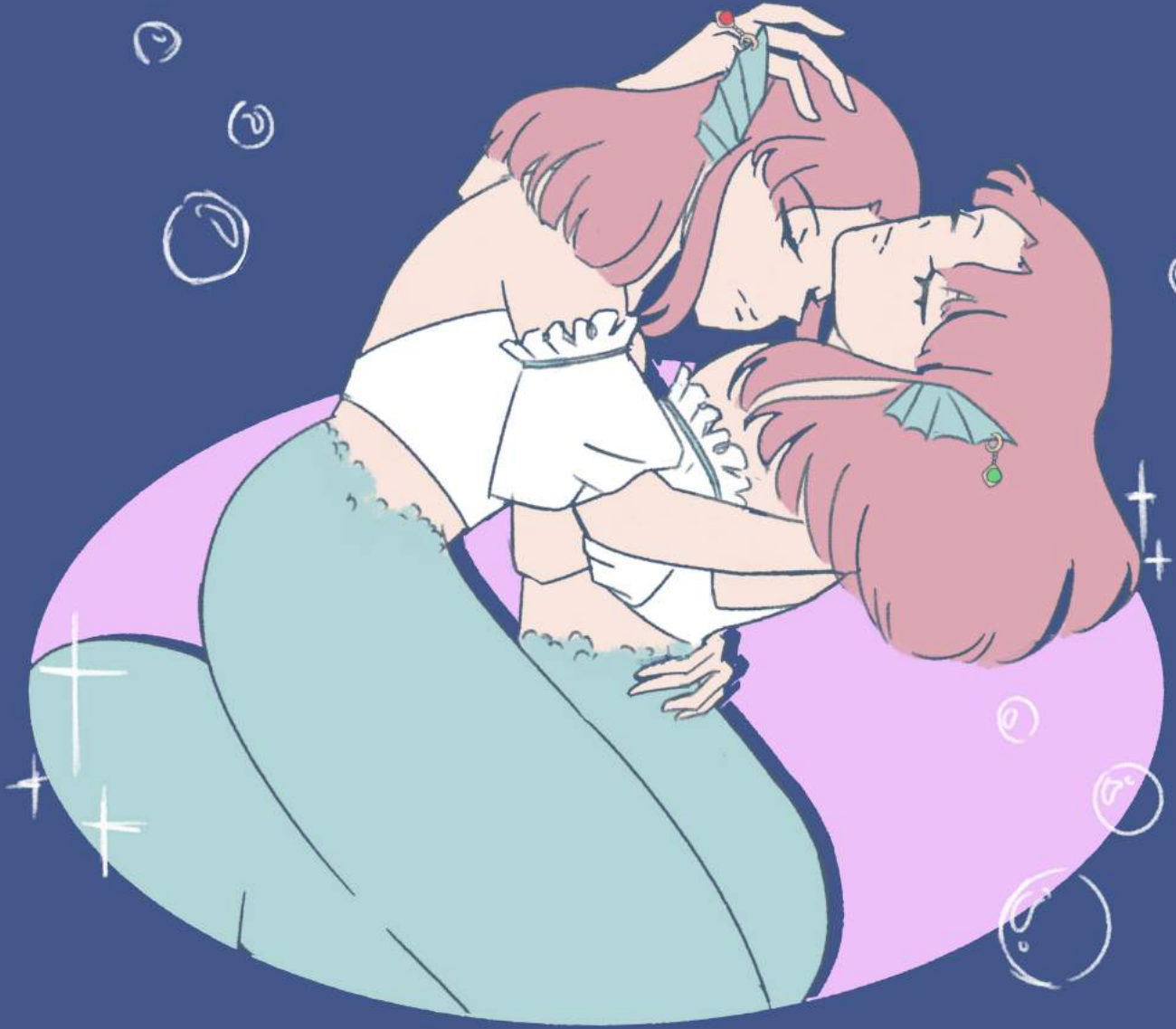


ILLUSTRATED BY NADYA



THE CURSED'S BLESSINGS

WRITTEN BY NORMA, NADYA, AND SALZA

Once upon a time, deep down in the ocean, there was a kingdom named the Oceana Empire, ruled by a queen named Lord Ellevine. The kingdom's regulations said having twins was forbidden, they believed that twins were the bearers of a curse for their beloved kingdom Oceana. For years, twins would be killed or thrown away to maintain the order of life.

