

# *The Keepers of The Roses*

A Novel by Coco

Copyright © 2006 by Rafael Mayor  
2022 by Rafael Mayor

ISBN 978-1-956793-49-9

All right reserved. No part of this book, except as specifically noted below, may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means including information storage and retrieval systems without permission in writing from the Publisher. Exceptions: A reviewer may quote brief passages in a review.

Printed in the United States of America.

# Dedication

To my wife of thirty-eight years.  
For your love and understanding.  
To my kids Priscilla, Nicole and my son David.  
I have been blessed to have you four in my life.

May God Bless you all

Coco

# Chapter One

The alarm sounded just as Miss Eleanor was reaching over to turn it off. She opened her eyes and stretched out her sleepy limbs, glancing to her right and then slightly looking over to her left.

“Good morning, sleepy heads,” she said aloud.

“Just a little more time,” groaned a muffled voice from the right side.

“Yes, that sounds good.” Sighed a voice from under a mound of covers to the left.

“Okay, I’ll let all of you, sleepy heads stay in bed a little longer, but not all day. Do you understand?”

“Yes,” was the response from the right, though not a sound emerged from the left. Miss Eleanor got out of bed and started to get herself ready for what looked to be a very long day.

As she made her way to the kitchen, she mentally began to gather all the ingredients she would need for her world-famous peanut butter cookies. First though, Miss Eleanor decided she would have her morning tea and at least one of the leftover cookies from the batch she had baked the day before. But too soon her cup was empty and all that was left of the cookie was crumbs and so she began on the day’s batch. Just as she put mixing spoon to bowl, the telephone rang. Doesn’t it always ring when I’m in the middle of something, thought Miss Eleanor, and never when I’m doing nothing.

“Hello and good morning,” she sighed into the receiver.

“Good morning to you,” said a voice on the other end of the line. “My name is Priscilla Mayor. I briefly spoke with you last week.”

“Oh yes, I remember,” said Miss Eleanor. “You’re the young lady from the book company.”

“Exactly,” said Priscilla, “that’s me. How are you feeling this morning?”

“Oh, jolly well, as always. Any time you awake you should always thank the Almighty for giving you one more day.”

“I’m glad to hear that. As I mentioned when I called last week, would it be okay if I stop in today, say, around eleven?”

“Eleven will do. I’m making up a fresh batch of my peanut butter cookies for you to try.”

“Oh, I’m looking forward to having one or two.”

“Thanks for calling,” said Miss Eleanor. She was about to hang up, but Priscilla continued:

“Oh no, thank you for allowing us to come over and write your biography.”

“Yes, about that, Priscilla...” she paused, “May I call you Priscilla?”

“Oh yes, do.”

“Well, Priscilla,” continued Miss Eleanor, “you don’t truly believe that I can remember everything about my life, do you?”

“Of course not,” laughed Priscilla.

“Well good, then I’ll see you at eleven or so,” and with that, Miss Eleanor hung up.

In what seemed like no time at all, the doorbell rang, and Miss Eleanor went to answer it. She opened the door to a young woman she presumed was Priscilla, who was standing there with a laptop in one hand and a briefcase in the other.

“You must be Priscilla. Won’t you come in?”

As Priscilla walked in, she inhaled the delicious aroma of Miss Eleanor’s peanut butter cookies.

“Oh, that smells delightful,” she sighed.

“I just took my second batch out of the oven,” said Miss Eleanor as she led Priscilla into the grand room and invited her to sit down. “Do you like milk with your cookies?”

“Why yes, please,” nodded Priscilla.

Miss Eleanor left the room for a moment and returned with a glass of milk and a small plate brimming with six cookies.

“Here you are,” she said as she set down the cookies and milk in front of her guest.

“Thank you,” said Priscilla, already taking her first bite. “This is delicious,” she smiled sheepishly as she reached for the milk.

“Try dunking one,” said Miss Eleanor. And Priscilla did, polishing off two more cookies.

“More?” asked Miss Eleanor.

“Oh, I couldn’t!” said Priscilla, and then added, “but maybe later.” She began to set up her laptop and laid a writing pad next to it.

“Are we ready?” asked Miss Eleanor. Priscilla nodded, urging her to begin. “Where should I start?”

“At the beginning, naturally,” said Priscilla.

“Well, then, the beginning,” Miss Eleanor paused, gathering her words. And then, she slowly began her story...

“You see, it all started one beautiful spring day. I was only twelve years old and at that time I lived at home with my family in a small town in England. I remember it was early one morning when our telephone rang, and I found my Auntie Mabel on the other end of the line. Her voice was very easy to recognize, strong, sure of itself, and yet tender at the same time. She asked me if I had heard the good news. I hadn’t, so I asked what it was. Well, she could hardly believe that my parents had been able to keep the news a secret from me. I pleaded with her to share, and she teased that maybe my parent’s ought to tell me instead. But I was relentless, and finally, after what seemed like hours of begging, as it always does to a little girl, she announced that we were all going to be staying at her vacation home near Little Lake for two weeks the following month. Two whole weeks by Little Lake! Let me tell you, Priscilla, I was so excited I could barely contain myself...”

# Chapter Two

Little Miss Eleanor started jumping up and down and screaming with what could only be described as pure joy. Her mother, father, and brother, David, all came running into the room to see what all the commotion was about.

“What in the world is going on, Little Eleanor?” asked her mother, who was also named Eleanor, and little was just the word that distinguished the two. They all stood there watching her until she stopped jumping up and down.

“Mommy, daddy, Auntie Mabel is on the phone, and she told me about the trip to her house on Little Lake next month. You kept it a secret from me, but now I know!” She passed the phone over to her mother and was instantly out the door, running as fast as her legs could take her to her girlfriend, Alejandra’s, house.

“You won’t believe my luck,” said Eleanor as soon as Alejandra answered the door. “My Auntie Mabel called and next month my whole family is going to go to her house near Little Lake!”

“And what am I supposed to do with myself for almost a whole month?” cried Alejandra. But Alejandra was also very happy for Eleanor, even though she would miss her friend.

“I’ve never been there,” said Eleanor, “but my cousin Lori has, and she said that it is so beautiful. She said there are woods all around and no people, because Auntie Mabel owns so much land.”

The girls talked excitedly for a while and then Eleanor returned home, dreaming about all the wonderful things she would do by Little Lake.

Three weeks went by too slowly and poor Eleanor was so excited the night before they were to leave that she could hardly sleep. All she could do was think about going to the house near Little

Lake. Ever since her cousin Lori had told her how nice it was, it gave Eleanor goose bumps just thinking about it. When she finally fell asleep that night, she had a dream that she was standing at the edge of a small, crystal blue lake. From where she stood, she could see, all the way on the opposite bank a brilliant garden of roses. When she awoke the next morning, she had a strange feeling about those roses, but by breakfast, she had forgotten all about the dream in the excitement of setting off and didn't think to mention it to anyone.

Some hours into the trip, though, she dozed off, and, sure enough, the roses returned to her dreams. When she finally awoke, her father was announcing that they had arrived.

Eleanor sat up quickly, and rubbed her eyes, straining to get a look at her long-awaited destination. And then, she saw it, the most beautiful gateway to a long driveway bordered on both sides by beds of flowers and trees that canopied twenty feet overhead. Even the driveway itself bore the mark of luxury: it was made of stones, hued a hushed grayish blue.

As her father made the turn to the right up the driveway, Eleanor finally got her first glimpse of her aunt's home. She had never seen anything like it. Marble seemed to be everywhere, and the flowers! More flowers than she had ever imagined, flowers of wondrous kinds. There was even a fountain that sparkled gloriously in the middle of the grand circular driveway.

Lori never described a house like this, thought Eleanor. It struck her for the first time that her aunt must be rich. When the car finally came to a stop, she wrenched open the door and jumped out immediately. She stared up at the house, completely beside herself in amazement at its size, its beauty. As she was admiring the grandeur of it all, the front doors swung wide open and her aunt, Mabel, strolled out with both arms ready to embrace her favorite Little Eleanor.

While they were hugging, Eleanor couldn't help but go on and on about the entrance and how beautiful it all was. David passed them by, nodding an easy hello to his aunt Mabel.

“Which room is mine?” he asked as he crossed the threshold of the incredible home.

“Go upstairs to the right and it’s the last room on the left,” said Mabel who was just coming in behind him, her arm around Eleanor.

David headed off to discover his room as the rest of the family walked in, Eleanor was dazed by how everything appeared to be so perfect. The foyer alone seemed bathed in what she could only describe as the finest antiques, the colors were perfectly matched, and not a thing was out of place.

“Auntie Mabel,” Eleanor wondered aloud. “Are you rich, because I’ve never seen anything as beautiful as this house, in my life.”

“Not too rich,” laughed Mabel, “just very lucky,” and she gave a little wink as she looked towards Eleanor’s father who was also her only brother, Peter, whom she loved more than anyone else apart from her Little Eleanor.

# Chapter Three

Eleanor raced upstairs to the room that Mabel had said was hers. It was twice as large as her room back home and there were all kinds of antique dolls and teddy bears lining the shelves. She walked over to the large window and peered out, discovering she could see for miles, or at least that's how she viewed it.

