



AUTHOR PROFILE

Şevin Polat**Level** C1**Genre** Fantasy

The Weight of Feeling

In the north of the Kingdom of Eterna, there lay a forest where roads gradually vanished and sounds thinned into silence. This forest was composed not merely of trees, but of forgotten memories. Its wind blew heavy; the leaves tried not to make a sound, even as they fell to the ground. Birds did not sing here; they fluttered their wings just enough to remind the world of their existence.”

At the very heart of the forest stood a cabin where no one ever went by choice.”

The cabin was ancient. Its roof was blanketed in moss, and its walls were etched with cracks. Yet, the inside was warm. For the old woman who lived there never let the fire die out, despite everything. The villagers called her ‘Nene.’ No one remembered her real name; perhaps they had never even learned it.

Hana was born in this cabin

On the night she was born, a strangeness was felt throughout the forest. No storm broke out, nor did any lightning strike. But the air grew heavy. It was as if the world had realized that something had been born incomplete.

Hana did not cry.

When Nene took her into her arms, the baby’s heart was beating steadily. She had breath. Her eyes were

open. But those eyes were empty. The chaos, the uncertainty that should be found in a newborn's eyes was missing. There was only stillness.

Nene realized in that moment that something was different, but she was not afraid. For fear had been exhausted in her youth.

Hana grew up.

As the years passed, other children fell, cried, laughed, and shouted. When Hana fell, she simply got back up. She did not cry. Whether she felt pain or not, she did not know. When a toy was taken from her hand, she did not get angry. When she won something, she did not rejoice.

She learned words. She learned to speak. But she could not fill the words with meaning.

'Love,' Nene said one day, sitting by the stove. 'One fears losing what they love.'

Hana looked up. — 'What is fear?'

Nene could not answer.

Hana had no trouble sleeping at night. She had no dreams. When she closed her eyes, there was darkness. When she opened them, the same darkness remained. For her, the world consisted of a single color: gray.

But in the year she turned sixteen, the forest began to change.

Where Hana walked, the grass stood more vibrant. The branches she touched did not wither. Nene was the first to notice.

'The earth loves you,' she whispered.

Hana did not understand. — 'The earth does not love.'

Nene smiled, but her eyes filled with tears. — 'Everything feels, my child. Except for you.'

That day, there was a knock at the cabin door. This was a rare occurrence.

Armored soldiers stood before the door. The sun reflected off their shields, but their insides were dark. The commander took a step forward.

‘The girl is coming with us.’

Nene trembled. — ‘She is only a child.’

For the first time, Hana felt a pressure in her chest. It was not fear. But it was the beginning of the road leading to it.

She looked at the soldiers. — ‘Where?’

‘To the palace.’

Hana turned back to the forest. She looked at the trees. The earth. The cabin.

And for the first time, something she could not name happened.

It was a severance.

Chapter 2 – The Severance in the Forest

“When Hana stepped out of the cabin door, the forest was quieter than ever. It was as if the trees had held their breath, watching what was to unfold. Nene stood at the threshold; her aged hands were trembling, but she remained silent. For some goodbyes were not meant to be spoken.

Hana put nothing in her bag. She didn’t know what she might need anyway. To her, belongings were merely objects that took up space. But Nene secretly slipped a small stone into her palm.

‘This is yours,’ she said.

‘Why?’ Hana asked.

Nene looked away. — ‘To remember.’

Hana put the stone in her pocket. She didn’t know what it meant to remember. But the stone was heavy. For the first time, she felt the weight of something.

As the carriage moved along the narrow forest path, Hana looked back. The cabin shrank. The trees thinned out. The soil changed. With every step, an indescribable void grew within her. This void was not the absence of emotion. It was the loss of the silence she was accustomed to.

The soldiers were talking. Hana listened, but their voices blurred together. There were words, but no meaning. Until one of them whispered:

‘The King specifically asked for her.’

Hana lifted her head. — ‘Why?’

The soldier shrugged. — ‘Sometimes kings do not give reasons.’

As the journey stretched on, the air shifted. The damp scent of the forest was replaced by the smell of stone and smoke. When they saw the first village, Hana’s eyes widened slightly. This was the closest she had ever come to surprise. There were many people. But their eyes... they were all weary.

