**Not a Love Story**

How did it come to this...? How did it come to this?! They’d definitely wished for an adventure, but dangling from the roof top of a building whilst barely dodging bullets wasn’t included in their itinerary of possible adventures. Not even close. This shouldn’t even be possible. If only they hadn’t picked up that stupid letter in the night…

It was Day 3 of the mission “Octopi“. Agent Daffodil, on her very first task. To find out about a strange person claiming to be a princess, with no records or official documents who someday, apparently, just “found herself in the empty house”, she was supposed to be keeping an eye on. A princess in this day and age…a typical rich snob maybe. The spy could only imagine the riches a princess would have. Agent Daffodil, or if you’d prefer her real name, Ophelia Flax, had graduated from the spy training agency a few weeks ago. After orientation, this was her first task. Nothing cool like gliding off the buildings had happened yet, so she was pretty upset. At the least, she hoped, the princess would be pret- No, no time to be gay on a mission, focus Ophelia!

Looking through her stake out spot, she finally found-…no wait- the instructions said a princess- who was supposed to be all alone. Why was there a guy here then? The location was right. The time when the princess usually came outside according to the bureau was right about now too. Then why a man? Ophelia knew what to do now. She had to disguise herself. Finally! Something fun! Ophelia got into her character, messing her hair badly, using makeup to quickly make fake bruises and fake blood to drip out from “fresh cuts”, ripping her shirt and pants from here and there, then climbing down, faking a limp till she crossed the road, knocking frantically on the door.

The said man came out.

“Please- I was just mugged- please help me.”, she said, panting and almost falling into the man’s arms, “fainting”. As she felt the man mutter something and pick her up, she looked for possible princess abduction signs. Then her eyes travelled to the man. He had approximately the same height as the princess. His hair was the same ash brown as that of the princess. He had the same purple eyes...he had the mole on his neck the princess was supposed to have. What was going on…? She had no idea…but as the man was treating her fake wounds, she seemed to be drawn to him. Focus on the mission Ophelia!

A few days earlier, Henrietta was just your regular princess. Being pampered was her usual. Her kingdom, the Yutica kingdom, was a small one, but peaceful. She was about to be the sole ruler of the nation. She had a magical power, though only her parents, the king and queen knew, she could shapeshift into any human form. She was genderfluid, you see, so this power came in handy. Her life was pretty mundane, usual princess stuff, so she was greatly looking for something new. Just a taste of it would be fine. Their birthday arrived. It was a whole grand celebration. She blew the candles and made a wish, ‘Dear almighty, please, please, pleaseeeee, let me be part of an adventure. Any adventure.’

Once the celebration ended, she headed to her chambers and found a mysterious letter right on her pillow as she was about to go to bed. Henrietta picked it up curiously, going to her window for some moonlight to read, but to her dismay, she spotted something not too far from her on the ground. Something stood at the end of the courtyard fence, watching and waiting and perfectly patient.

This creeped her out. Night time adventure. They went out in their androgynous form, so the guards won’t know, hopping over the fence and looking around. Their luck must’ve been very bad because there was a sudden bright flash and when they opened their eyes after the flash had passed, they found themselves in a very small room. It looked like a house as they started to move around, but it was so strange…

It was a very small house, the whole house the size of her chamber back in the castle, filled with unknown items. Henrietta just didn’t touch it. She seemed to be unable to shapeshift as often as she usually could in this world. Their first day in the tiny house, they’d managed to find strange but edible things in a big cool cabinet, and very strange but soft items to dress themselves. The second day, they decided to look around, but that just resulted in some suspicious people asking them all sorts of questions, nothing they understood except the language.

This was the fourth day of them being here when a lady came to them all beaten up, after being robbed and fainted in their arms. They treated her wounds gently. This all was exhausting. They hated all these situations. The food didn’t taste good, the clothes were so thin they might as well have been stripping to their underwear. Everything aside they missed their parents.