As she tucked away the last piece of clothing from her small suitcase into the room's dresser drawers, she heard a bell ring from downstairs. She closed her suitcase, hid it away in the closet, and went running for the stairs. At the top she ran right into David, who had heard the bell too, and they both giggled at the thought of the fun they would have for the next few weeks.

As they reached the bottom of the staircase, they heard a voice saying that tea was being served on the back porch. It sounded so grand to them that they took each other's hands and sauntered toward the back of the house as if they were two famous people walking down a red carpet. They giggled all the way to the French doors that led them to the back porch. Their father, mother and Mabel were all there, waiting for them.

Two different types of tea awaited them, alongside a glorious array of crumpets and goodies that Eleanor and David had never seen or tasted. They were both instantly determined to try every one of them. As they sipped and nibbled to their hearts' content, Mabel told the story of how she came to own the vacation home. It originally belonged to her late husband's Auntie Lillian, who had passed away years earlier. Her husband had inherited it from her, and when, two years earlier, he died of cancer, she became the sole owner of the house, for which there existed a trust for taxes and upkeep that would last for the next one hundred years.

Mabel then mentioned, almost as if she didn't mean to, that the house had a name. She looked away for a moment as if trying to decide whether to share it with them. When she turned back to the children she said, "It's called the House of the Rose." Eleanor felt a shiver of excitement run up her spine.

A moment later a lady with a big smile on her face appeared from the right, nearly scaring David off his seat.

"Are you done, Lady Mabel?" she said with a strong Hungarian accent.

"Yes," said Mabel and the large woman started to clear the dishes. "This is Katrina," she added, introducing each member of the family to her. "The gentleman you saw earlier putting the car away is her husband, Hugo."

Eleanor glanced quickly at David and her mother who understood the look in her eyes.

"Mabel," said Eleanor's mother, "may the children go out and explore the property for a little while?"

"Of course," said Mabel, "but don't go off too far, and be very careful if you decide to go near Little Lake. It's very deep just five feet from shore. Now I know you both can swim, but please don't, and whatever you do, don't separate."

Eleanor stood up and gave everyone a kiss on the cheek and a hug. She turned to David —

"Ready? Let's go!"

David waved his good-byes and together they walked off the porch out onto the lawn. When they were nearly out of earshot, they heard their aunt say to their father, "Peter, it reminds me of us when we were that young and nothing ever mattered. We didn't have a care in the world. The thrill of exploring meant everything."

David and Eleanor walked on.

A hundred yards later, David smiled over at his sister, "So where should we go first?" Eleanor stopped for a moment, looked back at the house, across the lawn separating them from it, and then turned and spotted a path into the woods to their right. She pointed and ordered through a grin —

"We'll go that way!"

“Looks good to me!” said David.

They neared the entrance to the path at the edge of the woods. The trees loomed over them and the shadows in the forest interior beckoned with coolness. David noticed Eleanor hesitating, so he grabbed her hand and pulled her on.

Soon Eleanor forgot her nervousness and gazed in wonder around her. They noticed all varieties of birds chirping and saw a bird’s nest all the way at the very top of one of the biggest trees that either one of them had ever seen. Then David, who was walking on the path in front of Eleanor, stopped suddenly and his sister abruptly ran right into him.

“Shush,” he said and pointed at a doe with her fawn sipping water from a little stream that was running down a short embankment. They stayed as still as they could, watching the deer until the breeze shifted. In an instant, the deer looked up, sniffed the air, sensed the children, and scurried away, deeper into the woods.

David ran up to the stream.

“Let’s follow the stream. I bet you it will trickle down to, Little Lake,” he said.

Eleanor had no objections to his plan. As they were about to set off down the stream, David spotted a stick on the ground. He picked it up and saw that it looked more like a staff than a mere stick. He glanced over at his sister.

“For our protection,” he laughed.

They turned in the direction of the lake and felt the breeze on their faces, a breeze which grew stronger the further downstream they went.

Soon they came upon a large branch that crossed over the trickling stream. As they got closer and closer to it, it began to almost magically open, unfolding a view of the lake beyond. To David and Eleanor, it did not seem like a small lake, but a big lake and they thought to themselves that Little Lake wasn’t the right name for it after all.

David, who was excited to finally be near the shore, wondered if there were any big fish in Little Lake. But Eleanor felt, for some reason she didn’t understand, like she had seen this lake before.

Then she remembered that this was the very lake, crystal blue, she had seen in her dream.

David started splashing his face with the water while Eleanor just stood there admiring the beauty of it all. As she stared over the blue expanse, she knew the scene was a dream brought to life. Then she remembered the beautiful roses that were supposed to be just on the other side of the lake. She got up on her tip toes and looked as far across as she could. She could barely make out waves of different colors far along the distant shore but wasn't sure if those colors were simply the glare off the lake. She looked around the shoreline for a higher lookout point and noticed a big boulder at least as tall as she was, probably even taller. She thought to herself, maybe if I stand on the boulder, I will be able to see the other side of Little Lake a lot more clearly.

"David," she asked, "could you give me a hand getting to the top of the boulder?"

"Okay," said her brother, "but on one condition."

"What condition?" she asked.

"You have to help me get to the top after I help you," he said.

She agreed, but as she climbed up on the boulder, a chilly wind started to howl around her.

"What in the world is this wind?" asked David. As he turned into it, it suddenly stopped blowing. By that time, Eleanor was already on top of the boulder, staring across the lake, frozen in the spot where she stood.

"Can you give me a little help, please?" David called as he tried to scramble up the boulder. But it was as though Eleanor was deaf to his calls, so transfixed was she by the view. She couldn't take her eyes off the beautiful roses on the opposite shore.

"Thank you," David muttered as he finally climbed up unaided and stood next to her. Then he followed her gaze across Little Lake and saw the beautiful colors. From where they stood, all the roses appeared to be in different shapes and sizes, and curiously, that the longer they stared, the closer the roses seemed to get. Eleanor grabbed her brother's hand.

"Aren't they beautiful?" she whispered.

“Okay, little sister,” he said, “they’re just roses. Wow Wee!”

David could see that Eleanor wasn’t too keen on his sarcasm.

“Oh alright,” he said, “they’re very pretty,” in a very girly way. They both laughed.

“I want to go to that side of the lake and see the roses,” she said.

“I don’t know, Eleanor, it’s getting late. By the time we walk all the way around, it will be too dark. I think we should start to head back,” he said, and then added in his best dark and spooky voice, “Can you handle the scary woods in the dark?” And they both giggled.

David jumped off the boulder and called to his sister to come down. She took a hard look at the other side of Little Lake and for an instant, it looked as if the roses were swaying back and forth. She shook her head as David called out to her.

“Eleanor, did you see a ghost? Come on, little sister, we don’t have all day!”

After one more look, David helped Eleanor climb off the boulder and they went back to exploring the woods not too far off the main trail, but Eleanor could not keep her mind off the roses on the other side of the lake.

When they arrived at the edge of the woods, behind the House of the Rose, it was already beginning to get dark and the lights inside the house were already on. They made the house glow so brightly that it looked even bigger than it had when they first laid eyes on it a couple of hours earlier. As they walked up the steps to the back porch, they could see movement in the dining room.

David turned to Eleanor, “Looks like it’s time for supper.”

# Chapter Four

A short while later, everyone was gathered in the dining room. The children stared in wonder at the size of the dining room table. The china, the sterling silver, the glassware, the size of the chairs, their long back rests and elegant carvings were far more opulent than the children were accustomed to.

After Mabel said grace, everyone began to eat and talk about the things that were important in the world. Eleanor was very quiet during most of dinner. Her mother looked over at her.

“Eleanor, is everything okay, love?”

“I’m okay,” she said, “I just have something on my mind that I can’t stop thinking about.”

“When I have something on my mind,” said Mabel, “I find it very helpful to discuss it with someone.”

Eleanor paused for a moment, and then said —

“Today, when David and I went by Little Lake, we stood on this boulder, and I could see across the lake what looked like all kinds of beautiful roses. I would really like to go and see them tomorrow if David would take me.”

Mabel smiled at her niece.

“There was a time when there were all types of flowers and roses all around Little Lake,” she said. “When I married your uncle Simon, we came here for our honeymoon. There were more roses here than any other type of flower. That’s why this house is called the House of the Rose.

“The roses were everywhere, just everywhere, until one year, we had a bad winter and the cold killed off nearly all of them. Simon used to love to go down by Little Lake. He would spend hours there at a time. He would say that there was something about them that he

couldn't explain, something magical. When he became very sick and his cancer began to spread, he would argue with me to take him to the House of the Rose so that he could go down to the lake and see his roses. But Simon's doctor wouldn't allow him out of the hospital. I wish now that I would have allowed him to leave the hospital and come here to die. To him, this was the most beautiful place on earth. Truth be told, he basically died in route to the House of the Rose. He had managed to sneak out of the hospital and was on his way here in a taxi, when the driver noticed that my dear Simon had stopped talking and was motionless. So, the driver turned right around and drove all the way back to the hospital, and that very night, my Simon died. He left me a letter saying how much he loved me and that he wished that I would have understood how much he really needed the House of the Rose..." Her voice trailed off.

Everyone at the table had grown quiet and a tear fell from Mabel's eyes.

"You're not to blame," said Peter.

"I know," said Mabel, "but maybe I should have listened more to his request."