However, things were different for these two identical twins, Marrine and Nixie, who were so close to each other, unseparated. They had always been together since, in the womb, they understood each other, as well as the teachings of their parents to love and care for each other. A pair of earrings, green for Marrine and red for Nixie respectively, were given to them. These earrings gave them power that could change their appearance.



Since twins were a curse and banned from the kingdom, people only knew Nixie, an ordinary mermaid. They never knew who Marrine was. When they were born, their father hid Marrine so that no one would know about them being twins. Every day if Marrine wanted to go outside, she had to change her attitude like she was Nixie, her twin. Nixie had a firm and more rational side than Marrine, who was soft at heart.

Sometimes deep down in her heart, she said "I'm quite tired, disguised as someone else for my entire life, I want everyone to know who I am as myself, Marrine."

Marrine would never dare to express that feeling because she still wanted to be together with her family and didn't want anything to happen to her family. However, an unexpected incident happened, and the biggest secret they had been hiding from others was exposed. It started when Marrine left the house to buy necessities, while Nixie's friend, Shea, came to visit their house for a chat. Marrine came into their home amid the conversation between Nixie and Shea. Everyone was shocked.



"YOU'RE TWINS?! I can't believe this!" shouted Shea.

"Shea, calm down," said Nixie while trying to touch Shea's arm.

"DO. NOT. TOUCH. ME! Both of you are cursed, a calamity bringers! How can you hide this fact? Do you want to betray this kingdom?!" yelled Shea, "you are liars, traitors, don't you ever befriend me again, I don't want to be friends with a curse bearer!"

"One more thing, I won't stay silent about this, I will reveal to everyone that you are twins," Shea snarked, leaving the yard of the twins' house.



Shea kept her words. The twins were exiled, in fear of getting cursed. Thrown into a dark cave, Nixie and Marrine had nothing but each other. Until they heard about the war between the Oceana and The Caspian. Another bad news was the princess of Oceana, Alice, was kept hostage. Coincidentally, near their cave too.

"We're going to save her," said Marrine

Nixie whipped her head at that, "what?"

"We're saving her, dear sister," Marrine determined, "The princess. We will get her out of there."

"And why us?" Nixie asked, "it's not our job."

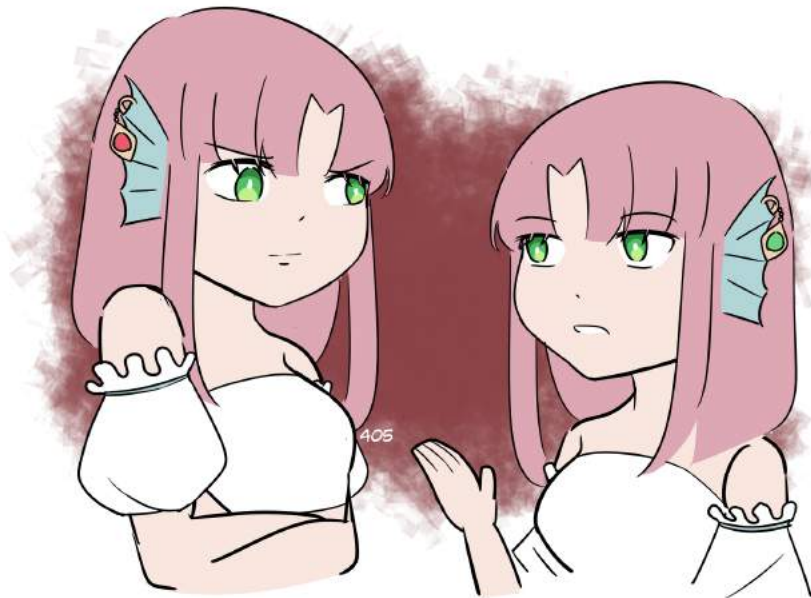
Marrine's eye twitched, "But she needs our help, Nixie."

Nixie couldn't help but feel agitated, "Marrine, let me get it straight. You want us to save the dear princess of Oceana, who apparently hates us, correct?"



