Furina sits on a stone at the edge of an island in the realm within, looking off into the clouds in the distance. Paimon was right, it truly is a beautiful and tranquil place. Furina’s been here quite a few times already now. It had quickly become a habit of sorts to come whenever she wanted some quiet time to reflect.

She sings absentmindedly as she looks off into that endless distance that seems to suck one into its throes.

As promised, she hasn’t seen the Traveller around even once while she was in here – something Furina was not sure she was happy about or not. However, she has noticed more and more Fontainian items and furnishings popping up in this place the Traveller had set out for her – no doubt an effort by the Traveller to make her feel more at home.

She’s not sure it’s working, but she feels appreciative of the effort, at least.

Then, a sound as if air being sucked out suddenly rings behind her. When she looks around to find its source, she finds instead a lady, adorned in an intricate pink, dark purple and blue dress, carrying herself with palpable poise and elegance. It reminds Furina a bit of the way some ladies in Fontaine dress their poodles.

“My apologies for disturbing you,” the lady says, with a graceful curtsy upon spotting Furina.

Before she can respond, a sudden thought jumps into Furina’s mind.

The way she had associated with people since the trial had been a bit unusual and strained – she just didn’t know how to approach her interactions now that people know she isn’t a god, but have always treated her as such before.

And so, right now, she’s stuck questioning whether this person knew of her as an archon or not. As she ponders the question, the lady continues to stand, waiting patiently on her. When it dawns on Furina just how long she’s kept her on hold, she, in a panic, throws caution to the wind.

“Don’t worry about it,” she says, in her ‘normal’ voice.

“It is good to hear I did not interrupt anything,” the lady responds, before quiet falls upon the conversation – if you could call it that. The visitor has said her piece, and Furina is still a bit too flustered to know what to say.

“May I introduce myself, if it would not disturb you further?” the lady says, choosing to break through the lull herself.

“Ah, of course,” Furina responds, a bit awkwardly.

“My name is Yun Jin, hailing from Liyue. You may call me Miss Yun, if you would like.”

From Liyue – a place Furina had never been to. It’s very possible that she’d also never been to Fontaine – or, if she had, that she hadn’t seen Furina herself.

“Might I have the privilege of knowing your name as well?” the lady asks, while Furina was still thinking.

“Oh sorry,” she says, as she braces herself for the moment where she’ll find out for sure if she’ll be recognised. “It’s Furina.”

“A very beautiful name,” the lady responds, without missing a beat. There was no moment of realisation or dawning to be found in her eyes, from which Furina concludes that, surely, this ‘Miss Yun’ doesn’t know of ‘the hydro archon, Furina’.

Furina feels some sort of excitement bubbling in her, coming from somewhere she couldn’t locate. This might be the first time she’s talked to someone who didn’t know of her as the hydro archon, after all.

“Miss Furina,” the lady then says with a serious face. “May I say something?”

“Huh?” Furina responds, a bit confused. “Go ahead.”

“The truth is, when opening the entrance to the teapot, sounds from inside already travel through.”

“Okay?” Furina says, nonchalantly. Then, she remembers what she was doing just before, and immediately feels herself getting a bit flushed.

“You didn’t hear anything, did you?” she asks.

“I certainly did.”

An amount of panic she wouldn’t have thought likely welled up in Furina. She’s sung in public many times, yet somehow being overheard like this felt much more embarrassing.

“Miss Furina,” the lady continues before the situation can sink in too deep, “you are a very talented singer.”

“You don’t have to flatter me.”

Somehow, the sudden change to praise did not make Furina feel less bashful.

“I certainly am not flattering. Both your voice control and range are truly superb. I’d almost go so far as to say that, surely, you have done this on a bigger stage before?”

“Ah, well, I guess you could say that,” Furina says, awkwardly.

The lady nods, as if affirming to herself.

“I would be hurt if you were that good without having worked professionally.”