When supper was over, the family retired to the back porch and talked about how David and Eleanor were doing in school. There were a lot of laughs and moments of sadness when Mabel would remember Simon. After hours of talking and reminiscing about life, Mabel stood up and said that it was time to call it a night.

The family stood and headed for their rooms. In the hallway Eleanor stopped David.

"Will you go with me to the other side of Little Lake to see the beautiful roses?" she asked him.

David laughed, "Well, we'll see, little sister. I would really like to sleep in tomorrow."

Eleanor was a little saddened by the way he put it, and he noticed that she was getting upset.

"Okay, little sister, I'll take you there tomorrow."

"Okay!" she grinned, "I love you, big brother! Sleep tight..."

"And don't let the bed bugs, bite!" smiled David.

“Let the angels kiss you good night!” They hugged one another and went to their rooms.

When Eleanor reached her room, she walked over to the window, opened her curtain, and stood there looking out to where she knew the roses were. She couldn’t wait until the next morning. It took a very long time for her to fall asleep.

That night she had a dream about Uncle Simon. He came to her and told her to go and see the roses, that she would see something amazing. It felt so real to Eleanor that she woke herself up. She wondered what time it was but noticed that it was still very dark outside. It took her a while, but she was finally able to go back to sleep again.

It was early morning when Eleanor woke up again. She jumped out of bed, opened her curtain, and squinted into the sun that was just coming up over the trees. She dressed herself as fast as she could, went to the bathroom and brushed her teeth. On her way out of her room she saw her father walking down the hall towards her.

“Good morning, my lovely,” he called to her.

Eleanor ran up to him and gave him a big bear hug.

“What was that for?” he wondered out loud.

“That was just for letting us come here,” she said. “I love it here, daddy.”

He hugged her again and said he would meet her downstairs for breakfast.

“Okeydokey,” said Eleanor and they both giggled as they walked away from each other. As she started down the stairs, she seriously contemplated waking up David, but decided against it. Better to let him sleep in, she thought, or else he’ll be cranky for the rest of the day. Their mother was always saying that David sleeps so much because he is a growing boy and needs his sleep to grow.

When Eleanor finally got down the stairs and walked into the dining room, she couldn’t believe the amount of food that there was on the table. Just about anything she could imagine wanting for breakfast was spread out before her. She knew that when she got back home and told Alejandra about breakfast that she would never believe the amount of food. And then it occurred to her that it was

the first time she had even thought of anything outside of the House of the Rose and Little Lake since she arrived.

She paced around the table for a good five minutes before deciding that she would just have a little bit of everything. Within minutes, everyone but David, were all eating breakfast beside her. Her mother looked over at her plate.

“For one so small, you sure have a lot on that plate,” she said.

Eleanor just smiled, with food in her mouth, and everyone at the table laughed.

“What time will David awake?” asked Mabel.

“Oh, who knows? It could be another hour or so, but for sure it will be before noon,” replied his mother.

There was much talking at the breakfast table. Mabel and Eleanor’s parents were all going to go into town to do a little shopping.

“Little Eleanor,” asked her father, “would you like to go with us?”

“Oh no,” she said, though ordinarily she would have never turned down a shopping trip, especially into town with Mabel. “We have plans to do, all kinds of fun things today.”

“Okay,” said Mabel, “but if you need anything, don’t hesitate to ask Katrina or Hugo.”

When everyone was done with breakfast, Eleanor’s mother made a plate for David. She knew exactly what David liked.

“I’m going to the back porch to wait for David to wake up,” said Eleanor, “so we can do some exploring.”

“Okay,” said her mother, “but don’t wander too far on your own.”

“Okeydokey!” smiled her daughter.

But after sitting around the back porch and walking around the back lawn for two hours, she had nearly had enough. She heard a car start up and knew that her parents and Auntie Mabel were leaving for town to do their shopping.

Eleanor waited a while longer and just as tears of boredom were welling up, she heard someone opening the French doors. Her face lit up as she noticed that it was David.

“Oh David,” she said, “I’ve been waiting for you for what seems like an eternity.” But as she moved closer to him, she could see that something was wrong. “What’s wrong, big brother, you don’t look so good.”

“I don’t feel good,” he said. “Where is everyone?”

“They went into town to do a little shopping,” she answered as Katrina walked out through the French doors.

“I’m sorry to interrupt,” said Katrina, “but I overheard that you don’t feel good, Master David.”

“I don’t. My belly hurts and I have a headache.”

“Well, I have something in the kitchen that might help you,” said Katrina. “Then maybe you should lie down in the grand room for a little while and you will probably feel better.”

“Sorry, little sister,” said David, “if I feel better later, we can go down too Little Lake and see your beautiful roses.”

“I’ll find something to do until then,” she said to him a touch mournfully. “I hope you feel better, big strong brother David.” They both laughed at that, but David clutched his stomach.

“No more jokes, please,” he groaned. “Don’t wander too far off on your own, okay?”

“I won’t. Feel better,” she said.

And with that, David turned to go back into the house.

About an hour went by and Eleanor had continued to pace the back lawn. Then she found herself getting close to the opening in the woods and the trail they had taken the day before. As she inched closer, she thought she heard what sounded like singing. She stopped and looked around her and could see no one at all. And then she heard it again. This time she was sure that it was coming from somewhere further down the trail.

As she entered the trail, she felt a cold wind start to pick up. She thought it felt like the same wind that she and her brother had felt the day before on the boulder. Eleanor looked all around, and the singing started again. This time she was sure it was coming from the direction of Little Lake, and not just somewhere along the trail.

Confused, she didn’t know if she ought to keep going or wait for David. What if I wait for David, she thought, and the people who

are singing go away? And as she pondered her next move, she heard the singing again, and it surely sounded like it was more than one person. It sounded like a choir.

She walked in circles, unsure of what to make of all of it. Then finally, she decided to go ahead and make her own way toward Little Lake.

# Chapter Five

She started down the path and was amazed to find a large stick on the ground, not unlike the one David had picked up the day before. For protection, she thought as she grabbed it off the forest floor, as David always says.

When she got to the spot where the deer had been drinking from the trickling stream, she heard the singing again. I'm not too far from Little Lake, she thought. She became very nervous as she approached the big branch that just the day before had seemed to magically unfold the view to the lake. Sure enough, it had the same effect, opening so quickly that it nearly scared her off her feet. But she kept her balance, focused on the view and something inside her made her feel happy. Even though just a moment before she had been frightened, there was not an ounce of fear left in her.

She made her way down to the shoreline, walked over to the boulder and pondered how best to climb it without David's help. She found out that her big stick gave her more than just protection. By pushing off the stick, she was able to climb to the top on her third try. As she slowly stood, she could see all around Little Lake and, just like the day before, she could see the roses on the other side. Then suddenly, she heard the singing coming from across the lake, and like the day before, the roses seemed to be swaying. Only this time, she was certain they were swaying to the beautiful music.

She started to get excited and was looking to both sides of the lake to see which way would be the quickest to the other side. Then suddenly, a chilly wind blew from the right side of the lake. And so, she decided that the right side it would be.

As she walked along the shore, she had to climb over many branches that crossed her path. She almost fell several times, but she

kept her eyes focused on the other side of Little Lake near the roses. When she was halfway there, she noticed that the swaying of the roses had stopped, and it occurred to her that it had been a little while since she last heard the singing. Eleanor started wondering if she had made a big mistake by coming all the way here by herself. She looked down at her big stick and said out loud, "For protection," and onward she went.

Within fifty feet of the roses, she couldn't help but stop, so mesmerized was she by the brightness and beauty of the different shades of colors that lay before her. Then she noticed how quiet it had become. There was no singing, there wasn't the slightest wind blowing the smallest of leaves. It was a bit eerie, but exciting at the same time. Those last fifty feet felt longer than walking all the way around Little Lake.

When she finally stood in front of the beautiful roses, she could see that there were many different types, so many that she didn't know what they were all called. But she was certain there were long stemmed roses, bushy roses, and at least two climbing roses. The fragrance was overpowering. Eleanor closed her eyes and inhaled deeply. When she let her breath out, she opened her eyes. Eleanor walked around to every rose, cupping each one in her hands and inhaling each different fragrance.

When she got to the last one, she turned and looked at all of them again. She counted eight rose bushes in all, two of which were climbers that were growing up nearby trees. Someone must have planted them specifically in these spots, she thought, because they are all so perfectly arranged. Eleanor felt so relaxed that a tingling feeling came over her. Getting a little silly, she began skipping and dancing around, humming a song her mother used to sing to her. As she danced, she started moving her arms from side to side. She felt like she was gliding through the air. There were so many colors and so many fragrances, that Eleanor fell into a trance-like state. She finally stopped when she felt a chill cross her cheek. The wind had picked up again. Perhaps I should start heading back to the House of the Rose, she thought, having no idea how much time had gone by. Before she headed back, she cupped all the roses once more. She

promised them that she would be back. Eleanor giggled at the way she was talking to the roses, as if they were people.

“I’ll see you tomorrow,” she said to the hundreds of quiet petals, “and I’ll bring my brother, David, with me.” She waved them goodbye.

