. When the moon

rose, they danced under its silvery orb, and when the sun shone, their smiles were warm and bright. They'd never known the cold. Not the biting wind that whipped the face, nor the callousness in hearts that hunched shoulders.

But one day, the fiery passion of summer arrived unannounced, setting one man's heart ablaze.

'Hello, can you hear me? Are you OK?'

'I . . .'

'What did you say? I can't hear you.'

'Water . . .'

'Water? Of course! Here you go.'

The man had been walking along a narrow path that wound through the village. As the village custodian, he was responsible for all matters, big or small. He swung his arms, breathing in the scents of the greenery, when he spotted a figure lying unconscious on the path. A woman with long, dark hair, and the fairest of skin. When he gave her water, her lips quivered as if to speak. After taking a few tiny sips, she passed out again. *She's not from our village*, he thought.

'Hey, wake up! Where do you live? I'll take you home.'

He hovered over her, but there was no response. Conscious that her white dress might get dirty, he shrugged off his jacket and draped it over her before sitting down.

This is no place to be sleeping . . . Well, I guess she doesn't have much choice. I'll take her home when she wakes up. Oh wait . . . I feel a bit sleepy . . . How strange . . .

The man rested his head comfortably on his knees and drifted off to sleep.

‘Excuse me, hello? Where are we?’

Feeling a gentle nudge on his shoulder, the man stirred awake and found himself drawn into a pair of blue eyes, deep and mysterious, as if he were staring into the ocean or the sky. In the light, they were a brilliant shade of cobalt. But when she blinked, the orbs behind her long lashes took on a russet hue. For a moment, he lost himself.

‘We’re . . . er, I . . . This is the village of wondrous powers.’

‘Wondrous powers?’ the woman echoed. ‘It smells so different here. I can read a place’s energy by its scent, you know . . . And it smells good here. Peaceful, yet somewhat nostalgic, too. How strange. Even the wind here feels gentler. If only I could live here, too.’

‘Well . . . would you like to stay here with me?’

The man scrambled to his feet, shocked by his own boldness. She fixed her gaze on him as he shuffled awkwardly, his ears blushing. A radiant smile lit up her face.

‘I would.’

Calling it love at first sight was rather a cliché, but the woman settled down in the village and soon bore a beautiful daughter. The villagers might hold mysterious powers, but never once did they use them for anything but good. Through the seasons of falling leaves and new beginnings, the family of three lived happily.

JUNGEUN YUN

Life was perfectly blissful, yet one day the woman became seized by an inexplicable feeling of anxiety.

No, no, nothing's going to happen. I'm probably the only one here who even knows what anxiety is . . .

She shook her head, trying to rid herself of the unease.