Furina stares blankly for a few seconds, not sure whether to try to advance the conversation.

“Um,” she finally says, “could it be that you also…?”

“Certainly,” the lady responds to the trailing question. “I am a singer working in the opera business, you see.”

“Really!?” Furina says, getting a little bit too excited at the mention of opera.

“That’s right.”

“Ah but,” Furina continues, “I’ve heard operas in Liyue are quite different from the ones in Fontaine.”

“You are from Fontaine, then? I have heard much of their prolific opera scene.”

“That’s right. I’ve stood on stages with people packed in like sardines!” Furina says with a laugh.

“Ah, so you were a singer after all?”

“Yes, that’s right…” Furina says, twiddling her thumbs. Somehow, she’s only just realised her own sudden shift in tone before.

“I would be delighted to witness one of your shows then, once,” the lady says.

Furina immediately becomes dejected.

“Sorry, I…I don’t do shows anymore.” She almost chokes up. Ever since her last ‘performance’ at the Opera Epiclese, she’s felt so scared of the stage whenever she’s thought about it. Just having it in her head is enough to bring her back down to those depths – even though she felt so happy hearing opera come up just before.

“I see,” Miss Yun says with an understanding nod. “In that case, might I extend to you the opposite offer?”

“What do you mean?” Furina says, getting herself back together.

“You see, I came here today to invite the Traveler to the dress rehearsal for my upcoming show. Seeing as she is not present, I would love, instead, for you to come.”

“Huh? Really?” Furina feels herself getting excited at the prospect. Cautiously, but excited nonetheless.

“Certainly. While it is not my first time performing this show, I still have not been able to help myself being a bit nervous about doing the tale justice. Having someone as enthusiastic as Ms Furina present would go a long way to quell my fears, I do believe.”

“…you think I’d be of help?”

“Most certainly.”

Furina thinks about it. It’s quite a pointless act, however – she’s clearly already made up her mind.

“In that case, I’d love to come along.”

“That is very good to hear,” Ms Yun says – although her face doesn’t betray any strong emotions. Somehow, Furina feels a bit annoyed about being so easy to read in comparison.

“If you’d please come with me, then,” Ms Yun continues, beckoning Furina along the way she’d entered, herself.

The piece performed was called ‘The Divine Damsel of Devastation,’ a story about a girl who protected her home from a great calamity, but became an outcast in her community after. It was a great performance, but the subject specifically touched Furina to her core. It felt almost eerily like it was echoing her own experience – with the prophecy and everything that happened at the Opera Epiclese.

In the end, the girl was accepted by some close friends and became happy, fighting together for a common cause.

Sitting alone in the benches, Furina had become worried. While the whole encounter with Miss Yun, taken at face value, would be nothing but benign – if she read into it, however, it could just as well be a roundabout way devised by the Traveler to tell her ‘everything will be fine.’ It wouldn’t have been the first time the Traveler did such a thing to her, at least, and it certainly isn’t a sentiment Furina was in the mood for. She’s had more than enough of pity – getting more from *another* outlander would be enough to drive her crazy.

She didn’t have more time to think it over, however, as Miss Yun quickly approached her seat.

The two locked eyes as she got closer. But, after arriving, she doesn’t say anything, as if sensing Furina has something of her own to bring forth first.

“Miss Yun,” Furina says, somewhat resolute.

“Ms Furina,” Ms Yun responds.

After the few uncomfortable moments of silence that follow, Furina swallows her fears long enough to choke out a sentence.

“…did the Traveler tell you anything about me?” she asks.

“She did indeed,” Ms Yun responds, affirming Furina’s fears. Before she can say anything else, however, Ms Yun continues speaking.

“She said there might be a beauty with lovely white-blue hair, fashionable attire and a gorgeous singing voice in the teapot, and to try not to be a bother if I did encounter her.”

“Huh?” Furina can only say in response, suddenly baffled. “She said that about me?”

“Only the last part.”