As she started to head back around the lake, she kept turning around and waving at the roses a few times. She finally got to the other side of Little Lake. As she turned to take one last look at the roses, she heard the singing again. Eleanor climbed back upon the boulder to get a better view and once more, it looked like the roses were swaying to the singing voices. She jumped off the boulder and started back up the trail, wondering why there had been no music when she was there. When she arrived at the House of the Rose, she saw Katrina waiting outside.

“Little Eleanor,” she said, “I was just about to put a search party together.”

Eleanor laughed and Katrina also thought it was funny.

“Did you enjoy your little exploration?”

“Oh yes, I did, very much. Thank you. Do you know where David is? Is he feeling any better?”

“Master David is feeling much better and he is in the grand room reading.”

“Thank you, Katrina,” said Eleanor as she raced by her. Eleanor ran into the house and there was David lying across an enormous couch, with his shoes on!

“David,” she said, “Get those shoes off the couch. Auntie Mabel would kill you if she saw you like that!”

“Oh, know she wouldn’t,” smiled David. “Auntie Mabel couldn’t get mad at a pestering fly.”

Eleanor grabbed David’s feet, lifted them up, sat down herself and then placed his feet on her lap. After a few moments, he reluctantly put down his book because Eleanor had been staring at him intently. He knew something was up.

“Okay, what is it?” he asked.

“If I tell you something,” she began, “you must promise you won’t tell mommy and daddy, and you must promise not to get mad.”

David swore he wouldn’t, so Eleanor proceeded to tell him about her entire adventure. After she was done, David brought his hand up to her forehead.

“You’re not running a fever,” he said as he pulled his hand away, “so you didn’t drink water from the lake like I did. Maybe the air out there is contaminated with something that makes you hallucinate. You are my little sister and I love you more than anything in this world, but if you ever go off on your own like that again I will tell mommy and daddy. Now, about everything that you have told me, I think you fell off the boulder and imagined the whole thing. Tomorrow when we finish breakfast, I will go with you around the lake to see the flowers and the singing and the swaying roses,” David began swaying back and forth.

Eleanor just looked at him.

“You’re just teasing me.”

David came a little closer and gave her a hug.

“I’m just glad that you’re okay,” he said.

Just then they heard the front doors open. Their mother, father and aunt all came walking in and stood by the door, looking at the children hugging.

“Oh, isn’t this precious?” sighed Mabel.

But their mother gave them a stern look.

“What is going on?” she asked.

“Nothing.” said David. “Is it a crime to hug your little sister?” Everyone laughed at his reply.

“Come to the other room,” said Mabel, “so you can both have a look at what we bought in town.”

They started opening the shopping bags and started taking out little decorative pieces for the house. Eleanor and David were waiting to see what they had bought them from their shopping trip. When they were done with the last bag, Mabel looked up at the children, and threw the car keys to Eleanor.

“Both of you go out to the car. In the trunk there’s something waiting for you.” But before she could even finish her sentence, they were already out the door.

When they reached the car, Eleanor handed the keys to David. He opened the trunk but dropped the keys.

“Stop playing around!” laughed Eleanor. “This is serious business, mister!”

As they opened the trunk there was a big bag and a smaller one. David grabbed the big bag and opened it to see a track car set.

“Bye!” he said. “I’m going to build this set right now!” He went running off. Eleanor grabbed the other bag and opened it. In it was a porcelain doll, just like the ones in her room. It was beautiful and the face on the doll was the face of an angel. She went running back into the house.

“Thank you, Auntie Mabel,” said Eleanor, at which point a muffled ‘thank you’ came from David who was in the other room. Mabel walked over to Eleanor.

“Who do you think she looks like, Eleanor?” she asked.

Eleanor looked at the doll again.

“I think she looks like an angel,” she answered. And as she was saying it, she thought for a moment that it did look like someone she knew. “Why, it looks like me!” she exclaimed.

“That’s right,” said her aunt. “She looks a lot like you. I have a friend who travels all over the world and when she was in China, she met a lady who makes these dolls. If you give her a picture of someone, she makes the faces come out as perfectly as possible.”

David, having overheard the conversation, came walking over.

“Let me see the doll,” he said. He peered at the doll’s face. “It really does look like her.” He grabbed the doll by the arms and knelt on the floor and made the doll seem like she was walking.

“Look,” he said, “now we really have a little Eleanor!” They all laughed.

Katrina came walking into the room and announced that supper would be ready in ten minutes. Eleanor’s mother looked over at her daughter.

“Sweetheart, why don’t you go and clean yourself up for supper,” she said, “and that means you, too, David.”

As Eleanor went upstairs to the washroom to wash her hands, she laid the doll next to the sink and stared at it for a minute. She does look a lot like me, she thought. I’m going to call you Dolly Eleanor. She kissed her doll and went back downstairs for supper.

Mabel was telling the kids about the day’s shopping excursion and the stores that just opened by the market. A palm reader had set up shop, and another man was selling magic cards and all sorts of magic tricks. A store that sold only handmade toys and many new antique shops had also opened.

“Auntie Mabel, when are you going to go shopping again? I want to see the magic stuff, and I know Eleanor will want to get her palm read to find out when her Prince Charming will be showing up,” said David. Everyone chuckled.

“So, what did you kids do today?” asked their parents.

“I didn’t feel too good earlier,” said David. “Katrina gave me some medicine and a couple of hours later I felt much better.”

“And you, Eleanor? What have you been up to?”

“Oh, I played outside for the better part of the day,” she said, as innocently as possible.

“So, what are your plans for tomorrow?” her father asked.

Eleanor jumped in before David was able to say a word.

“We’re going on an expedition around Little Lake!” she said, rather excited by the idea of seeing the roses again.

“Be very careful,” said Mabel.

“Is it safe for them to be going all the way around the lake?” asked the children’s mother.

“There’s nothing out there but deer,” said Eleanor quickly. “We saw one doe and her little fawn just the other day.”

“Well, Simon used to go by the lake, and he would spend hours out there alone. He would say it relaxed him to be out there,” sighed Mabel as she looked away staring at the ceiling.

When supper was over, the family went into the grand room. Mabel told all kinds of fantastic stories about her and Uncle Simon and their worldwide expeditions. They even made it all the way to

the North Pole. Mabel had traveled the world three times in her life. By the third time around, though, it was getting late, and everyone was tired.

“Well, it’s time to head up to bed, kids,” said the children’s mother. Eleanor kissed everyone good night and walked upstairs with David. They paused for a moment at the door to her room.

“Thanks for not telling mommy and daddy about my little expedition today,” she said.

“Okay Eleanor but, remember what we agreed on and you won’t go on any expeditions by yourself anymore.”

“Yes sir, big brother,” smiled Eleanor and she kissed him on the cheek.

That night Eleanor felt incredibly relaxed. She slept all night long without awaking once.

David knocked on her door around nine-thirty the next morning and heard nothing from inside the room. He cracked the door open and peered in to find that she was still fast asleep. It’s late, he thought, especially for her.

“Eleanor,” he called, trying to wake her. He called a few more times before she finally opened her eyes.

“What’s wrong?” she asked.

“Nothing... It’s just that it’s nine-thirty and you’re still sleeping!”

“Oh,” she sighed, “I had the best night’s sleep and a couple of really nice dreams.”

“That’s great,” he said. “So, do you want to eat breakfast and go on our expedition today or not?”

Eleanor jumped right out of bed and went marching straight to the bathroom to wash her face and brush her teeth. When she was done, she noticed David had already gone downstairs, so she headed down to have her breakfast too. Straight into the dining room she went and grabbed a pastry off the table and a glass of juice.

“David?” she called. No one answered. “David, where are you?”

Katrina came walking through the room and said, “They’re all outside by the gazebo.”

Eleanor drank her juice so fast that she nearly choked, which prompted Katrina to come walking right back in. “Are you all right, Little Eleanor?” she asked.

“Oh yes, sorry,” Eleanor said. “I just drank my juice a little too quickly.”

“Okay, but be more careful next time,” said Katrina, and again she left the room. Eleanor opened the French doors to the back of the house and noticed everyone was leaving the gazebo and walking back to the house.

“Why, good morning, sleepy head!” said her mother.

“Good morning, everyone!” said Eleanor.

“Did you sleep well last night?” asked Auntie Mabel.

“Oh yes!” she nodded.

“So,” started David, turning to Eleanor, “are we going on our expedition or are we just going to sit here and talk and talk all day long?”

“Now David,” said their father, “don’t go too far and please watch after your little sister.”

“He will,” Eleanor answered for David. “He’s my strong and handsome bodyguard.” Everyone laughed but David, who just smirked and blushed a bit.

“Okeydokey,” said Eleanor, “we’ll see you later!” Off they went across the lawn.

As the children neared the opening to the trail, they both looked back and waved at their parents, who were watching them from the back porch.

They turned and started down the trail. David stopped and bent down.

“Well, would you look at this?” he said. “It’s a really nice stick.” He picked it up and examined it, and looked over at Eleanor, smiling.

“For protection,” they said in unison and laughed.

# Chapter Six

They finally reached the branch that magically opened every time they approached it, exposing the view of Little Lake.

“Open sesame!” cried David, raising his arms high into the air. Nothing happened. Eleanor laughed.

“See, now you jinxed our magical tree,” she said. They took a step closer, and the tree opened quite suddenly, scaring them both. They laughed at their own surprise. As they walked to the shore of Little Lake, David went to the boulder and turned toward his sister.

