

DEER KING

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EXT. GALAN VILLAGE - DAY

The birds chirp. The TOWNSFOLK promote their products. They chatter as CHILDREN run around.

PRINCE AMIR CORNELIUS, 17, in a golden uniform with a deer pin, plays Gameball with the children.

PRINCE AMIR
Hey, nice catch! You guys are good.

They laugh as they pass the ball to each other.

KING ODO CORNELIUS, 35, enters.

KING ODO
Amir!

Prince Amir and the children stop their game.

KING ODO (CONT'D)
It's time for your studies, my son.

PRINCE AMIR
I'll be right there, Father.

Prince Amir passes the ball to the one of the children.

PRINCE AMIR (CONT'D)
Sorry.

He walks towards his father and smiles.

King Odo smiles back, looks away, then exits.

Prince Amir stops. His energetic smile fades. He exits.

INT. GALAN CASTLE - HALLWAY - DAY

Prince Amir watches the children play their game.

King Odo, his hands crossed behind his back, looks at Amir.

KING ODO
It's nice to see you with the
townsfolk. You'll be a great king.

PRINCE AMIR
Yeah. I suppose so.

Prince Amir struggles to smile. His pace slows down.

KING ODO
Don't fret. You'll be ready.

King Odo puts his head up high. He exits.

Prince Amir stops. He turns to the open window.

EXT. GALAN VILLAGE - DAY

A group of CIRCUS PERFORMERS, in colorful costumes with deer masks, perform various tricks to the enormous AUDIENCE.

The Children stop their game to watch. They laugh and run towards the main event.

The JESTER, 30s, a tall male with a spooky deer mask, enters.

JESTER
For my next trick, I would need a
coin from the audience.

One of the Townsfolk from the Audience hands in a coin.

The Jester grabs, then blows onto the coin. It turns into gold sparkle with white rose petals.

The Audience cheers and throws coins into a performer's hats.

INT. GALAN CASTLE - AMIR'S BEDROOM - DAY

From the window, Prince Amir fixates on the performers.

PRINCE AMIR
Man, what would I do to live a life
like that?

KING ODO (O.S.)
I'm glad you asked.

Prince Amir rests his hand down. He turns to his Father.

King Odo enters with a smile.

KING ODO (CONT'D)
You can test the waters tomorrow.

PRINCE AMIR
Wait-- what?

KING ODO
You'll be King for a single day.

PRINCE AMIR
 Father! I'm not old enough.

King Odo walks forward and rests his hands on Prince Amir's shoulders. He stares into his son's eyes.

KING ODO
 This is the perfect opportunity.

PRINCE AMIR
 But I don't want--

KING ODO
 To mess up? Do not fret.

Prince Amir looks out the window at the Circus Performers.

KING ODO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 You are a Cornelius. We are born to
 shape our country to greatness.

The Circus Performers bow, take their gold, and walk to a carriage.

KING ODO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 I can't be any more proud, my son.

King Odo pats Prince Amir's shoulders.

Prince Amir snaps out of it.

KING ODO (CONT'D)
 One day. That's all I ask.

Prince Amir pauses. He looks back at the window.

The Circus Performers exit into a mysterious forest.

Prince Amir takes a deep breath, then nods.

PRINCE AMIR
 Okay, Father.

KING ODO
 Your mother would be proud.

King Odo turns away, then exits.

KING ODO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Rest easy, my son. You'll need it.

PRINCE AMIR
 Will do, Father.

Prince Amir smiles and waves to his Father. He takes another deep breath, frowns, then looks back at the window.

EXT. GALAN VILLAGE - EVENING

The Jester use his gold to purchase carrots. He still wear his deer mask and costume. He returns to his carriage.

Prince Amir, in a black cloak, hides behind the carriage. A lantern lights up the forest.

JESTER (O.S.)
You all did good today, eat up.

Prince Amir looks at the silhouettes of the Jester and the Performers. They lift up their masks to the eat the carrots.