Marrine's nod didn't help but agitated Nixie a lot more, "Marrine, think about it, could you? I don't know about you but I'm not saving someone who is basically from a kingdom that exiles us like we are a disease."

"The past is in the past, Nixie," Marrine's body tensed, "we won't grow if we didn't try to forgive!"



"Forgive, you say?" Nixie laughed, bitter, "what things they do that are forgivable, Marrine? The part when they exiled us? When they say mean things about our father? When they said that we are a disease and curse and everything bad so we need to be gone? Which one, sister?"

Marrine was silent, and Nixie snorted, "that's what i—"

"I know it's not fair for you, for us, but we need to move on, Nixie. There's no reason for us to stop being nice and doing good things. No matter how bad life treats us, we do kind things and we will receive one eventually," Marrine gripped her sister's hands, "so please, just this once, yeah?"

The nod she received with a defeated sigh was enough to wash her with relief.



"I'm not going out with you!" refused Princess Alice.

Nixie's eyebrow twitched, "and why not?"

"Oh, you need me to spell it out for you? Because you both are a curse! If I'm going out with you, or by your help, I'm getting cursed, too!" the princess yelled.

"But this is your only chance, princess. We have one chance and that's now," Marrine tried to reason, desperately too.

"Or if you want to wait here until your beloved mother decided to do something, prepare for eternity," Nixie snapped, sending the princess a glare.

"Don't ever talk about my mother like that!" she snarked, "she will get cursed too if—"

"No time, get out!"

Nixie jumped at her sister's voice, didn't even notice her picking the lock with some kind of small twig. She eyed the princess' face, pure rage turned shocked then morphed into a conflicted one.




"I'm not leaving with your help!" the princess' face once again turned, yet both twins knew that she was debating with herself, with her ego.

"Do you wish to die, princess?"

"Do you understand that we, no, you, have no other chance? No one will if not us, and if someday someone will, it'll take forever. Do you have the time? Or will you lose to the mercy of death itself?"

Silence, so Marrine continued, "You're the only one who could end this cold war, your highness."





The princess took a deep breath, exhaling as her eyes glowed in determination, "you're right, okay. I'm sorry because I was—"

"Later," Nixie interrupted, "if you wanna get sentimental, not now. Things need to be done as soon as possible. So, hurry up."

"Yeah, but what about the guards?" the princess couldn't help a shudder at the smirks the twins gave her.

"Don't worry, we got a plan with us," said Nixie.



The warden was perplexed, and mad too. Finding the one you were supposed to guard left her cage was not something she expected. So, there she was, swimming after the hostage.

Nixie, who already changed her appearance to mimic the princess, smirked as she juked the warden. The warden eventually lost her and decided to report her escape. But unknown to them, Marrine was already posing as another princess in the cell, ready to cause confusion among the guards.



After going through a long and thrilling trip, Alice, the princess of Oceana, finally arrived at the castle safely and no one knew her escape from The Caspian's prison. At the moment she arrived at the castle's yard, Alice immediately looked for her mother quietly. According to the maid's conversation she heard while stealthily swimming through the ballroom, the Queen must be in her room at the moment.



Without wasting her time, the princess hurried to her mother's room. After she arrived in front of the room's door, Alice broke into the room. The queen who was sitting near the window was shocked by someone who impolitely broke into her room without her permission.



“How dare you come into my room!” shouted the queen angrily.

“Mother, it is me, Alice,” said Alice in a low voice, still panting after the whole ordeal.

The queen was shocked for the second time to see her beloved daughter inside her room. She was sure that Alice was kidnapped by The Caspian, and The Oceana has already arranged a strategy to attack its enemy. The Queen told her daughter their strategy to attack The Caspian, but surprisingly, Alice told something out of the queen’s expectation.

“Mother, I was helped by the twins to be able to flee, and now they are trapped in The Caspian prison because of helping me,” told Alice.



“That’s good then, you are safe and free now, just let them...”

“No, Mother! I know what you are going to say. I did have the same thought like you before. But now, I changed my mind. They are not a curse, they...”

“So what? Since their appearance in public as twins, our kingdom suffered. We were attacked by The Caspian and you were kidnapped, Alice,” answered the Queen.

