[Everything is muffled]
[Sounds of wind through trees]
[Marigold is walking quickly through grass and plants]

MARIGOLD:

(*quiet rushed breathing) (to self)* Keep going, keep going, almost- *(sudden gasp)* Ah!

[Marigold collides with vines, followed by a thump]

MARIGOLD:

(deep breath)

[Marigold attempts to free themself]

MARIGOLD:

Right, it's fine. I'm fine. I just- *(pauses)*

[Marigold turns, still tangled in plants]

MARIGOLD:

(spots the Journal) Huh.What's- that shouldn't… *(softly)* What are you doing out here?

[Something is picked up, moved around, and the audio stops being muffled]

MARIGOLD:

How could you even be here? That's so s-

[Audio abruptly cuts off]

[Everything is once again muffled]

[Slight wind followed by echoey sounds of pages being turned quickly]

[Ambience of a quiet shop. Pluto's are audible on the wooden floor]

[Pluto reached into a shelf, picking something up]

PLUTO:

(to self) Huh…

[It's quiet]

[Pluto inspects the book]

[Pluto moves back]

PLUTO:

(a bit louder) Excuse me? How much is this book?

CREDITS

[Intro music plays]

LUMI OAKES:

Wanderer's Journal is a fantasy fiction podcast about connections, perspectives, and change. To learn more, visit us on our website wanderersjournal.info or follow us on social media @wanderersjournalpod or @wanderjournpod. Listen to season 1 now, wherever you get your podcasts.

Scene 1

SALEM

If there's anything life has taught me recently, it's that the little achievements are still achievements. And no matter how fast I wish time could go so that I might finally be able to keep on top of things, you don't get to choose the problems of everyone around you. You can't wish your friends an easier life but you can hope they'll grow stronger. And that's what I'm trying to be right now. Stronger. My strength starts with facing my mom again.

[movement]

RUE

If this isn't too much trouble?

SALEM

I've dyed your hair plenty of times before mom

RUE

all this effort for pink hair. This is why your mother thinks I'm losing it.

SALEM

[teasing/joking]

I think there are plenty of other reasons she thinks you're losing it.

RUE
[mock offence]
Salem Alice!

SALEM
[laughs]
Hey don't forget who's got the power over your hair right now!

RUE
Are you threatening me with bleach?

SALEM
only warning

RUE
[joking/dramatic]
Threatened by my own daughter. Who'd have seen it?

SALEM
The amount everyone dyes their hair around here I'm surprised Micah's the only one that's horribly damaged.

RUE
Yes well, some of us have hair still

SALEM
[small laugh]
I keep forgetting I buzzed it. Do you like it?

RUE
It suits you

SALEM
thanks...

[pause, Salem is fidgeting with the supplies]

SALEM
[nervous]
so- I -uh ... there's something I've been meaning to talk to you about. And I understand if you don't... I'm - I

RUE
you’re shaking Sal. What’s wrong?

SALEM
no it’s okay- or if it’s not- that’s fine as well- I just- I

RUE
It's okay. Take your time. Whenever you’re ready, I’m here to listen. No judgement.

[pause]

SALEM
[sigh]
I don’t want to be your daughter anymore.

RUE
[upset]
Oh... I see... well I’m sure we can adjust your legal documents, you could take your mothers last name, well before we got married that is. Salem Kwon. It’s a very pretty name and if that's what makes you comfortable then…

SALEM
I- wait- no- that’s not what I- let me start again?

RUE
[confused]
What did you mean, Sal?

SALEM
[deep breath]
I don’t want to be called your daughter anymore... she is- fine- but I’m…

[pause]

RUE
Do you want me to call you my son?

SALEM
Child? Just... child.

RUE
Are you going to change your name?

SALEM

I don’t think so... not right now at least. The name has never really bothered me.

RUE
What pronouns do you want me to use?

SALEM
[anxious]
she- is fine- I wouldn’t want to overstep or anything- [to themself] I don’t really like she in a girl way, but he doesn’t quite fit I don’t *think*? Gender is confusing. I mean, why have one at all, right? It’s a social construct anyway and some people like that! Which is completely okay and can make sense for them, but it’s not *for* everyone, you know?

RUE
If anyone’s going to understand, it’s me. But, I suppose we’ve never had that conversation before have we?

SALEM
you’re nonbinary?

RUE
[short laugh]
No Sal, I’m a trans woman. But from that reaction I assume that’s what you’ve been trying to tell me?

SALEM
I-uh ...yeah. Well, agender specifically. They/them is mainly what I’ve been using recently.

RUE
your friend Micah uses they too, correct? I believe I’ve always picked up on their pronouns. And I’d like to think I’ve never overstepped with their identity... So why were you so worried?

SALEM
well, when you put it like that...

RUE
and you know what I say to anyone who calls you the wrong pronouns? Fuck ‘em. Assholes like that aren’t worth your time.

[salem hugs rue]

SALEM
Thank you mom

RUE

of course. As long as you're happy Sal.

