"Rosa, Rosa!"

Rosa Stone was startled awake by her mother, Eliza.

“Mama?” Rosa questioned sleepily. “What’s wrong?”

“One of the Pegasuses has escaped, and with everyone preparing for the Life Festival, you’re the only one free to go and catch them.” Her mother explained.

“Alright, Mama. Which one has escaped?”

“One of the stallions, Leo.”

Rosa nodded. Leo was the most headstrong out of the herd of Pegasus horses their tribe of Travellers, named the Fireflies, owned.

Rosa dressed quickly, and headed out of the caravan that she shared with her family.

Rosa was 24 years old, and she was a part of the tribe of Travellers named the Fireflies. The Travellers were different to humans, for they were thought to be descended from Gods. There were magical creatures who mixed with humans, such as Unikorns, Centaurs, and Fauns, but they were mostly afraid of the Travellers. The Travellers had some magical creatures, such as Unikorns who possessed healing powers, but mostly they kept to themselves, moving from place to place.

Rosa hurried to the stables, quickly tacking the nearest available Pegasus up, a black mare named Midnight.

She mounted Midnight, and urged her out of the stables, into the fields, and up, up, into the Skye.

Once Midnight had flown high enough, Rosa guided her steed in a circle, looking down for Leo. Leo was a white stallion, who had sired a few of Midnight’s foals.

Rosa noticed a white spot in a field, and commanded Midnight to fly down a little so she could get a closer look. It was indeed Leo, but there was a winged creature next to him.

“Midnight, go and land.” Said Rosa.

Midnight did so, and Rosa called Leo.

Leo whinnied at her, and Rosa relaxed as she realised that he was ok.

As Midnight got closer to the ground, Rosa realised that the other winged creature was a Fae.

“Hey, get away from *my* Pegasus!” She cried in an authoritative tone.

“I ain’t doing anything to him, honest!” Replied the Fae, and Rosa realised that he was a young man.

“Hmm.” She replied, narrowing her eyes at him.

“I was flying about in the clouds, when I saw him in the air, looking rather interested at a mare in the next field, and I caught him and I’ve been feeding him apples to distract him.” The man explained.

“Oh.” Rosa replied as Midnight landed on the ground. “That’s fair enough, I’ll wager.”

“Yes, it is.” Replied the man, and stuck out his hand. “Thomas Barnstaple, pleasure to meet you.”

Rosa took his hand and shook it. “Rosa Mineway, pleasure to meet you too.”

Thomas smiled. He had jet black hair, piercing blue eyes, and he was of muscular build. His wings were a lilac colour, and they were quite imposing.

“You’re a Traveller, aren’t you?” Thomas questioned Rosa.

“I am, yes. It’s pretty obvious what you are.” Replied Rosa bluntly, going over to Leo and stroking his nose.

Thomas laughed. “You don't sugarcoat things.”

“Never have.” Rosa responded, quick as a wink.

Thomas laughed. “I gathered that.”

Rosa found herself relaxing in his presence, and smiled. “You’re a quick learner, then.”

“You could say that. I’m a farmhand at Hillview Farm, have been since I was 10 years old, so 13 years now. My family died you see, in a shipwreck. I’m the only one left, so instead of going to the workhouse I got myself a job working for a friend of my dearly departed mother.” Said Thomas.

“I’m sorry to hear that.” Replied Rosa. “Anyway, I’d best be getting home. It was nice to meet you, Thomas.” She beamed.

“It was nice to meet you too, Rosa. How about tomorrow, you meet me here, at 2PM sharp, with some of that lovely food I’ve heard your people make, you can share it with me as a thank you. You know, seeing as your stallion didn’t get the chance to sow his wild oats because of me.” He suggested with a cheeky grin.

Rosa smiled. “All right, then, as long as you bring some ale.”

“Deal.” Thomas grinned.

Rosa mounted Leo, and casted a quick spell around the two Pegasuses and herself, so Midnight would follow her and Leo. “Until tomorrow, Thomas Barnstaple.

Rosa retuned to the camp, and fed Leo and Midnight, after that she groomed them and mucked out their stalls.

Following that, she went in search of some breakfast.

Her aunt, Clover, was baking some bread, so Rosa knocked on the door.

“Come in!” Clover called.

“Hello, Aunty.” Rosa beamed. “Any scran going?”

“Yes lass, there’s a few buns going if you fancy that with some jam.” Clover suggested.

“Thanks aunty, you’re the best.” Rosa said happily, and gave her aunt a kiss.

Clover chuckled. “You got Leo back alright then?”

“Yes, I did.” Rosa nodded, cutting a bun up and spreading jam thickly over it.

“Something tells me that you’re not just happy about getting the Peg back.” Clover observed.

“No, I’m just happy about that, honest.” Rosa fibbed.

“Fair enough.” Responded Clover with a knowing look. “Anyway, away with you.”

“Yes, Aunty.” Replied Rosa. “Thanks for the scran.”

“You’re welcome.”

Rosa exited the caravan, and went about the rest of her day, thinking about Thomas with a smile on her face. He was rather handsome.

The next day, Rosa awoke early, and lay awake thinking of Thomas. She was forbidden to interact with him, but something about him was magnetic, pulling Rosa to him.

She got up at 6, and dressed quickly.

Outside, her cousin, Lyra, her Uncle, Misha, and her Aunt Clover were dancing around, performing a ritual, asking the Goddess Rebecca for a day of good weather and a good bounty of food.

Rosa watched, joining in with the song that was sung every single morning.