“No, Mother! It was because The Caspian’s ancestors and ours were involved in a war, and The Oceana destroyed one of The Caspian’s most important temples. That’s why they hate us,” explained Alice to her mother.

Queen Ellevine was speechless but she managed to stay calm, “So, if you don’t want us to attack The Caspian, what do you want, my dear?”

“I want this quarrel solved in peace. Battle will just make everything worse, My Queen,” Alice was hesitant, but she encouraged herself to say, “I want a peace conference to solve this problem.”



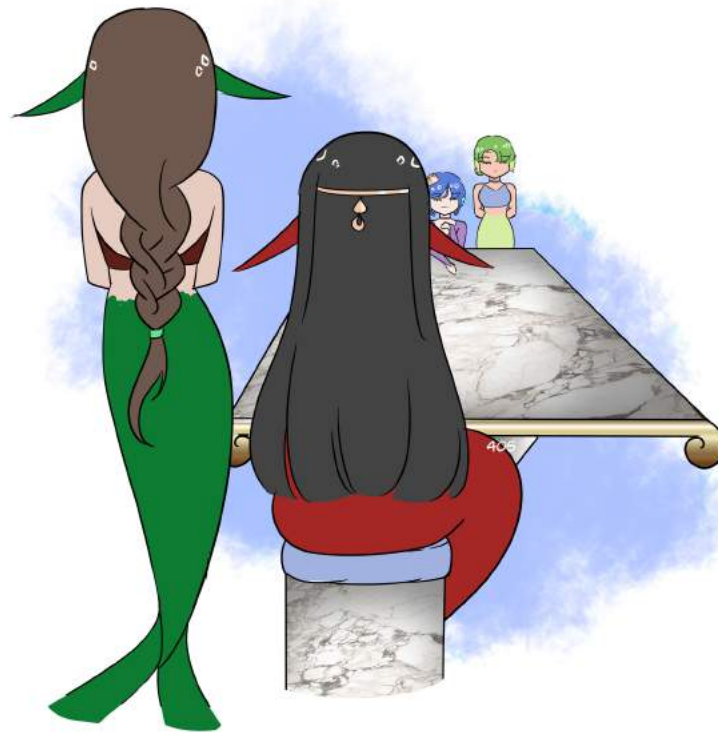
The queen did not answer right away, but she would determine Alice's words and Alice was okay to let her mother think about her suggestion more. The princess also asked her mother not to tell anyone that she had escaped The Caspian's prison, because the twins were still there, posing as her, basically saving the princess by sacrificing themselves. Queen Ellevine thought about Alice's words the whole night until she realized that Alice's words were true.

The next evening, Alice woke up to the voice she heard from the outside of her room. She took a peek out of the window and saw hundreds of The Oceana's soldiers lined up in front of the Queen.

"The Oceana and The Caspian will have a conference soon, so I want all of The Oceana's Soldiers ready to preserve this occasion," said the Queen. Alice was really glad to hear that. She knew that soon both kingdoms would live in peace, with no war or grudge left.



After two days, the conference was held in The Oceana's hall. It was attended by the Queen of The Caspian and several delegations as well.