Children played, but their laughter was incomplete. Women spoke, but their voices were hushed. Hana was not noticed as they passed by. Did she like this? She didn’t know. But for the first time, she thought about being invisible.

The sun was setting when the palace came into view. Golden towers caught the light, but it wasn’t warm. A feeling stirred inside Hana. This feeling did not say ‘run.’ It said ‘be careful.’

The gates opened. As Hana stepped inside, the forest fell completely silent. And the Palace of Eterna sensed her presence.”

Chapter 3 – Inside the Palace

“The sound of the gates of Eterna Palace closing behind Hana was harsher than anything heard in the forest. The strike of stone against stone signaled a closure. Hana did not understand it at that moment, but her heart grew heavy, as if she had lost a place she had known for years.

The palace interior was bright. The walls were clad in polished marble. Chandeliers hanging from the ceiling were lit even during the day. Yet, the light did not reach everywhere. There were shadows in the corners, as if the palace were deliberately hiding certain things.

As Hana walked, she listened to her footsteps. They echoed on the stone floor. It wasn't like this in the forest. There, sounds would blend into the earth. Here, everything returned. The words spoken, the steps taken—even the breaths.

A woman stepped forward. Her clothes were cleaner and more orderly than the others.

‘I am Akane,’ she said. ‘I am in charge of the kitchen.’

Hana nodded. — ‘I am Hana.’

Akane scanned her from head to toe. There was no curiosity in this gaze. There was evaluation.

‘One does not speak much here,’ she said. ‘One works.’

The kitchen was the most vibrant place in the palace. Large cauldrons were boiling, and knives made rhythmic sounds. The scent of spices filled the air. But Hana noticed something immediately: the people were fast, yet stagnant. No one laughed. No one shouted.

Hana was given vegetables and told to clean them.

When she took the knife in her hand, she paused for a moment. The metal was cold. But when she touched the vegetable, she felt a warmth passing through her. It was a very weak sensation. Perhaps an illusion.

But the food prepared that day was different.

A servant hesitated as he brought the plate to his mouth. — ‘The taste... it’s like my childhood,’ he said without realizing.

No one believed him. But everyone finished their meal.

Akane looked at Hana. She frowned. — ‘What did you do?’

Hana shrugged. — ‘Nothing.’

But Akane knew that ‘nothing’ was sometimes the most dangerous thing of all.

That night, Hana was given a small room. It had a bed. It had a window. But the forest was not visible from the window. Only stone.

Hana lay down on the bed. She closed her eyes.

For the first time, a thought lingered in her mind.

‘Do I belong here?’

This was the birth of a question.

And questions are the first signs of emotions.”

Chapter 4 – Days in the Kitchen

“In the palace, the days resembled one another. The morning bells would ring, the servants would wake, and the kitchen would begin to simmer. Every morning, Hana woke at the same hour, walked through the same corridors, and arrived at the same workstation. But even if the days were similar, Hana’s inner world was slowly shifting.

While washing vegetables, she noticed the coolness of the water. Before, water had been just water. Now, it made her hands cold. Sometimes she didn’t like this. Other times, she would pause when she realized she did

like it.

Akane was watching her.

‘Don’t think too much,’ she said one day. ‘Thinking is a waste of time here.’

Hana nodded, but a voice inside told her that thinking could not be stopped.

The food began to be talked about throughout the palace. Whispers drifted through the corridors. ‘Today’s soup was different.’ ‘This bread warmed my soul.’ No one knew why. No one spoke Hana’s name, but everyone noticed the food coming from her station.

As for Hana, she was unaware. She simply touched. She cut, she stirred, she waited.

One day, a plate fell to the floor in the kitchen. The noise erupted. Everyone startled. Hana’s heart raced. This was a new sensation. She placed her hand on her chest and counted her heartbeats. It felt like fear, but not quite. It was more like... a preparation.

Akane looked at Hana. — ‘You shuddered.’

Hana looked up. — ‘Is that bad?’

Akane fell silent for a moment. — ‘No,’ she said. ‘It is... human.’

That night, when Hana returned to her room, she could not sleep. She felt the hardness of the bed. The coldness of the walls. The distant sounds from outside. And for the first time, she thought of the cabin. Nene’s stove. The scent of the forest. The silence.