A day or two passed by. The new stranger seemed to be passing out every now and then, but during the time she was up, Henrietta had learned her name was Jay, she was an orphan, and lived alone. She was what they called a college student. Henrietta introduced herself as was true, at least according to her, a princess of the Yutica kingdom, the queen to be, and that she could shapeshift.

Ophelia was astonished by how vivid the man’s imagination went. Shapeshifting? That was a concept she didn’t believe even as a kid, though she found the company of the “princess” soothing. She helped the man make something better than instant foods that were expired. How did this strange man..or woman, their name was Henrietta, and they were a princess, even survive after consuming this much expired material?!

Ophelia, or Jay for now, had decided to rent a place nearby for the short while, just to make completely sure that the “princess” wasn’t a terrorist. She visited the princess everyday. They seemed lonely whenever they weren’t chatting with her and some part of her didn’t like how that made her feel sad too. She’d gotten over her attraction to Henrietta, or that’s what she told herself. They were only a mission, nothing else. Only a mission. Nothing. Else.

Weeks turned to months, Henrietta couldn’t find any way to get back to their family. They’d grown closer to Jay. She was fun. She taught them a lot about this world, and even made them forget they didn’t belong here.

One of these days, Henrietta was roaming around with Jay, both of them blissfully unaware that they’d accidentally entered a turf war area, and the biggest gangs of the city had been fighting there. Ophelia cursed herself for not bringing her gun, which was very negligent of her as a spy. She took Henrietta’s hand and ran to the nearest building, rushing up the stairs to the roof. The gangs must’ve assumed both of them were a member of the opposite gangs because now they were being attempted to be shot and stabbed at.

Ophelia found a rope big enough, tying it around her and Henrietta’s waist and without giving the other a chance to even think to refute, she tied the rope to a stump and climbed down, barely dodging the bullets.

Henrietta was safe, but worked up by this. The adrenaline rush after fleeting with their life was horrible. They hated how it felt. They’d asked for an adventure, but this? This was unacceptable.

Seeing two people dangle like this, the residents of the house right below had called the fire department, getting them off from the rooftop.

Ophelia had submitted her last report after six months of invigilating (and having a not-so-secret crush on) Henrietta. It was finally time to go back for another mission, but before that Ophelia felt like she needed to have a perfect closure.

It was random and silly and barely 1 o'clock in the morning, but they found themselves dancing in the darkened living room to no music and a whole lot of laughter. This was exactly what Ophelia wanted. Henrieta looked pretty while laughing...the prettiest princess she’d ever seen. The laughter died soon, both of them were now just swaying together, eyes fixed on each other. Soon their lips met somehow. It was short, but sweet.

“I love you, Jay..”, Henrietta said. The smile on Ophelia’s face faded. The voice in the back of her head boomed, ‘It’s just a mission. Nothing else.’, and she left in a hurry leaving Henrietta to wonder what went wrong.

A flash appeared again out of nowhere while Henrietta was dwelling on the pain and the next moment Henrietta opened their eyes, they were right where the first flash had blinded them. The same night, their same clothes. Their powers had returned apparently because the guards had come to fetch her.

It has been a few years since then. A family recently opened a time capsule that had been passed on from generations. It was all over the news, the items of the capsule. A few rings, of all kinds of precious stones, dried up flowers, small dolls, and a letter. The letter read:

“  Dear Jay,

I have been thinking about how very much I love you, and how I really didn’t get your reply. So, I wanted to sit down and let you know how truly in love with you I really am. I don’t think you’ll even get this, but one can really only hope.

When I first met you, you were badly injured. Thinking back on it, it was probably love at first sight. I remember thinking how beautiful you were, with your tangled hair, pale and bruised skin. When we danced together that one time, it was so peaceful, and so…right.

I don’t think I’ll ever get over how your tender lips felt on mine. I wanted to cherish it more. I wanted to dance with you more, to laugh..to love you more.

Yours,

Henrietta.                                                                                                                               “