SALEM
[happy]
you know what? I think I am.

[pause]

SALEM
I've been on testosterone for a while now and I didn't think I could keep pulling it off as a cold for much longer

RUE
[laughs]
I had a feeling it was a little more than cold weather

SALEM
Now I feel stupid for not telling you sooner

RUE
don't be. I'm glad you're comfortable enough to tell me

[pause]

SALEM
So the same shade of pink as usual?

RUE
[knowing]
Is that all you wanted to talk about?

SALEM
[trying to play it off]
I'm sure I don't know what you…

RUE
[knowing]
You've got nothing else you need to get off your chest? You look almost love sick… if that ex of yours is back in contact again we're going to need another intervention because you're worth more than that sal…

SALEM
[sudden]
How'd you know you loved 엄마 (eomma)?

RUE
[amused]
Jae was… patient. Understanding. The prettiest woman I'd seen, inside and out. She had problems sure but we all do. She spoke about you a lot. Like you were the light of her world. Years passed and I couldn't imagine a life without either of you. No matter how I felt there was always a happy buzzing in the back of my mind when I was around her… but love doesn't look or feel the same to everyone Sal. Maybe you'll fall in love with more than one person or maybe you'll never find anyone who quite ticks that box. Jae and I will love you either way.

SALEM
[worried]
But what if it's someone I'm friends with? And what if it's not romantic? Or i screw it up somehow? Or it freaks them out?

RUE
[affectionate]
Salem. Breathe.

SALEM
[big breath]
I just don't want to lose them.

RUE
[amused]
Remember it's not about fixing them. It's about growing together. Supporting each other. Friends or otherwise. It's better to let it out than keep it bottled up inside.

SALEM
[sighs]
right

RUE
[curious/teasing]
Is this about the boy sleeping on your couch?

SALEM
[thrown off/ trying not to laugh]
Charlie? No he's straight. Plus he's engaged to Micah's sister.

[charlie walking in]

CHARLIE
[tired]

You talking bout me?

RUE
[joking]
Call it curiosity

CHARLIE
[tired]
Am I intruding on something?

SALEM
[amused]
No you're good. My mom's just pretending to be a therapist again.

RUE
[amused]
It's called being a mother, Sal.

CHARLIE
[laughs]
I'm literally in college to become a therapist… or a teacher. I haven't decided yet.

RUE
[joking]
Well, you know what they say. Mother knows best.

SALEM
[amused]
Not everythings a competition mom

RUE
[amused]
Where's the fun in that?

CHARLIE
[amused]
Charlie Bao King, nice to meet you Mrs. Alice

RUE
You can call me Rue dear, everyone else around here does. It's very nice to meet you as well… have we met before? You look familiar.

CHARLIE
[embarrassed]

Ah right, a few years ago now, yes. You're probably more familiar with my adopted brother, Bailey? I uh… also used to frequent your shop before my fiance started the plant ban.

RUE
Of Course! I thought it sounded familiar! How's your aunt, Linh, does she still live around here?

Start fade out

CHARLIE
She does! She's very well thank you! Have you had any new types of flowers recently?

Scene 2

[in the living room chunk, tv on in the background?]

SALEM
Somehow the idea of Charlie and my mom in the same room has become a new fear. Together they definitely wield too much power. Probably enough to make Micah eat healthy and see the sky before sunset… At least they get along.

CHARLIE
[awake]
Wait- Back to the flower shop - Do you do weddings?

RUE
[amused]
We've done a few in the past. Sal mentioned you were engaged?

CHARLIE
[excited but kinda sad]
Yeah… still getting used to that.

RUE
[knowing]
You should call her.

CHARLIE
[tired]
Am I that easy to read?

RUE
[amused]
Let's just say I've seen that look before…i have my own issues to attend to at home but i wish you luck with yours. Don't go throwing rocks into the wind, okay? It was nice to meet you Charlie

CHARLIE
[lost in thought]
Yeah, you too

[salem and rue walking out]

SALEM
Stay safe mom. Call me when you get home.

RUE
[joking]
Who's the parent now?

SALEM
I'll try calling more often

RUE
[amused]
I know

[door closes behind her, phone dialling from the other room and charlie's words muffle though the wall as salem walks along to micah's room and knocks on the door. Charlie's words completely fade out when salem enters the room]

CHARLIE
Hey naomi? Are you feeling up to talking? I'm not upset or mad, I just want to be there for you. If you'd let me? You see..

MICAH
[tired]
You're gonna come in either way

SALEM
[soft, slightly awkward]
Heyyy you

MICAH
[tired]
Hey

SALEM
[slightly awkward]
Can we talk?

MICAH
[tired]
What's on your mind?

Credits

If you hear scratching coming from your closet, remember it's always polite to scratch back. In this episode you heard: teu m shin as salem alice, Avalon Willowbloom as rue alice, victor hua as charlie king and luka miller as micah oak. Mx bad luck is written by cry mj and felyx pozorski with music by Tai Valenzuela. Thank you for listening.