A void formed in her chest. This was longing. But Hana did not yet know its name.”

Chapter 5 – The Forgotten Garden

“When Hana found the Forgotten Garden, she did not realize it wasn’t a coincidence. She was only just

beginning to question why anything happened in her life.

She had left the kitchen a bit early that day. Akane had dismissed her without a warning for the first time. Hana noticed this but didn't dwell on it. While walking through the corridors, she saw a narrow passage opening to the back of the palace. She had never gone that way before. The door was ajar.

When she stepped through the door, the air changed. The heavy, enclosed atmosphere of the palace was left behind. Before her lay a silent but living void. A wide area trapped between stone walls. The earth was cracked, the weeds had withered. The trees were standing, but they looked as if they had given up on living.

Hana stopped. There was a familiar void in her chest, but this time, it was accompanied by something else: a pull.

She knelt. She placed her hand on the ground. The earth was not cold. It was not hard. It was as if it recognized her.

For a moment, nothing happened. Hana was about to withdraw her hand when the earth trembled slightly. A thin, green sprout rose from the cracks. Then another. Then another. Hana held her breath. Her heart raced. This was fear. But at the same time... it was wonder.

'How did you do that?'

The voice came from behind her. Hana startled. This was the second time she had felt such a jolt. When she turned around, a boy was standing in the shadows of the garden. He wore simple clothes. His hair was messy, but his eyes were vibrant; it was as if he truly saw the world.

'I am Kaito,' the boy said. 'And you... you don't belong here.'

Hana stood up. — 'I don't belong anywhere.'

Kaito smiled. It wasn't a mocking smile. It was full of curiosity. — 'Then this place might have chosen you.'

Hana looked at the ground. — 'I didn't do anything.'

'Sometimes,' Kaito said slowly, 'doing nothing is the greatest thing of all.'

A light wind blew through the garden. The leaves shivered. For the first time, Hana felt a place breathing. And for the first time, she felt she was not alone.”

Chapter 6 – Kaito’s Story

“Hana and Kaito stood in the Forgotten Garden for a long time without speaking. Silence was not foreign to Hana, but this silence was different. It wasn’t like the silence in the forest. This silence was born from two people accepting being in the same place.

Kaito broke the silence. — ‘Do you know why no one comes here?’

-Hana shook her head. — ‘No.’

— ‘Because this is a place of failure,’ Kaito said. ‘Kings do not like failure.’

Hana looked at the ground. The sprouts were still trembling. — ‘But it is alive.’

Kaito smiled faintly. — ‘Yes. But they don’t want to see that.’

In the following days, Hana began going to the garden as soon as her work was finished. Kaito was always there. Sometimes he read a book, sometimes he just sat. When Hana asked why he never worked, he shrugged.

‘I am the excess of this place,’ he said. ‘But the excess are sometimes the ones who see the truth.’

One day, Kaito began to speak. This was one of the rare things he did of his own accord.

‘My mother was a seamstress in the palace,’ he said. ‘One day she fell ill. No one cared. Because she was just a servant.’

Hana listened. Something stirred inside her. This was her first reaction to someone else’s pain.

‘She died,’ Kaito said. ‘I remained.’

Hana didn’t know what to say. — ‘Is that... bad?’

Kaito lifted his head. His eyes were hard, but his voice was soft. — ‘Yes. But it is also instructive.’

Hana realized in that moment: Kaito felt. He felt deeply. And this did not make him strong. It made him fragile.

One day, Kaito caught his hand on a thorny branch. Blood dripped. Kaito winced.

‘It hurts,’ he said.

Hana reached out. She touched her finger to the wound. The bleeding stopped. The wound closed.

But a sharp ache formed in Hana’s chest. She pulled her hand back quickly. — ‘This is... bad.’

Kaito looked on in surprise. — ‘What?’

‘My chest... it feels tight.’

Kaito grew quiet. — ‘Hana,’ he said slowly, ‘This is pain. But it shows that you are feeling.’

Hana sat on the ground. The ache in her chest did not pass. But for the first time, she realized she didn’t want it to pass.

This was the beginning of feeling.”

Chapter 7 – Learning to Feel

“The Forgotten Garden was no longer an escape for Hana; it was a mirror. Every time she came there, she saw a bit more of herself. But what she saw did not comfort her. Because feeling was not as simple as she had thought.