“Eleanor, let’s see if you can climb up there without my help.” Eleanor looked at him smartly.

“Oh, so you don’t believe me,” she said. “Let me have our protection stick and I’ll show you.” She took the stick from him and with just two tries she scrambled up onto the boulder. “See, big brother, I wasn’t lying to you!”

“I never thought that you were,” David chortled. “I just wanted to see how funny you would look trying to get up there.”

Eleanor smirked at him, but David didn’t notice. He made it to the top of the boulder in one quick jump. As they looked across Little Lake, it looked so peaceful and quiet. There wasn’t a sound to be heard, not even a trickle of water or a lick of wind.

“Do you see the roses on the other side?” asked Eleanor.

David looked and indeed, he could see all the beautiful colors. In an instant a chilly wind hit them both. Eleanor grabbed a hold of David.

“See, I told you I felt the wind again,” said Eleanor.

But they were both more nervous because this time the wind was much stronger. David glanced at Eleanor as the wind finally subsided.

“Now, that was some wind,” said David.

“I know big brother. That was the worst one of them all.” They both were climbing off the boulder, when, they heard the beautiful singing that Eleanor had heard the day before.

“David,” gulped Eleanor, “do you hear it? Please tell me you do.” David stood there momentarily transfixed. He grew pale, as though he had seen a ghost.

“Yes, I hear it, but where is it coming from? Auntie Mabel has over a hundred acres, and no one should be anywhere near the lake,” David said. “Didn’t it sound like a group of people singing, a choir, maybe?”

Eleanor was smiling at her brother, knowing that he was now thinking precisely what she had been thinking. David glanced down at her. She was smiling up at him.

“David, I’m just so glad you heard it because after talking to you yesterday, you might have thought me to be a bit loony.” she said. David laughed.

“Oh, little sister, I already think you’re a bit loony.” They giggled.

“Which way do you want to go to get to the other side? I went along the right shore yesterday,” said Eleanor.

“Sounds good to me,” said David. “How many times did you say you heard that singing coming from the other side of the lake.”

“Oh, a couple of times, until I got closer to the place where the roses are, and then it all stopped,” said Eleanor.

They proceeded to go around Little Lake. When they were three quarters of the way around, the singing started again.

Now David, being a little taller than Eleanor, looked right at the rose garden.

“Eleanor,” David said with quiet alarm, “it sounds like the singing is coming from over by where the roses are.”

Eleanor got on her tip toes to see but the singing had stopped.

“Did you see them swaying back and forth, like I saw them do yesterday?” she asked.

“Oh, Eleanor, that was probably the wind,” he said.

They were no more than fifty feet from the roses. David couldn't believe how beautiful they were and the scent as the wind blew in his face gave him the chills.

"What's wrong, big brother?" asked Eleanor.

"You're right, Eleanor," he said, "I just got a sniff of their fragrance."

"I told you," said Eleanor. "Is it not divine?"

"Did you say divine?" asked David, laughing at what Eleanor had said. When they were finally standing right in the middle of the rose garden, Eleanor started cupping them as she had done the day before. David was so amazed at how strong and dizzying the fragrance of the roses were. He tried cupping one of the roses, a big one, probably the biggest rose of all eight bushes. As he cupped it with both hands and sniffed the rose, he closed his eyes and as he opened them, he could see Eleanor dancing in and out around the roses, just as she had told David the day before.

"Eleanor," said David, "are you, all right?"

Eleanor took two more steps and stopped, looked at David and said, "Aren't they beautiful?"

David smiled.

"Yes, they are, but there is something very strange about these roses."

Eleanor walked over to where David was standing.

"Which of the roses do you like the best?" she asked.

"They're all so different," he said as he scanned all eight bushes to get a look at all of them. There were two trees on either end of the little garden. On the left was a climbing rose, halfway up the tree. It was very large and very white, though tinted with a fleshy pink. On the right side there was another climbing rose. This one was also a big rose, although it was red.

"I like the one on the right" said David, "it's a climber like me and red is always the color of strength." He flexed his biceps and they both laughed.

"Which is your favorite?" asked David.

"I couldn't choose just one. To me, they're all so different and unique in their own special way," said Eleanor.

“Okay, so you had me pick one,” as he sat down, and Eleanor sat next to him on a small rock. “So, who do you think put them all up at this side of the lake?”

“I don’t know,” said Eleanor, “but I was thinking last night before I went to bed about that... Do you remember when Auntie Mabel told us about how Uncle Simon used to go by Little Lake and spend time here?”

“That’s right,” said David. “Auntie Mabel said it used to relax him.” As David said this, he noticed something on the side of the big tree on the right side. It looked like a rope, a big rope at that. David stood up and started to walk towards the big tree. As he got closer, he could tell that the rope was strapped to the limb on the tree like a rope swing.

“Eleanor, come here, look what I found.” he called.

Eleanor stood up and walked over to the big tree.

“Look, a rope swing,” said David. “Remember my friend John, from school, who used to tell me about a rope swing by the lake on the north side of town?”

David jumped up and tried to grab the rope. It had been wrapped around a limb of the tree that was about six feet off the ground. David tried again, finally hitting it hard enough to make it spin around twice. He did it over and over until it was finally freed from the limb.

“David,” said Eleanor, “what do you think you’re doing?”

David grabbed the rope and looked around, and as he turned, he saw another boulder ten feet behind him.

“That’s how they do it,” he said.

Eleanor didn’t want to see what was coming next.

“David Mario Bud, if you’re thinking what I think you’re thinking of doing, mister, you just better not,” she said.

“Oh, little sister, don’t worry, I can hold on.”

“I’m not worried about you holding on, big brother, but if that rope is safe enough to hold you, when you attempt to swing. It’s probably been up there for a very long time — David ignored her — “David, I think we should have daddy come and check it first.”

“Oh, dog poop, Eleanor, can’t you just trust me? This rope is very strong. Look, see I’m tugging as hard as I can,” he said.

He walked back to the small boulder and stood on it, poised to jump.

“Ready or not, here I go!” he screamed.

Eleanor held her breath as David swung towards the lake. It swung out a little further than David thought it would, just about giving Eleanor a heart attack. But the rope held as he swung back towards the shore and again back out over the lake as David screamed with excitement.

Eleanor started getting nervous.

“David, slow down! The tree limb is shaking too much!” she screamed.

“This is great!” yelled David as he swung back towards shore. Just then, Eleanor heard a big crack. She turned just in time to see the limb of the tree snap in half and David fly high up in the air and landed with a hard thump on a boulder on the shore. It was the same boulder that he stood on when he first took off on the rope swing. Eleanor screamed so loudly that it echoed across the lake. She ran as fast as she could over to her brother. He laid their still, and there wasn’t a sound. As she got close to him, she saw blood slowly oozing from the side of his head.

# Chapter Seven

Eleanor didn't dare to touch him, remembering how when she was ten, a kid in the playground fell off a swing. Their teacher told the class that if they hadn't moved him, he would still be walking and not paralyzed from the waist down.

"Oh my God," she moaned, "what should I do?" Tears were streaming down her face as she sat there and prayed. "Please, Lord, help my big brother. I just couldn't live without him. Please, Lord, take me instead."

As she uttered "Amen," she heard the beautiful singing from right behind her. She turned around to see all the roses moving back and forth. Eleanor wiped the tears from her eyes, not just once but twice. I must be hallucinating, she thought. As she stared at the eight different rose bushes, one rose on one of the six rose bushes suddenly began to resemble a face and so did two of the climbing roses that were clinging to the tree. They were singing in harmony.

"Little Eleanor don't be sad. We can make you feel happy again. Open your eyes. Don't be afraid. We are here to help you in every way. Give us a chance and you will see just how wonderful your life will be."

Eleanor felt dizzy and faint as she turned to look back at David.

"Oh, David, please wake up!" she sobbed.

Eleanor turned again to look at the roses. As she did so, the two big red climbers released their hold on the top of the tree and swooped down towards Eleanor. Eleanor was so startled that she fell backwards landing right on her behind. The two big red roses, which had truly lovely petalled faces, began speaking to her.

"Little Eleanor," said one of the climbers, "please don't be afraid. We're brothers and we're here to help you and in return,

maybe, you can help us too. My name is Leo, strong and handsome, like Leo the Lion.”

“And my name is George, stronger and more handsome than George of the Jungle,” said the other red climber. Both roses started to laugh. But one of the pink roses behind them piped up —

“This is no time for jokes. It’s not a laughing matter,” it said.

“We’re sorry your highness,” said Leo the rose, and smiled at his brother George.

“Okay, we’re sorry for the joke, little Eleanor. We can help heal David’s wounds,” said George.

That got Eleanor up on her feet

“Can you really?” she asked.

“If you promise to help us, we will heal all of his wounds,” the brothers said together.

“Oh, please do, I’ll do anything you ask me to do, just please, please bring my brother back to me,” she said.

Leo looked at George and George looked at Leo.

“A deal is a deal,” they said.

As soon as they finished speaking, they swooped down, stretching themselves out as close to David as possible, which turned out to be about two feet away from him. Their heads both started spinning round and round. Then a magical powder puffed out from them that landed directly on top of David. To Eleanor it looked like fairy dust that she had seen in a movie years before, very sparkly looking dust. Everything was dead silent. The two roses backed away from David, smiling, as they noticed David’s hands and feet start to twitch. Eleanor ran to David and little by little he started to move.