The Jester pats on of them.

JESTER (CONT'D)
Don't eat fast. You'll choke.

Prince Amir opens the back trunk of the carriage.

The Jester hears the trunk click. He investigates the back trunk, but finds no one behind it.

JESTER (CONT'D)
Finish up. We must make haste.

Jester grabs the side handle of the carriage. He takes a bite on a carrot.

The Circus Performers return to the passenger's seat on the carriage. They travel further into the forest.

INT. CARRIAGE - TRUNK - NIGHT

Prince Amir peeks out and watches his kingdom become smaller. He lays down, breathes in, and lets his eyes wander.

PRINCE AMIR
One night, Amir. Then we leave.

He tucks and turns. He tries to sleep but fails.

PRINCE AMIR (CONT'D)
I should slap myself next time I
have another "brilliant" idea.

He lays on his back. He puts his hands on his stomach.

PRINCE AMIR (CONT'D)
This is for our own good, remember?

He jumps when the carriage comes to a sudden halt.

EXT. ARCANIC FOREST - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Prince Amir peeks out, looks around, then exits the carriage.
He takes the lantern and investigates.

PRINCE AMIR
Hello? Anyone there?

He steps on the Jester's mask, then sees remains of the
Circus Performers's tore up costumes and masks.

PRINCE AMIR (CONT'D)
Don't panic.

He turns to the spooky part of the forest. He hesitates.

He turns and shines his lantern on the other side of the
forest. He hears footsteps behind him.

PRINCE AMIR (CONT'D)
Who's there?

He hears more footsteps, then looks around. The footsteps
overlap the sounds of the forest.

The DEER KING, a big ghoulish-looking deer with yellow eyes
that glow, enters. He locks eyes with Prince Amir.

PRINCE AMIR (CONT'D)
Um, hey. Don't mind me, I was just--

A herd of DEER surrounds the forest. Their eyes glow.

Prince Amir drops his lantern and tries to make a run for it.

The Deer King nods. The herd of Deer chases after him.

PRINCE AMIR (CONT'D)
STAY AWAY FROM ME!

Prince Amir tries to run faster, but the Deers catch up. He
passes through the tall trees. Every turn, there's a Deer.

PRINCE AMIR (CONT'D)
What the--

The herd of Deer tries to bite Prince Amir, but they miss.

Prince Amir runs faster, but so do the herd.

He dodges the Deer. He passes the carriage, then stops.

PRINCE AMIR (CONT'D)
Wait. Did I just run in circles?

More Deer chases after Prince Amir. Prince Amir grabs the carrots and throws one at one of the deer.

The Deer King watches. He walks backward, then disappears.

Prince Amir passes the same tree, the same carriage, the same lantern he dropped. He stops to catch his breath.

PRINCE AMIR (CONT'D)
What-- is this place? Why can't I--

The wooden door on the carriage breaks as a Deer pops out of it. He bites Prince Amir's cloak.

Prince Amir struggles to pull on his cloak.

The herd of Deer behind him runs faster towards him.

PRINCE AMIR (CONT'D)
Let me go.

Prince Amir takes off his crown and whacks the Deer in the face. He drops his crown, removes his cloak, then runs.

Prince Amir screams, runs to the big tree, and climbs up. He reaches the top, then looks down below.

The herd of Deer tries to climb up, but fails.

PRINCE AMIR (CONT'D)
Not so tough now, huh?

The herd of Deer stare at Prince Amir. They exit.

PRINCE AMIR (CONT'D)
Right. Don't mess with a Cornelius.

Prince Amir frowns, his forehead on the tree, eyes closed. A large thud that shakes the tree snaps him out of it.

PRINCE AMIR (CONT'D)
Ah--

Prince Amir holds onto the tree tighter, then looks down.

The Deer King smashes his head on the tree. He repeats the action until the tree snaps.

PRINCE AMIR (CONT'D)
No, no, no, no, no--

The tree falls down. The tree log lays on top of Prince Amir.