One day, Kaito took Hana to the center of the garden. To the place where the earth began to turn green and the trees provided shade once more.

‘Today, I will show you something,’ he said.

Hana watched him silently. Kaito sat on the ground and closed his eyes. — ‘Now, think of something that makes you happy.’

Hana paused. — ‘Happiness... what is that like?’

Kaito smiled, but there was sadness in that smile. — ‘Your inside lightens. The weight in your chest decreases.’

Hana closed her eyes. She thought of Nene. The silence by the stove. The scent of the forest. The ache in her chest eased for a moment.

‘This,’ she whispered, ‘this is good.’

Kaito nodded. — ‘Yes. But it doesn’t always last.’

Then he stood up. He showed her the small stone in his hand. — ‘Now, think of fear.’

Hana didn’t want to. But she thought of it. The soldiers. The palace gate. The King’s gaze. Her heart raced. Her breath tightened.

‘Stop,’ she said. ‘This is... too much.’

Kaito immediately moved closer. — ‘That is fear. It protects you, but it can also wear you out.’

Hana opened her eyes. The flowers in the garden were trembling. It was as if they were breathing with her. That day, Hana laughed. The laughter was short-lived, but it was real. Kaito did not laugh as he watched her. Because he knew the price of laughing.

Meanwhile, in one of the high towers of the palace, King Zenith was looking out at the garden.

'She feels now,' he said to the advisor beside him. 'And powers that feel... are dangerous.'

Zenith had made his decision. The golden cage was to be prepared."

Chapter 8 – The Golden Cage

"The palace corridors were quieter than usual that night. The silence had seeped into the stone walls. Lanterns were lit, but the light offered no warmth. King Zenith stood alone in his high-ceilinged room. On the table were ancient parchments and half-faded prophecies.

'A power that feels... destroys kingdoms,' he muttered.

The advisor bowed. — 'The girl is still young, Your Majesty.'

Zenith turned sharply. — 'Precisely because of that.'

When Hana arrived at the garden the next morning, Kaito was not there. This was the first time. The garden was silent, but it was not alive. The flowers bowed their heads. Hana could define the unrest within her for the first time: anxiety.

Suddenly, soldiers appeared. Their armor gleamed in the sun. Hana did not run. She had never learned how to run.

'By order of the King,' one of them said.

The golden cage was in the highest room of the palace. The walls were plated with gold. There were windows, but they could not be opened. There was sky outside, but it could not be reached.

'This is for your safety,' Zenith said. 'To stop you from feeling.'

Hana collapsed to the floor. The pain in her chest returned. But this time, it was different. It was deeper. It was heavier.

‘Where is Kaito?’ she asked.

Zenith paused for a moment. — ‘Some bonds... must be severed.’

For the first time, Hana cried. Her tears fell to the ground. Small cracks formed on the golden floor. Below, among the cold stones of the dungeon, Kaito was shackled. But there was no fear on his face. There was only determination.

‘You allowed her to feel,’ he said to one of the guards. ‘Now, you cannot stop her.’

And at that moment, the foundations of the palace trembled.”

Chapter 9 – Cracks

“The golden cage was silent, but Hana’s interior was filled with noise. As she breathed, the pain in her chest expanded. It was unlike anything she had felt before. Neither fear nor happiness... this was loss.

She pressed her fingers against the floor. The cracks in the golden ground grew. Thin lines spread toward the walls. Hana startled and withdrew her hand. Her power was coming involuntarily now.

‘Stop,’ she whispered. ‘Please...’

But feelings do not stop.

She closed her eyes and thought of Kaito. The silence in the garden. The moment she healed the wound. The way his pain passed into her. Something snapped inside her.

Below, in the dungeon, Kaito strained against his chains. The iron groaned but did not break. Yet, he smiled. Because he knew Hana had begun to feel. This was salvation and destruction arriving at the same time.

‘Feeling... demands a price,’ he murmured.

Palace guards were rushing about. New cracks were forming in the walls. Green sprouts from the garden began to rise between the stones. King Zenith climbed to the tower. He looked at Hana.

‘If you do not stop,’ he said, ‘I will kill him.’

Hana lifted her head. There was no fear in her eyes. Only resolve.

