A Pencilled Geranium for Ingenuity

In our fallow captivity, an idea blooms. We sow the seeds of the plan amongst ourselves first. We mention to the guards that we need a hobby. We say but don't say that maybe we'll be more docile if occupied. Perhaps we could relive the pastimes of Victorian ladies, planting messages in bouquets rather than saying difficult things aloud. The language of flowers. Posies and nosegays.

The guards' sneering faces turn indulgent. We ask for books on floriography, seeds, potting soil, pots, vases, twine, and a scissors. We get everything but the scissors.

Unasked for, our gaolers provide a reprint of a Victorian herbarium. A rare attempt at an act of kindness, or an accidental inclusion. Either way, they are too kind. We learn from it which flowers have deadly seeds, the rare ones that hide something nasty in their pollen, or those with poison in their foliage.

Now we know this'll work. They think us frivolous. They could've communicated that to us with the flower of the common bladdernut, but they don't know that. Thankfully.

Some flowers we keep in pots. For hasty arrangements, we use vases. We move them around as required, a hidden conversation amongst ourselves.

We document our deceit with a bouquet of straw, dogsbane, laurel, tamarisk, and thistle. In a vase on the sill, it says: This is the plan. Ready?

A marigold in reply means: Wait, not yet.

But a daisy says: Yes, let's do this.

When the plan is afoot, we update each other. A bunch of wolfsbane, birdsfoot, and bilberry says: The poison is in the tea.

We add a rhododendron to say: The guard has drank the tea.

We add a white poppy if he's unconscious.

We add a black rose if he's dead.

A single red rose means: Run!