

THE QUEST

The white chiffon of the headdress battled with her fine ringlets as the coastal breeze tried to steal Princess Vada's hat and toss it into the sea. Her red velvet dress puddled onto the sandy beach, sunlight glinting on the gold brocade embroidery. She sat on a rock looking out to the horizon. Searching. Searching.

Standing in the dunes, King Favian watched his only daughter with a heavy heart. She looked so like her late mother, pale cream skin and golden hair, trusting brown eyes that still held innocence. He thought he had done the right thing. Prince Rowan had asked for the Princess' hand in marriage, but Rowan had to prove he was worthy to marry his daughter and to rule the Kingdom.

"Prince Rowan, you must go on a quest for gold and fine jewels as befits my beautiful daughter. If you return with a filled treasure chest, I will gladly give you her hand in marriage."

The King had dismissed the Princess' plea, she loved Rowan and begged he would not be sent away. Consumed by his own grief, the King's cracked heart made him believe he was protecting his daughter, her future husband must be an explorer, a provider and a warrior. The crying Princess said her goodbyes to Rowan.

"He leaves a boy, but will come back a man my darling, then you will be ready to marry." The King comforted her.

Word had reached them that the Prince had been so successful in his task that his whole ship was laden with gold; goblets, plates and crowns, and precious jewels including huge rubies, garnets and emeralds. The messenger said Rowan was sailing home and would be with them before Midsummer's Day. For the last seven days Princess Vada, dressed in her wedding outfit, had insisted on waiting at the beach for Rowan's return.

Holding a hand up to shield his eyes, the King saw the menacing black vultures circling. In folklore this could only mean one thing, the Prince would not be returning to marry the Princess, his ship had sunk.

Princess with Vultures – Henry Justice Ford (1860-1941)

349 Words (excl title)

Bushey Museum Art Inspired Competition