‘Then,’ she said in a trembling voice, ‘you cannot stop me either.’

At that moment, Hana did not suppress her power. The golden cage shattered. But this was not freedom. This was a storm.”

Chapter 10 – The Price

“When the fragments of the golden cage hit the floor, it was as if time had stopped in the palace. Dust hung suspended in the air. The guards retreated. None of them dared to approach Hana.

Hana was standing, but her knees were trembling. The power had been released, but her body was not ready for it. Breathing became difficult. With every breath, something else was depleted in her heart.

King Zenith descended the stairs. — ‘Do you see?’ he said. ‘Feeling makes you weak.’

Hana shook her head. — ‘No,’ she said. ‘Feeling... makes me who I am.’

Zenith raised his hand. A scream rose from below. Hana recognized that voice. Kaito.

The pain in her chest became unbearable. She fell to her knees. The power suddenly surged toward the garden. Stones split open. Trees grew rapidly. Vines entwined the palace walls. But while everything was blooming, Hana was fading.

Kaito broke through the dungeon door. The chains were still on his wrists, but he didn’t care. He ran up. When he saw Hana, he stopped.

‘Stop!’ he shouted. ‘You cannot do this alone!’

Hana smiled. Tired, but at peace. — ‘I feel now,’ she said. ‘And that... is enough.’

Kaito understood. This power, if not shared, would kill. He reached his hand out to Hana.

Chapter 11 – The Sharing

“Hana and Kaito remained motionless in the Forgotten Garden. Silence was not foreign to Hana, but this silence was different. Kaito’s hand hung in the air. For the first time, Hana had to truly trust someone. This was heavier than fear.

‘It will hurt,’ Hana said. ‘It will pass to you as well.’

Kaito nodded. — ‘It already hurts.’ He took her hand.

In that moment, the power did not split in two; it expanded. The pressure in Hana’s chest eased. Kaito fell to his knees. A roar rose from within the palace. The walls seemed to breathe.

Zenith recoiled. — ‘No,’ he said. ‘This is impossible.’

The trees in the garden bloomed. But the flowers were not white. They were crimson—the color of the price.

Kaito gasped for air. — ‘You must stop this,’ he said. ‘Or both you and I...’

Hana closed her eyes. She looked inside. There was no longer just power there; there were memories. Nene. The forest. The garden. Kaito.

‘To stop,’ she whispered, ‘is to let go.’

She pulled her hand away. The power ceased. But Kaito fell to the ground. Hana did not scream. She only bowed her head. Tears flowed silently. Where they hit the ground, the flowers withered.

Zenith seized the silence. — ‘It is over,’ he said. ‘The kingdom wins.’

But he was wrong. Because Hana was no longer just one who felt. She was one who understood.”

Chapter 12 – The Awakening

“Kaito’s body lay motionless on the cold stones. Hana was on her knees, her hand on his chest. His heartbeat was weak, but it was there. This meant hope. But hope was no longer innocent.

Shouts came from outside the palace. The people had gathered. Vines had completely overtaken the walls, cracking the stones. The heart of the kingdom was exposed for the first time.

Zenith looked out the window. — ‘The people are afraid,’ he said to himself. ‘Fear brings order.’

But order had already begun to unravel.

Hana stood up. She could not leave Kaito where he was. But to call upon the power again... it could consume her entirely. She took a deep breath. For the first time, she did not want the power. She only asked for help.

A light rose from the garden. A soft, non-burning light. The vines retreated. The stones cracked no further.

Kaito coughed. Hana’s eyes welled with tears. — ‘You’re alive...’

Kaito opened his eyes. — ‘For now,’ he said in a weak voice. ‘But this might be my last awakening.’

Hana startled. — ‘No.’

Kaito smiled. — ‘I told you... feeling always demands a price.’

At that moment, the palace gates opened. The people entered. For the first time, they were not looking at the King, but at Hana. Zenith recoiled. The throne appeared empty now.”

Chapter 13 – The Throneless King

“The throne room had never been this silent. The gold engravings had faded; the banners on the walls felt like a burden. The people lined the sides of the hall. No one shouted. No one bowed.

King Zenith sat on his throne, but no one saw him there anymore.

Hana stepped forward. Her dress was tattered, her hair messy. But her gaze was clear. For the first time, she was not hiding.