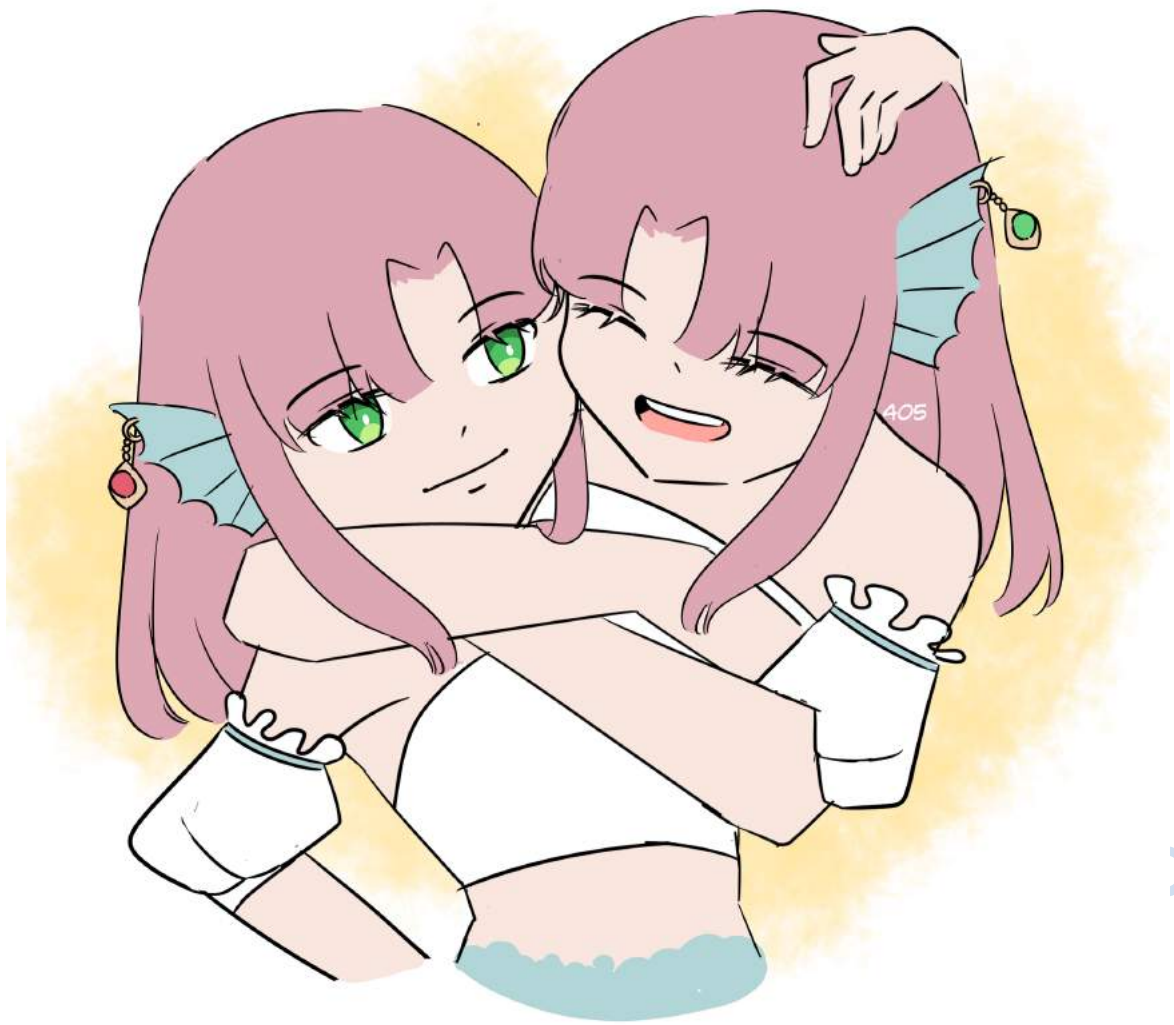
Everyone from both kingdoms was apprehensive about the conference. All they knew was that Princess Alice was still a hostage of The Caspian. Citizens were afraid the conference would go wrong and cause the next war. Gladly, the conference ran well. Queen Ellevine wisely stated The Oceana's intention to pay back what their ancestors had destroyed and would build a new temple for The Caspian, in return for The Oceana's Princess's freedom. Both kingdoms agreed to end the quarrel between them.



The next day, The Caspian set Princess Alice—who was Marrine, free and asked a guard—actually Nixie who took a uniform and posed as one, to send the Princess back to her kingdom. When they arrived at The Oceana’s capital, they changed their appearance back to normal, giggling. Two guards approached them and said, “Miss Marrine and Miss Nixie, the Queen wants to meet both of you now.”

The twins followed the guard to the castle to meet the Queen and the Princess. Both of them were very nervous and scared if the Queen would harm or punish them. However, the Queen wanted to praise their bravery and kindness in saving The Oceana’s Princess. Queen Ellevine thanked and apologized to the twins. She also announced to all of her citizens that twins are not a curse, a disease, nor a catastrophe to avoid and hate. So from that moment, in The Oceana, if twins were born, they no longer had to suffer from a bad stigma.





The End.

