

The Blue Phoenix Dream - Chapter 1

jjuri Oh



The courtyard of a grand Korean noble house glows with the last rays of sunset, painting the sky a dramatic crimson over Inwangsan mountain. Boknyeo, an elderly slave woman with a back bent from decades of labor and gnarled hands, kneels on the ground diligently doing laundry with a wooden mallet. Her simple clothes are worn, but her focus is unwavering.



Suddenly, the serene evening is shattered as the young noble lady bursts from the inner house, her silk dress dirty and hair wild. She is barefoot and disheveled, her eyes wide with unbridled terror. Her sudden appearance creates a dramatic contrast with the peaceful, laboring Boknyeo.



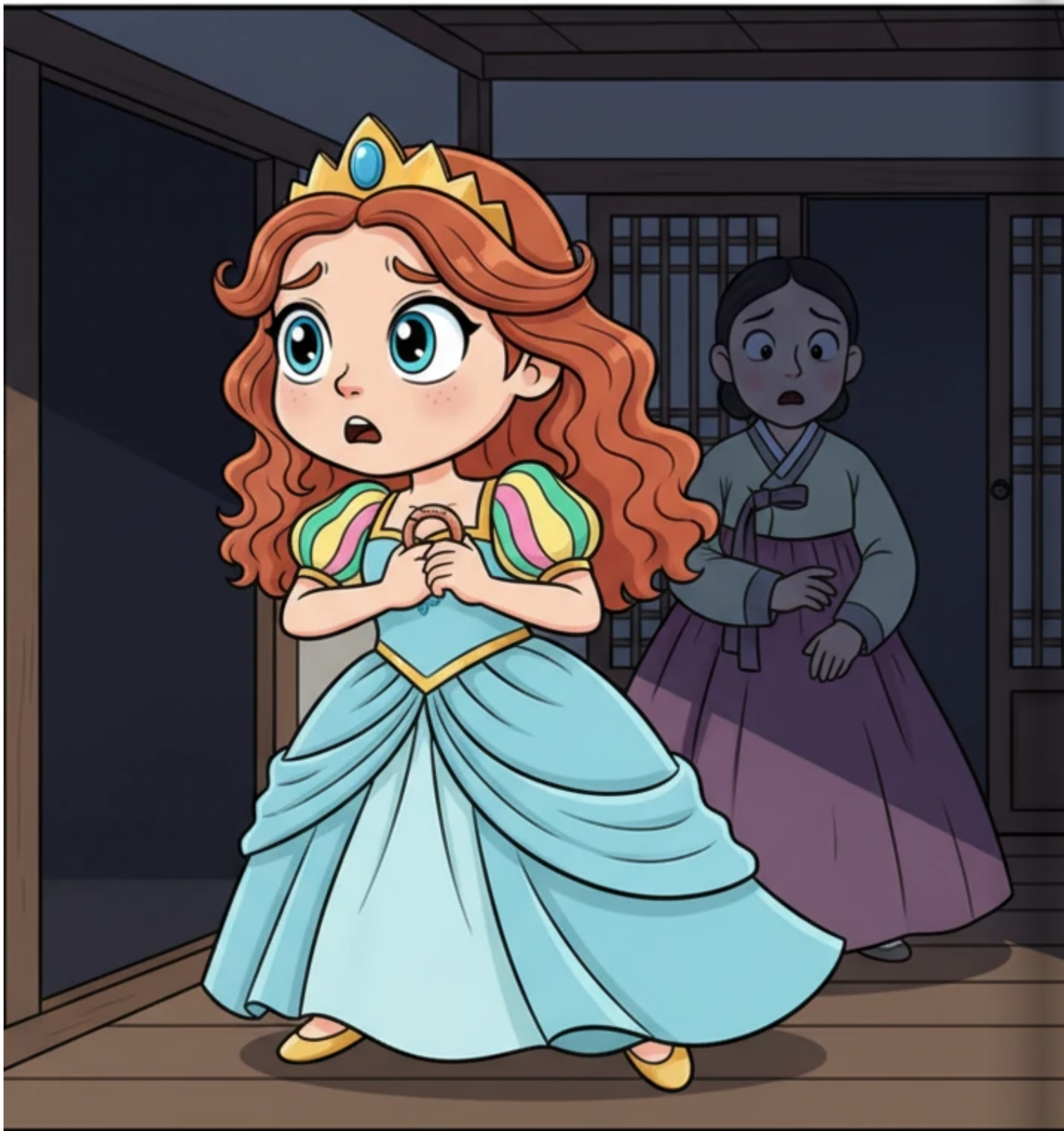
The lady lunges forward, grabbing Boknyeo's shoulders with surprising force, her grip desperate and trembling. Her face is contorted with fear as she demands that Boknyeo buy her cursed dream – a dream of terrifying blue flames. Boknyeo looks up, startled and confused by the sudden, intense outburst.