“Oh my god, it’s a miracle!” she cried.

All the roses started to sing —

“Come back to us, David, with happiness and joy. You have so much to live for and a sister who adores you. So come back to us David with love you’ll enjoy, a happier life than any girl or any boy.”

As David regained consciousness, he heard the singing too.

“Where am I?” he croaked.

“Oh, David,” cried Eleanor as she hugged him. “I’m never going to let you go again.”

“Eleanor,” said David, “what happened?”

“You don’t remember being on the swing?”

“No, what swing?”

“That swing right there,” said Eleanor.

“N-No... all I can remember is coming out here with you and seeing the beautiful roses,” he said.

“Oh, big brother, you gave me the scare of my life.”

“I’m so sorry Eleanor, but I really don’t remember anything.”

“It’s okay because you’re okay,” she said. “I love you, big brother.”

She hugged David one more time and David turned to see two big red roses smiling at him. He reeled and nearly fell off the boulder.

“Eleanor, watch out!” he screamed as the roses swooped down for a closer look.

Eleanor reached down to help David up again.

“Big brother, I didn’t tell you.” she said. “Oh, George and Leo, I’m sorry — I was too caught up with my brother coming back to me that I didn’t introduce you” — and she turned to her brother — “David, meet George and Leo.”

David didn’t know what to say.

“Eleanor, please tell me what’s going on here,” he muttered, bewildered.

“When you got hurt, David, I prayed to God and the next thing I knew the roses came alive,” she explained. “They sprayed a kind of dust on you, and you came back to me. Look” — she pointed at his forehead — “you had a cut and it’s gone.”

“Oh, this is so confusing... When I was waking up, I thought I heard some singing... So, who was singing?” he asked.

“We all were,” said the roses, which now numbered more than just three.

“Why did you spray the dust on me?” asked David.

“To make you well again,” said George and Leo at the same time.

“Remember,” said Leo, “you said you liked us the most, out of all the roses in our group.”

Leo and George wagged their heads back and forth at the other roses, teasing them.

“S-So you’re all alive,” said David.

“Yes,” said a beautiful pink rose. “My name is Elizabeth. Some of the roses call me ‘Your Highness,’ and some call me Lizzy B. But you can call me whichever you prefer.”

“I am Lady Hilly,” said a beautiful yellow rose behind Elizabeth.

From the other tree you could hear two voices talking at once.

“My name is Adoni —”

“And my name is Amadeus —”

“Which is which,” interrupted David.

“I am Adoni,” said both roses at the same time, but just one leaned forward.

“I am Amadeus,” said the other one as he leaned forward.

“I see,” said Eleanor. “Adoni has a little more, white tint on his edges than Amadeus.”

“Fraulein Goldy, at your service,” said a rose with a gold center and yellow and white petals who spoke with a heavy German accent.

“Nice to meet you,” said Eleanor.

“I am the great and world-renowned Dr. Montgomery,” began yet another rose.

“In what world is that?” teased Adoni and Amadeus at the same time.

David and Eleanor and all the roses started laughing.

“Oh,” seethed Dr. Montgomery, “wait until someone needs my advice for something!”

“Don’t worry about him,” said Elizabeth, “he’s our token sour puss.”

“There are only two of you left, I hope,” said David. “I can only remember a couple of your names now as is.”

Everyone laughed.

“I am Prince Christopher,” said a big crimson rose bearing velvety black markings, which, in fact, looked quite regal. He spoke with a French accent and looked like he had a little mustache.

“I’m the last,” said the eighth rose, “and Giovanni is my name. You know what they say. They always leave the best for last.”

As he finished speaking, he moved quickly and strangely and faster than the eye could see, something whizzed by David.

“David,” said Giovanni, “look down.”

David looked at his feet and saw inch and a half long thorns on either side of his sneakers. David edged away a little.

“I am also the protector,” said Giovanni.

Elizabeth looked at Eleanor and David, noticing how nervous Giovanni had made them.

“Don’t worry about Giovanni,” said Elizabeth.

“Apologize to the children, Nani,” said George and Leo.

“I’m sorry, little ones,” said their protector.

“How long have you been here by Little Lake?” David asked.

“Well, the last one to be planted here was Prince Christopher,” began Elizabeth. “The rest of us have been here for four years. We were all planted by your Uncle Simon —”

“How do you know Simon was our uncle?” asked Eleanor.

“I’ll tell you more about that later,” continued the rose. “He brought Prince Christopher the last time we saw him. Since he passed away, we’ve been all alone here.”

“You promised to help us,” said George.

“Yes, she did,” said Leo.

“She sure did,” said George.

“What did you promise?” asked David, eyeing Eleanor.

“To do anything they wanted me to as long as I could have you back,” said Eleanor shyly.

“What do you want from us?” asked David.

“We want to get out of here and talk to people —”

“And with our magical powers we can help people —”

“— who have been hurt. Like in an accident,” said George and Leo.

“We can’t bring back the dead,” said Elizabeth, “but we can help those people who are pure of heart if they have an accident like you did, David.”

“Did you talk to our Uncle Simon?” asked David.

“Yes,” said Giovanni, “but he didn’t know about our powers.”

“He found us all over the world,” said Elizabeth.

“How can we move you out of here?” asked Eleanor.

“If you get some pots out of the old greenhouse behind the House of the Rose, you can take us out of here,” said Lady Hilly.

“I can do that,” said Eleanor. “I would love to take care of you.”

“How are we going to take all of these roses back home with us?” asked David.

“I don’t know!” said Eleanor. “I’ll think of something.”

“It’s getting late,” said Elizabeth.

“You’re right,” said Eleanor. “We will come back tomorrow unless, we go into town with Auntie Mabel. We promise to all of you to be here to help you tomorrow or the day after, no later.”

Eleanor and David said their good-byes to each rose and they started to head back around the lake. They didn’t say a thing until they got to the other side.

“Will you help me up onto the boulder?” asked Eleanor.

David pushed her up and then he climbed up himself. The roses all started singing a beautiful song. When they stopped, Eleanor and David waved at the magical roses, and the roses waved back.

“Eleanor, we can’t tell anyone about the roses,” said David.

“Okay, we will keep it our own little secret,” she said, “pinky promise?”

“Pinky promise, it is,” said David and the children shook with their pinkies.

Once they got to the back of the House of the Rose, they could see that their parents and Mabel were all on the back porch talking.

“Where have you been?” asked their mother.

“We lost track of time, we were having so much fun playing out by the lake,” said Eleanor.

“You both must be starving since you missed lunch,” said Mabel.

“You know, I hadn’t thought about it, but I am hungry,” said Eleanor.

“I am too,” said David.

“Is supper almost ready, Katrina?” asked Mabel.

“About twenty minutes,” called Katrina’s voice from the kitchen.

“Go wash up for supper, children, and we’ll meet you in the dining room,” said their father.

As they walked away, Eleanor noticed a strange look wash over Mabel’s face. David noticed it too, but neither of them mentioned it. When they had washed up, they went into the dining room.

“You both look much better,” said Mabel.

Katrina walked in with supper and Eleanor ate so fast that it looked like she hadn’t eaten in weeks.

“More?” asked Katrina.

“Yes please,” said Eleanor.

“Me too,” said David.

When they were done with supper, Mabel asked David and Eleanor if they had seen anymore deer.

“Oh no,” said Eleanor, “not since the first time we went by Little Lake.”

“So, what did you both do all day?”

“We played hide and seek... and we saw the most beautiful roses in the world,” said Eleanor.

“I thought all the roses around Little Lake had died or had been blown away,” said their mother.

“Well,” said David, “I guess not. On the other side of the lake there is a little garden with eight different types of roses, and two of them are climbers —”

“And one has big red roses and the other has white ones with a slightly pink hue to them,” chimed in Eleanor.

“Is the rope swing still on one of the trees?” asked their father.

David and Eleanor looked at each other and looked down at their empty plates.

“You have not been on the rope swing, have you?” asked their mother.

“N-No mommy,” stuttered David. “It’s broken.”

“Thank God for that,” said Mabel. “Rope swings can be very dangerous. Simon brought those roses out to the lake because his cousin was seriously hurt on that rope swing. He brought them from all over the world and some of the roses were extremely difficult and expensive to get. Simon always told me that when he worked — and by worked, I mean cleaning around the flower beds and helping position the climbers — doing this would make him forget about the pain in his legs and the cancer that was killing him.”

“Auntie Mabel,” said Eleanor, “would you mind if I took some home with me? They seem very lonely out there all by themselves.”

“Of course, my lovely,” smiled Mabel, “you can take as many as you want.”

“How many are you taking?” asked her mother.

“Oh, I don’t know, maybe all eight,” giggled Eleanor.

“If you trim them back a little, they shouldn’t take up too much space in the car,” said their father.

“Peter,” said his wife, “in what car do you plan on taking those eight pots of roses in? —”

“I will have them all shipped over to your house,” said Mabel.

“That’s wonderful!” exclaimed Eleanor. She got up and gave everyone a kiss.

“My, you’re very happy,” said her mother. “Where do you plan on getting the pots to put them in?”

“In the old greenhouse there are all kinds of pots,” said David.

“That’s right,” said Mabel, “Simon always had plenty of extra pots.”