Ms Yun lets out a soft, dignified laugh.

“I apologise – the rest was my own addition.”

“Oh,” Furina stumbles out, feeling embarrassed at the sudden praise – and the change in demeanour of the one who’d been so serious until now. Somehow, her worries had gone to the back of her head, just like that. “Um, thank you?”

“That is not what I came to you for, however,” Ms Yun then says, with a much more intented expression.

“And what could that be?” Furina asks, even though the answer is obvious.

“I want to know your thoughts, of course.”

“Uh, well,” Furina says, trying to gather them – her mind had been a bit unfocused during the performance, after all.

“I thought it was a great story, and your singing was fantastic.”

Even the stoic Miss Yun can’t hide her dissatisfaction with the response.

“If I may be a bit harsh,” she says, “that is also not what I came to you for. I have little need for petty praise of things I know full well are good.”

She looks Furina dead in the eyes.

“What I want from *you,* Miss Furina, is to know what could have been *better*.”

Furina is a bit taken aback.

“…I don’t know if you’ve come to the right person,” she says, sheepishly.

“Ah, but I *do* know I’ve come to the right person,” Ms Yun returns. “Well, know may be a strong word – I have quite a hunch you’re hiding a deep well of knowledge on both operas and performing in you, Miss Furina.”

Furina is even more taken aback. She’s been praised aplenty before in her time as archon, but, somehow, it’s never been like this. Never to *her,* at least.

“So, I ask you again,” Ms Yun continues, before Furina can gather herself any further. “What are your thoughts, Miss Furina?”

Furina swallows her worries and fears – at least for this moment with Ms Yun.

“Um, for one, I think your voice was a bit weak here and there,” she says. “But I’m sure you noticed that yourself, too?”

“Certainly. The fact you did too, shows I was not wrong to place my faith in you already,” Miss Yun responds, taking that criticism with pure grace.

“Um, I also think that, even though the story was great, the presentation wasn’t quite as much?”

Although she said that, Furina feels hesitant to get into further detail. She’s already feeling like she’s saying something unbelievable, after all.

“Go on, then.” Ms Yun presses, noticing that hesitancy.

“Um, well, in operas in Fontaine, at least the successful ones, an important part of telling your story is how you get attention to it. By being bombastic in your performance, you pull the audience along with your story, rather than them just being bystanders.

“While this is the first opera I’ve seen from Liyue, I have a feeling they are intended to be a bit more subtle and less ‘in your face,’ so it seems harder to do so.

“I think the concept does show in your presentation just before the appended tale: you goad them into thinking you’re on the way down, then pull them right in – I think only a fool wouldn’t have their full attention on you then.

“So that’s a point to consider maybe,” she finally says, as she rapidly begins to lose confidence in what she was saying. “Or something like that…”

“I see,” Miss Yun says, nodding along. “I really was right to get your opinion.”

“Huh? Really?”

“Certainly. Might I ask, perchance, if you also possess some idea on what we might do to rectify it?”

“What? No, no no no, I couldn’t possibly,” Furina stumbles out faster than she realised she could talk. “Isn’t the final show coming up next?”

“That only means this is our final opportunity to hear it before the performance. Besides, we can only decide after hearing it whether we would like to implement it.”

“What? But…” Furina goes on, before being interrupted.

“Miss Furina,” Ms Yun says, sternly.

“Yes?” Furina responds almost instinctively, in a half shout.

“You of all people would know the most important factor for a lead actress, surely?”

“Um,” she lets out, left too on the spot to respond immediately.

“That would be confidence, of course,” Ms Yun continues. “If you show doubt as the lead, it will only sow that amongst your fellow performers – and end up at the audience. So,” she says.

“So?” Furina responds.

Miss Yun pulls out a prop flag that was used in the performance and uses it to push Furina’s leg.

“Put your legs together, firmly,” she orders.

Furina complies, for some strange reason.

“Puff your chest out,” she goes on, poking Furina’s side lightly.