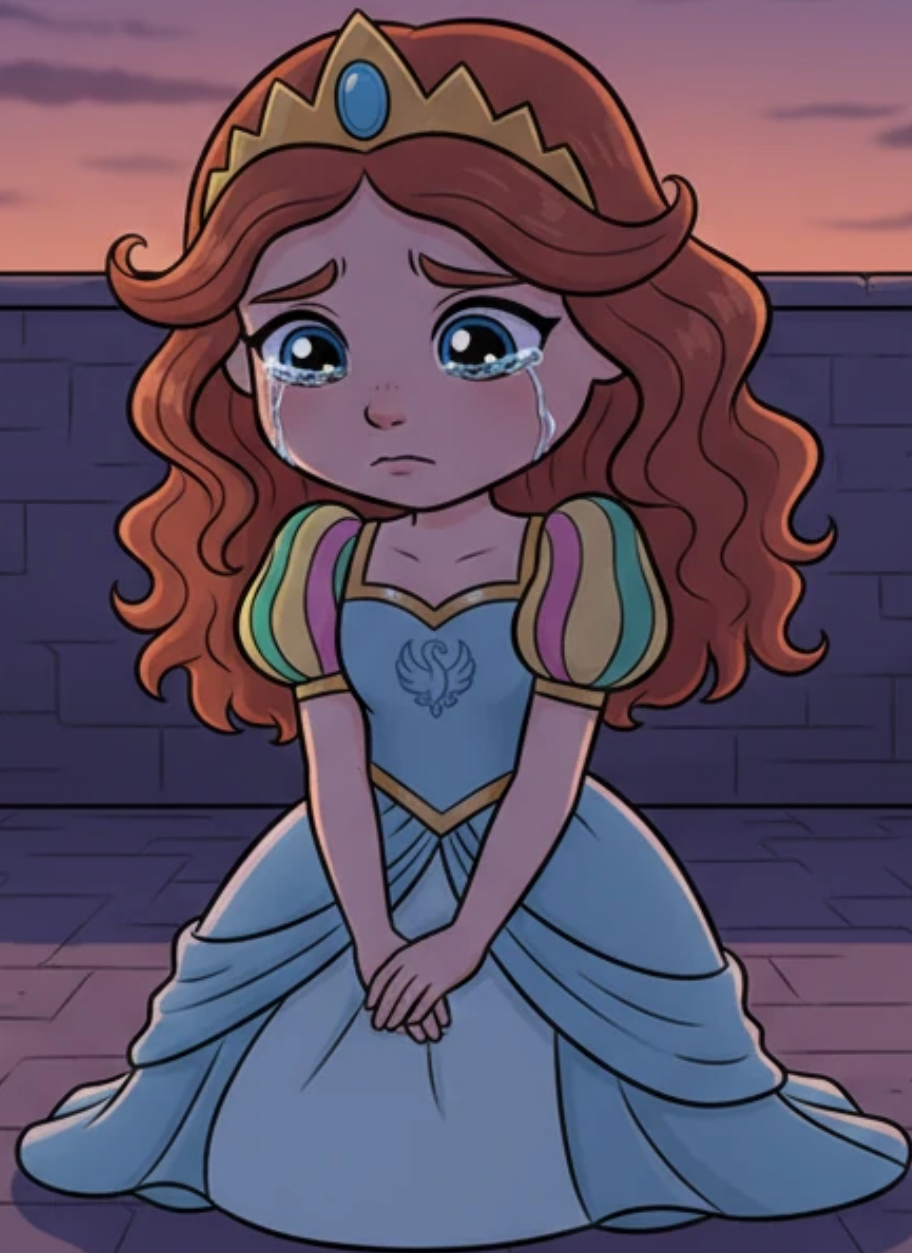
Boknyeo's heart sinks with a heavy dread, her gaze falling to her own worn clothes. The thought of parting with her most precious possession, her mother's only keepsake, fills her with profound reluctance. Her face shows a mix of fear for the lady and sorrow for what she might lose.



With trembling hands, Boknyeo slowly reaches into the folds of her clothes and pulls out a small, worn copper ring. It's a simple, humble piece, but its sentimental value is immeasurable. She reluctantly extends her hand, offering the ring as if it were a piece of her soul.



The young lady snatches the copper ring from Boknyeo's palm with a desperate gasp, her eyes still wide with fear. Without another word or glance, she turns and disappears back into the dimming shadows of the inner house as quickly as she appeared. Boknyeo is left alone, her hand still outstretched in the empty space.



Silence descends upon the courtyard once more, but now it feels heavy and ominous. Boknyeo remains kneeling, her heart heavy with an invisible curse she now carries. The last vestiges of sunlight fade, leaving her in the encroaching darkness, holding nothing but a profound sense of fear and loss.



That night, Boknyeo lies on her humble mat, unable to escape the chilling fear of the cursed dream she now possesses. Her sleep is troubled, her brow furrowed with worry as she drifts into the unknown. The darkness of her room feels vast and foreboding.



But instead of horror, a gentle warmth begins to spread through her dream. Soft, ethereal blue flames appear, dancing gracefully around her. They are not terrifying but fragrant and inviting, casting a soothing glow that banishes the fear.



From the heart of these beautiful blue flames, a magnificent blue phoenix emerges, its feathers glowing like countless precious jewels. With majestic grace, the phoenix soars, its form radiating pure light, and gently enters Boknyeo's sleeping heart, transforming the cursed dream into a blessed destiny.