After that, Rosa got some breakfast from the kitchen in her caravan, and headed out into the fields, barefoot.

The early morning dew soaked her feet, and she sighed happily, and made her way towards a river.

There, she got undressed and washed in the water. She’d stowed a mixture of herbs and spices in the bushes that she used to wash with, they had cleaning properties.

After that, she got dressed and lay down in the early morning sunlight to dry off, muttering a prayer to the God Jacques.

She went back to the camp, and made her way to the stables, and took one of the Pegasuses for a quick fly. The Pegasus in question was named Lucille, and she had suffered a small injury in her wing. The flight was to make sure that she had fully recovered.

Once Lucille had landed, Rosa washed and groomed her, and then left her with a trough full of hay.

Rosa looked at the sundial, it was 1PM. So, she packed some meat, bread, and chutney, as well as a knife and spoon.

After that, she went to the field she’d met Thomas in, and waited for him.

Soon enough, Thomas came into view, carrying a couple of bottles. Rosa stood up. “Hello.” She smiled.

“Hello.” He smiled.

“You came. You’re late.” Rosa pointed out.

“Ah, only by five or ten moments.” Thomas counted. “How are you?”

“I’m alright thanks.” She replied, smiling at him. “Yourself?”

“A bit tired, I’ve been shifting hay bales all morning.” Said Thomas.

“Hmm.” Rosa nodded. “I know a place about half a mile away, it’s a nice spot for a picnic. How about it?”

“Sounds good.” He replied. “Lead the way.”

Rosa did so, and the pair chatted on the way to the spot she knew of. It turned out that Thomas was of Irish descent, hence his slight lilt.

“I’ve some relatives that are Irish, maybe they knew your family.” Rosa mused.

“But you can’t, we shouldn’t even be doing this.” Thomas reminded her.

“True.” Rosa nodded with a sigh. “I wish that it was different.”

“Me, too.” Responded Thomas.

The pair continued on their journey, silent for a while.

A short time later, they got to the lake that Rosa had talked about.

She set the groundsheet that she had with them on the ground, and sat down. She patted the space next to her. “Sit.”

Thomas obeyed her, and sat next to her. He handed her a bottle of ale. “Try this, it’s not that strong so you won’t get drunk.”

“Drunk?” Rosa questioned as she handed him a piece of bread.

“Intoxicated?” Thomas prompted. “Pissed?”

Rosa shook her head. “I don’t know what you mean.”

“Certain drinks that humans have contain grapes, which have something called alcohol in them. Alcohol can make a man happy, or angry depending on his temperament.” He explained.

“Oh! We have something like that, only it’s in the pipes that the men smoke.” Replied Rosa. “Meat, chutney?” She offered.

“Yes please.” He smiled.

Rosa handed him the chutney and meat, allowing him to prepare everything, and then doing them herself.

The pair ate, and chatted away together. They each found themselves to be happy in the other's company, and talked about anything and everything.

Eventually, Thomas stood up. “I’d best be getting back to work. Thank you for the food, Rosa.”

“Thank you for the ale.” Responded Rosa, and stood up. She found herself to be a little too close to Thomas. “Um, sorry.” She said, and looked up.

“No need to apologize, it was a mistake.” Thomas shrugged, taking a step back.

“Shall we meet up again soon?” Rosa suggested.

“Yes, I’d like that.” Thomas smiled. “How about three days' time?”

“Alright then.” Rosa nodded.

They went their separate ways.

Rosa hurried home, for her Grandfather was due to visit her for tea. He was Chief of their tribe, the Fireflies.

“Where have you been?” Asked her mother.

“Just out.” Replied her daughter vaguely, and changed the subject. Luckily, her mother didn’t notice.

Soon enough, dinner was prepared.

Rosa’s brother, Lukas, entered the caravan. “Grandfather will be along soon.”

Lukas was two years younger than Rosa, and when they were little they were often mistaken for twins. They were as thick as thieves, and the best of friends.

“Alright, Lukas.” Responded Rosa.

“Oh, I almost forgot. Grandfather would like to speak to you along first, Ro.” Lukas said. “It’s important.”

“Right, well I’ll go and freshen up.” Rosa replied, and did so. After that, she made her way outside to talk to her Grandfather.

As Rosa stepped out of the caravan, she spotted her Grandfather. His name was Timothy, and he wore amber and ochre colours, to reflect the colour of fire. His face was lined with wrinkles, his hair was grey. He’d been chief for years and years, and had decades of experience behind him.

“Rosa, hello!” Timothy exclaimed with a smile on his face.

Rosa ran up to give him a hug. “Hello Grandfather.”

“I’ve something to tell you, child. I won’t beat about the bush.” Timothy announced. “I’m ill, I saw the wise woman a few days ago. She thinks that it’s something in my bones, eating away at me... Rosa, I’m going to die of it.”

Rosa’s eyes filled with tears. “No! I won’t let you die Grandfather!”

“There’s nothing to be done, sweetheart.” Replied Timothy. “Don’t worry, I still have some time left.”

Rosa nodded. “That’s a little comfort.”

“Yes.” Timothy said. “I have something to ask you, also... If I teach you, would you be prepared to become the Chief of our tribe? I know that it’s a lot to ask, but since your father passed away, you’re the next in line. Usually it would be Lukas, but he’s younger than you. Out of all my grandchildren, you’re the firstborn.”

“Well, it’s a big commitment, but yes, I will. I will become the Chief of the Fireflies Tribe.” Responded Rosa.