“Yes!”

Finally, she uses it to push Furina from behind.

“Keep your back straight,” she adds. “And step!”

Furina stands there for a moment.

“Very good,” Ms Yun says, as she puts the flag away.

“Huh?” Furina can only ask. “And now what?”

“Now, we go backstage,” the confident performer responds, as she begins to walk. “The director will want to hear this too.”

“No, no, I still can’t!”

“Furina…”

Ms Yun looks back into Furina’s eyes for a moment. Then, she shows a reassuring smile.

Somehow, it pushes Furina over the edge.

“O-Okay,” Furina responds, with some semblance of confidence. “But I’d better not hear any complaints!”

“Naturally,” Ms Yun finishes, as the pair begin to make their way.

Furina sits nervously in the now-full benches among the roaring crowd, as the members of the Yun-Han opera troupe do their bows on stage. Ms Yun somehow makes eye contact from on there and, with a graceful and subtle gesture, invites her to come to the back.

At least, that’s what Furina hopes, as she hesitantly swallows her worries once more, following the path she took together last time.

“Ah, there you are,” Miss Yun says, perking up a bit as Furina enters the room. “I was just wondering when you’d arrive.”

She deposits a few more of the stuffy-looking costume pieces, before prancing towards Furina.

“Um, yeah,” Furina sputters, unsure of what to say.

“I must admit, your advice worked wonders, Miss Furina.”

“Really?” Furina responds, more excited that she would’ve thought at the positive response.

“That’s right,” Ms Yun continues. “I have performed this piece many times now, so I could immediately tell – the crowd was clearly more enamoured at the start, as you had said.”

“I didn’t think you’d really go through with it. I was freaking out in my seat when you did that all of a sudden!”

“Oh, I noticed,” she teases.

“Huh?” Furina lets out in surprise. “You could see that?”

Ms Yun lets out a small laugh once again, while Furina once again ends up just feeling embarrassed.

“Miss Furina,” Ms Yun says, firmly.

“Yes?” Furina responds, shocked out of her bashfulness.

“We simply must visit a performance from this other troupe – I would love to hear your thoughts on their set designs.” Ms Yun says, a sudden departure from her usual, more reserved demeanour. “Oh, but I would certainly want to see a Fontainian opera as well. Ah, and maybe attend one of Xinyan’s rock shows? I feel like there’s so much I would want to experience with a fellow enthusiast like you.”

“Oh, um,” Furina lets out, taken aback by the sudden outbreak, as if a dam had shot open.

“It’s getting quite late, so I’ll really have to head back soon,” she responds in the end.

“Ah, of course,” Ms Yun says. “My apologies, I tend to get ahead of myself when I make a new friend – especially someone as knowledgeable as you.”

The word ‘friend’ hits Furina like five-ton waterbus – somehow, in her 500 years of life, it’s a concept she’s never really had the luxury of identifying with.

So if what Ms Yun said is true, and she does consider her a friend, that might be the first one Furina has ever made – at least as herself.

Almost giddily, Furina says, “Miss Yun?”

“Miss Furina.” Ms Yun responds.

“Can I come see one of your shows again?”

Ms Yun just smiles.

“I’ll tell you a little secret,” she then says, as she makes to whisper in Furina’s ear.

“My friends get free admission to all my performances.”

Furina lets out a quiet laugh.

“I’ll definitely come again, then,” she says, with a smile on her face.

“And I would have it no other way.”

Furina takes a moment just to look at her new friend, revelling in this new feeling.

“Then,” Ms Yun says, pulling out her Realm Dispatch, “I shall open the way back for you.”

“Ah, yes, of course,” Furina stumbles out, having totally not forgotten about needing to go back through the teapot.

“Miss Furina,” Ms Yun says, after activating it.

“Miss Yun,” Furina responds.

“I pray we shall meet again before long.”

“Yeah,” Furina says. “I’ll see you soon.”