David was getting tired and so was Eleanor.

“I’m going up to bed,” he yawned, “it’s been a long day.”

“Me too,” said Eleanor, “Good night, everyone and thank you for my roses.”

“Eleanor, just a minute...,” said her mother. “Where do you plan on putting your eight rose bushes when you get home?”

“Everywhere,” said Eleanor sleepily. Everyone laughed.

“Go to bed you crazy kids,” smiled their mother.

As they walked up the stairs Eleanor was thrilled that she would be able to tell all the roses the next day that they would be coming home with her. She turned to David —

“How am I supposed to sleep? This is too much!”

“I don’t know, little sister, but I’m exhausted and can’t wait to take a shower and go to my bed and die,” David said.

“Don’t even joke about dying after the day we had today,” said Eleanor, already welling up with tears.

“I’m sorry, little sister. I didn’t mean it that way.”

“I know,” said Eleanor.

David grabbed Eleanor and gave her a big hug.

“I love you little sister,” he said and kissed her on her forehead.

After taking a bath, Eleanor went to the window and looked out in the direction of Little Lake

“Good night my roses,” she whispered softly, “sleep tight and don’t let the bed bugs bite.”

She laid down in bed and stared at the ceiling. This will be the longest night of my life, she thought. But within ten minutes, Eleanor was fast asleep.

# Chapter Eight

“Miss Eleanor... Miss Eleanor...” called out Priscilla.

“Oh, I’m sorry... Did I fall asleep?”

“Oh no,” said Priscilla, “I think you just got caught up in your own story. Do you want to take a little break?”

“That would be good,” said Miss Eleanor. “So, what do you think of my story so far?”

“It’s wonderful, of course, but I have a question for you,” said Priscilla, “if you don’t mind that is” — Miss Eleanor shook her head — “What ever happened to the roses?”

“I gave some away over the years... but I still have a few.”

“Where do you keep them?”

“They’re here, in the house, sleeping probably...” Miss Eleanor smiled. “Shall I make us some tea?”

“I would love some,” said Priscilla.

Miss Eleanor left the room. But instead of going directly to the kitchen, she went to her room.

“Sleepy heads are you up yet?” she said into the darkness.

“I am,” whispered Elizabeth.

“Is no one else up?” asked Miss Eleanor.

“I don’t think so,” said Elizabeth.

“Would you like to come out?” asked Miss Eleanor. “There’s a very nice young lady out in the dining room who would love to meet you.”

“Not just yet,” said Elizabeth. “I think I’ll stay here for a little while longer. Would you mind opening the window here for me before you go?”

“Of course, my lovely,” smiled Miss Eleanor. “Isn’t that what I live for?”

They giggled as Miss Eleanor cracked open the window.

“Do you need anything else my sweet Lizzy B.?”

“No thank you,” said Elizabeth. “I’ll call you when the rest of the boys get up.”

Miss Eleanor walked down into the kitchen and started up the tea.

“Would you like to come into the kitchen?” called Miss Eleanor to her guest.

“That sounds good to me,” said Priscilla who came walking in.

“I went to check on the roses, but nearly all of them are still sleeping, except for my dear Lizzy B,” said Miss Eleanor.

“How many do you still have from the original eight?” asked Priscilla, amused that Miss Eleanor believed that roses could sleep.

“Just a couple,” said Miss Eleanor, knowing that it wasn’t what Priscilla wanted to hear, and suspecting, too, that Priscilla didn’t quite believe her. What’s the harm in making her wait a little longer for the truth? Eleanor thought.

When the tea was ready, Priscilla turned to her hostess —

“Do you feel up to continuing your story?”

“Of course,” obliged Miss Eleanor, “isn’t that why you’re really here?”

They got up and walked back to the grand room where Priscilla’s laptop was arranged.

“Now, do you remember where we left off?” asked Miss Eleanor.

“Yes,” said Priscilla, checking her notes. “You had fallen asleep the night that you met the roses.”

“Oh yes,” said Miss Eleanor. “The next morning, when I got up, I ran down the stairs and found no one nearby. ‘What time could it be?’ I remember asking myself, and I looked up at the grandfather clock. It was only just passed seven thirty. No wonder no one was up. But just then, David came walking in...”

# Chapter Nine

“Did you get any sleep?” asked David.

“Believe it or not, I fell asleep in minutes,” said Eleanor.

“I knew you’d sleep well,” he said.

Katrina walked into the room.

“Breakfast will be served in fifteen minutes,” she said.

When Katrina was bringing in breakfast, Eleanor helped her set the table.

“Do you have any children?” asked Eleanor, looking at Katrina.

“Oh no,” said Katrina. “We’ve never been blessed with a child. We’ve taken care of many children in our lives, though, and many treat us as part of their family.”

“Oh, that’s nice,” said Eleanor. “Do you ever get bored out here when Auntie Mabel is away?”

“Oh no, there’s plenty to keep us busy,” said Katrina.

“Can you stop asking her so many questions?” said David.

“It’s okay,” said Katrina, “I don’t mind at all.”

“I’m sorry,” said David, “I didn’t mean —”

“Oh, don’t be sorry, you did nothing wrong,” said Katrina as she walked out of the room.

“I really like her,” said Eleanor. “There’s something about her that makes me feel good.”

A little while later, after the children had finished eating, Katrina returned to the dining room.

“Are you done with breakfast?” she asked.

“Yes!” said the children. “It was delicious.”

“Are you ready, little sister?” asked David.

“Yes, big brother, I’m ready,” said Eleanor. “Katrina, we’re going to Little Lake.”

“Okay,” said Katrina, “I’ll alert the media.”

They all started laughing.

“So, big brother,” said Eleanor, “where are we going first?”

“Let’s go see what’s in the greenhouse,” he said as they walked out of the French doors.

At the door to the greenhouse, David had to really push hard to get it open. It squeaked very loudly. The inside of the greenhouse was very dusty and appeared like it hadn’t been used in years.

“Spooky, isn’t it,” said Eleanor.

“Just a little,” said David. “Look over here, there are pots of all kinds.”

“Which ones do you think we need?” asked Eleanor.

“I think these three-gallon pots are the right size,” said David.

“How do you know they are three gallons?” asked Eleanor.

“Because it says right here, ‘three-gallon pot,’” he said.

They both started to laugh.

“Now that we have our eight pots, three-gallon pots that is” — he giggled some more — “we need something to carry them in.”

“Look,” said Eleanor, “there’s a saw to cut some of the small branches that are in the way.”

“Good idea, Eleanor,” said David. “Let’s see what else we can find. I thought I saw a tire sticking out of the right corner of the other side of the wall.”

“Lead the way, big brother,” said Eleanor.

David grabbed the eight pots and Eleanor grabbed the saw. As they got to the door David waited for Eleanor to go first so he could close the door on their way out. It squeaked a little less this time. As they walked to the back of the greenhouse, Hugo rounded the corner and scared the life out of the children.

“I heard you needed a cart,” said Hugo.

“Yes, we do,” sighed David, relieved of his fright. “Do you know where we can find one?”

“Follow me,” said Hugo.

They followed the man with the funny walk. David started walking to imitate him and looked back at Eleanor to see if she was watching. But Hugo stopped and David bumped right into him.

Eleanor fell to the ground laughing. David was embarrassed from bumping into Hugo, but he didn't think Hugo knew what was happening.

"See, right there, Master David," he said and pointed to a brightly painted wagon.

"Wow," said David. "Look, Eleanor, it's a Radio Flyer. Do you remember, it is like in the magazine we saw last year!"

"You're right, it is," said Eleanor.

As they approached the wagon, David grabbed the handle and pulled it. The wheels squeaked terribly.

"We can take care of that," said Hugo. "I have some oil in the garage."

The children followed Hugo to the garage, pulling their wagon noisily behind them. Hugo greased the wheels and David and Eleanor set off to see the roses. They stopped six different times to make a path for their Radio Flyer to get through. From the time they got to Little Lake the roses had started singing. They had sung three different songs by the time David and Eleanor had made it to the other side of the lake.

"Good morning, my beautiful roses," said Eleanor.

"Good morning," they all sang to her in harmony.

David found it funny and laughed.

"I have some good news and then I have some really good news," said Eleanor.

"I want the good news first," said Dr. Montgomery.

"We want the very good news first," said Adoni and Amadeus at the same time.

"Well, since Dr. Montgomery asked first, I'll give you the good news first," said Eleanor. "We found plenty of pots for all of you."

"That's good news," said the grumpy Dr. Montgomery.

"Now the really good news is that I can take all of you with me when we go back to my home."

All the roses started clapping and cheering.

"Thank you, Little Eleanor," they sang.

"We have a couple of questions to ask all of you, if you don't mind," said David when the cheering had quieted down.

“Ask away,” said Lizzy B. “We will answer anything you ask of us.”

“First of all,” said David, “how much can all of you be trimmed back, because we need you to occupy as little space as possible on the trip back to our home.”

“We can all be trimmed back all the way around, but each one of the talking roses and two more non-talkers have to stay on the bushes,” said Lizzy B. “Now, as for the climbers like George, Leo, Adoni and Amadeus, you can trim around them leaving no other rose, and they can be put in a pot with a two-foot stick in the middle. They’ll wind themselves up around the stick until they only take up a little space.”