Prince Amir groans, pulls himself up, then dusts off the dirt. He turns and sees the Deer King. He slips and falls.

The Deer King creeps up to Prince Amir.

PRINCE AMIR (CONT'D)
Please don't kill me. I just want
to go home.

DEER KING
Why are you here?

Prince Amir pauses. He looks at the Deer King.

PRINCE AMIR
Did you just talk?

DEER KING
Only the Deer King asks questions.

PRINCE AMIR
Sorry, I--

The Deer King pulls Prince Amir up by his sleeves.

PRINCE AMIR (CONT'D)
Whoa-- Okay.

Prince Amir steps back. His body shakes.

The Deer King stares at him, then nudges his head on Prince Amir's arm. He leads him further into the forest.

PRINCE AMIR (CONT'D)
Where are we going?

The Deer King nudges Prince Amir's arm harder.

PRINCE AMIR (CONT'D)
Right, right. Sorry.

The Deer King guides Prince Amir back to the carriage.

Prince Amir sits on the passenger's seat.

DEER KING
I'll ask again. Why are you here?

PRINCE AMIR
Well, that's a long story.

DEER KING
Why are YOU here?

Prince Amir pauses. He looks at his knees.

The herd of Deer enters. They watch.

PRINCE AMIR
Why is that so concerning to you?

DEER KING
You whacked your crown at one of my people.

PRINCE AMIR
He attacked me first.

DEER KING
And that gives you an excuse to crack his head open?

Prince Amir groans and stomps on the grass.

PRINCE AMIR
Okay, okay. I'm sorry for hurting your people. Can I go now?

DEER KING
Not until you answer my question.

Prince Amir leans back and looks at his crown. He sees the blood marks on the tip. He looks back at the Deer King.

PRINCE AMIR
I don't know. I thought I did.

DEER KING
The last person to give that answer was around your age.

PRINCE AMIR
Was he also a deer?

DEER KING
He was like you. A worried prince who was about to take the throne.

The Deer King nods at one of the Deers behind him. The Deer walks towards the fallen crown and grabs it with its jaws.

DEER KING (CONT'D)
As the Deer King, I must show no
mercy, but I made him an exception.

The Deer returns the crown back to Prince Amir.

DEER KING (O.S.) (CONT'D)
He was lost, stressed, and unsure.
He reminded me of myself when I
took the crown.

Prince Amir takes his crown. He stares at it, then wipes the
small smear of blood from his crown.

PRINCE AMIR
If I take the easier route, no one
would have to worry about me.

DEER KING
Sometimes the easier route can be
the most harmful.

Prince Amir curls up. He covers his face against his knees.

PRINCE AMIR
I'm not ready for this.

DEER KING
You are the ruler of your own mind.
You chose how to shape your country
to greatness.

The Deer King moves closer to Prince Amir. He draws him into
a slight hug.

Prince Amir pats the Deer King, then accepts the embrace.

The herd of Deer walk towards the Deer King and Prince Amir.
They lay down next to them.

EXT. GALAN VILLAGE - DAY

The sun rises. The townsfolk open their shops, start their
laundry, and greet one another.

An old carriage drives into the kingdom. The townsfolk move
out of the way.

EXT. GALAN CASTLE - HALLWAY - DAY

King Odo paces with his hands behind his back.

The doors open. Prince Amir enters with dirty clothes and messy hair. He holds his crown in his hand.

KING ODO

Thank heavens, you're okay. Where were you? I've been worried sick.

Prince Amir tries to smile and hold back his tears, but fails. He runs to King Odo and falls into an embrace.

PRINCE AMIR

I'm sorry.

Prince Amir sobs into King Odo's arms.

King Odo strokes his son's hair, then embraces him.

KING ODO

It's okay, my son. I'm here.

Prince Amir hugs his father tighter. The crown that he holds no longer has blood, but with dry stains of tears.

END