‘I am not a king,’ she said. ‘And I do not want to be.’

A stir went through the hall.

‘But you,’ she continued, ‘you are listening to me. Because I am not afraid.’

Zenith laughed—a hollow sound. — ‘Feeling destroyed you,’ he said. ‘Not me.’

Hana shook her head. — ‘No,’ she said. ‘Feeling left you alone.’

Someone from the crowd stepped forward. Then another. No one was taking orders. The throne, for the first time, looked truly meaningless.

Zenith stood up. — ‘The kingdom exists through me!’

Hana closed her eyes. She did not call the power. She only spoke. — ‘A kingdom exists in the hearts of its people.’

In that moment, no one looked at Zenith. The throne was empty.”

Chapter 14 – The Final Choice

“Hana did not move as the throne room began to empty. People were leaving, whispering, but no one dared to make a decision. The kingdom was leaderless for the first time. And this felt more like freedom than fear.

Kaito was brought into the hall with the help of two soldiers. His face was pale. His steps were heavy, but his eyes were still vibrant.

‘You must end this,’ he said, looking at Hana. ‘Leaving it half-finished... hurts more.’

Hana bowed her head. — ‘What does it mean to end it?’

Kaito looked around. The throne. The walls. The people. — ‘Binding your power,’ he said. ‘Withdrawing it from this world.’

Hana froze. — ‘Then... I will also—’

‘Yes,’ Kaito said softly. ‘You will not be your old self either.’

Hana’s interior filled with silence. It wasn’t the silence she once knew. This was the silence of a decision.

King Zenith was shackled. But there was no defeat on his face. — ‘Without her, the kingdom collapses,’ he said. ‘Without her, the people will fear again.’

Hana looked at him. — ‘Perhaps,’ she said. ‘But to live with fear... is not to live at all.’

The light from the garden reappeared. But this time it wasn’t spreading. It was gathering. Around Hana.

Kaito stepped back. — ‘I am ready.’

Hana closed her eyes. This was the end.”

Chapter 15 – Farewell

“The light spun slowly around Hana. It was no longer bright; it was soft. It was as if it were preparing for a

goodbye. The palace seemed to hold its breath. No one spoke. For some moments cannot bear words.

Hana opened her eyes and looked at Kaito. She thought of the day she first saw him. The silence in the garden. The pain. The smile. If it weren't for him, she would still be living without feeling. Whether that counted as living, she wasn't sure.

'I am afraid,' Hana said for the first time.

Kaito nodded. — 'Me too,' he said. 'But that is because we are afraid of what is right.'

Hana placed her hand over her heart. The power was there. It was no longer overflowing. It had calmed. Like a river, it had found its bed.

'Will they remember me?' she asked.

Kaito's voice trembled. — 'Yes,' he said. 'But not as a legend.'

Hana smiled. — 'Good,' she said. 'Legends are lonely.'

The light suddenly contracted. All life from the garden stopped. The flowers bowed their heads. The vines withdrew. The world was releasing the power.

Hana fell to her knees. Her breathing slowed. The pain in her chest vanished. In its place came silence.

But this time... it was a completed silence.

Kaito held Hana. And he whispered:

'Goodbye.'"

Chapter 16 – Silence

"When morning came, there was neither light nor darkness in the palace. Everything was in its place, but

something was missing. People couldn't immediately understand what it was.

Hana was gone. The throne was still empty. King Zenith, along with his chains, had been left in a silent corner of history. No one judged him. Because fear was no longer needed.

The garden remained. But it wasn't as it was before. Plants did not grow unnaturally; stones did not crack. Everything... was normal. And this was something new for the kingdom.

Kaito came to the garden every day. He would sit on a stone and remain without speaking. Sometimes he placed his hand on the earth. There was no power. There was no light. But there was a slight warmth. As if someone were there.

In time, the people learned: Feeling was not a gift. It was a responsibility.

The kingdom was rebuilt. Throneless. Silent. An order where people made decisions by looking at one another.

And one day, a small flower bloomed in the garden. It was neither bright nor large. But it was real.

Kaito leaned down and smiled. — 'You are here,' he said.

A light wind blew. The silence answered. And the world, for the first time... began to live without fear.

THE END