“That’s what we were hoping to hear,” said David. “Now, I think the best way to do this is by taking two pots at a time. This Radio Flyer can only hold two three-gallon pots at the same time.”

“How do you know they are three-gallon pots?” said George and Leo.

David looked at Eleanor and laughed.

“I know,” said David, “because it says so on the bottom of the pot.”

They all laughed.

“So how do we go about getting you from under the ground?” David asked.

“Did you bring a shovel?” asked Dr. Montgomery.

“Oh, I knew we forgot something!” said David.

“I knew it,” said Dr. Montgomery, “they’re amateurs!”

All the roses hushed Dr. Montgomery.

“I’ll go back to the House of the Rose and get us a shovel,” said David. “You can stay here Eleanor — is that okay?”

“That’s okay,” said Eleanor, “I have my protector Giovanni to protect me if anything or anybody comes by.”

Giovanni flexed his rose petals as though they were muscles. All the roses, Eleanor and David started laughing. As David headed back to the other side of Little Lake he climbed onto the boulder and waved. Eleanor and all the roses waved back. Eleanor sat down on one of the boulders along the shore that faced all the roses.

“Where did you get your magical powers?” she asked.

“That’s a long story,” sighed Dr. Montgomery.

“But a good one,” said Fraulein Goldy, scolding the Doctor.

“Who will tell it?” asked the twins, Amadeus, and Adoni.

“Let Elizabeth tell it,” said Lady Hilly. “She tells a wonderful story.”

Elizabeth cleared her throat and ruffled up her petals a bit.

“We,” she began, indicating the flowers around her, “are the last of a special group of roses from the sixteenth century. Legend has it that a powerful monk in a sacred monastery in China had started to grow roses. This monk, Shaw Ling, loved and cared for the roses more than anything else in the world. He himself had God-given magical powers to change things and help heal people who suffered from accidental injuries. One night, a neighboring ruler who heard about this monk wanted to capture him, so he sent an army to invade the monastery and to kill the monks except the monk who took care of the roses. When the army arrived, Shaw Ling ran to his treasured roses, but one of the invaders chased after him and wounded him, not knowing that he was the one they were looking for. Shaw Ling was able to knock out the invader and make it out to his garden in the back of the monastery. He knew that his injury was fatal because he felt his life slipping away, so he put a drop of his blood on each of his eighteen different rose bushes. One drop for each bush and two drops for each climber, to give them the strength to climb. Then he put his hands together and used all the magic and power that he had been blessed with and said —

‘With my blood you will have my powers to heal, and you will come to life to those who come after me, who will love you as I have.’

He then died.”

Eleanor had tears in her eyes and so did most of the roses, except for Dr. Montgomery.

“Then what happened?” asked Eleanor.

“After the slaughter of the monks,” continued Elizabeth, “the invading king could not believe what had happened. How could they have killed the monk that he so needed? Little did any of his people

know that he was very sick, and he knew that he was dying. He had the monk brought back to his castle and buried him in an honorable way, as they did for the very important people of that time. Then a monk name Chu Wong who had been away on a missionary trip with two other monks heard what happened to his monastery. He knew that his Master Shaw Ling loved those roses and when he found out that he was found dead near them, he suspected and even felt that maybe some of his master's powers were left behind near his place of death. He told the other two monks traveling with him to pack their belongings and that they would return with him to the monastery. One of the monks refused, saying that only death would be waiting for them there. Chu Wong said to him—

‘Then go your own way. May God love and stay with you forever.’

‘Forgive me,’ said the other monk to Chu Wong, ‘I am scared too, but I will follow you to the end of the world.’

‘Thank you, Chow Ping,’ said Chu Wong, ‘you will not regret going with me, my friend.’

Chu Wong and Chow Ping gathered their belongings and headed out on the three-day journey back to the monastery. They had to change clothing because since the raid on the monastery no monks were welcome in the region surrounding the monastery. When they were one day away from the monastery, they were stopped several times by the ruler's men and asked where they were going. Each time they made up a different excuse and were allowed to continue, on their way. As they approached the last hill to where the monastery stood, they could see guards in different positions about fifty yards away from each other, watching for any intruders to the monastery. They waited for hours around a very thick bush that covered them from the watchmen. They noticed that one of the guards nearby was getting tired and the monks knew that in a matter of time, he would need to sleep. Finally, the guard laid down with a blanket and fell asleep. The monks were sure of it by the loud snoring they could hear. Slowly they started up the hill, looking for any sign of movement. Twenty more feet and they would be right next to the rock wall that surrounded the monastery.

As they got within ten feet a noise came from the left side not a few feet from Chow Ping. Chow Ping leapt and scurried as close to Chu Wong as he could possibly get without climbing on top of him. He was so scared that his knees started knocking. Chu Wong held him with one arm and told him to relax. Chow Ping finally did and as the noise got closer Chu Wong pointed at a snow rabbit. Chow Ping was so relieved. He was just one more noise away from relieving himself in his own robes. When they finally reached the wall, Chow Ping helped Chu Wong climb over, and then Chu Wong helped Chow Ping get over.

As soon as they had climbed over, they got an eerie feeling of what must have gone on during the invasion. They proceeded to walk along the wall until they reached another fence taking them to the back of the monastery. They jumped over the fence, and when they got to the other side, they could see that a lot of the roses that were in the garden had already died. But there were still twelve of them that seemed not to have wilted completely.

Chu Wong looked around for any clues that Shaw Ling may have left behind, he noticed the blood stains on the rocks that served as a path to the garden. Then he saw a big stain of blood and he thought to himself, this is where my master probably laid as he died. He knelt beside the blood stain and said a little prayer for his master. As he finished, he heard something approaching him fast, and as he turned Chow Ping ran right into him knocking them to the ground. Chu Wong pulled Chow Ping off him.

‘What are you doing?’ asked Chu Wong.

‘I heard or saw — I mean I saw — I don’t know what I saw,’ stammered Chow Ping.

‘Shake it off,’ said Chu Wong, ‘what did you see?’

‘Master, you’re going to think that I have gone crazy,’ said Chow Ping.

‘Just tell me what you think you’ve seen,’ said Chu Wong.

‘Oh master, please don’t think I’m crazy but I saw one of the roses make a face... It-it-it asked me to help him or s-s-something.’

‘Calm down, Chow Ping, show me where you were when this happened.’

‘Over there,’ said Chow Ping.

‘Come show me.’

‘Oh no,’ said Chow Ping, ‘I’m not going over there.’ ...”

Eleanor didn’t hear David approaching, so entranced was she with the story that Elizabeth was telling. She didn’t hear him until he was a few feet behind her.

“Eleanor,” said David, “I stood on that boulder with the shovel over my head for ten minutes and you guys didn’t even wave.”

“Oh, I’m sorry, big brother, but Lizzy B. has been telling me the story of how they became magical roses and it’s an incredible story so far, but she’s still not done. Lizzy B., can you tell it again?”

“Oh yes,” said Elizabeth.

“Here we go again,” Dr. Montgomery groaned.

It took a little while to tell the story once again and finally they were at the part where they had left off when David came back from getting the shovel.

“This is where we left off,” whispered Eleanor.

“Quiet, let her finish,” said David.

“I told you it was a good story,” said Eleanor.

“Eleanor, are you going to let her finish or not?” said David.

“Sorry,” said Eleanor, and Elizabeth continued:

“Chu Wong looked at Chow Ping and said —

‘Where exactly were you when you said you heard one of the roses talking to you?’

‘Over there by the small tree on the right,’ said Chow Ping.

‘There are a lot of trees to the right,’ said Chu Wong. ‘Listen, you follow behind me and if anything happens you can run, and I’ll stay to block whatever comes at us.’

‘Okay,’ said Chow Ping. They crept slowly, and Chu Wong was saddened by how many roses had dried up and died. As they got closer to the trees, Chu Wong heard something low. It sounded like a cry for help. The monks moved closer, and Chu Wong heard it again, but this time the words started coming much faster and Chow Ping grabbed the back of Chu Wong’s belt and almost pulled Chow Wong to the ground.

‘Chow Ping, be silent!’ scolded Chu Wong.

Just then Chu Wong saw a movement right by the tree and he moved Chow Ping's hand from his back and ran quickly to where he could see a rose sort of slumped over. He lifted it up. It first startled him from the first movement, but he quickly realized that the rose was dying. He looked at the rose and he couldn't believe that its petals formed a face, a beautiful face, and that its petal lips were trying to say something to him. Chu Wong held it as gently as he could, as a couple of petals fell from the fragile rose. He brought it to his ear to hear what the rose was saying, and when he finally got close enough, the rose said —

'Please, Chu Wong, help the other roses and do it as fast as you can. Time is of the essence because we are all dying from the cold. Winter is starting and we have no protection. Please help us! Shaw Ling gave us his power to heal others. You loved him as we loved him. You are our only hope to live.'

Then the rose closed its eyes and all the petals fell into Chu Wong's palm, one by one. A tear came to Chu Wong's eyes as he looked around him and saw the faces of the other roses who were still alive.

'I will help all of you, I promise,' said Chu Wong.

Now, Chow Ping heard him say this and wasn't sure who he was talking to, and he started to really get scared.

Chu Wong called to Chow Ping to come over to him, but Chow Ping was too scared to get close. So, Chu Wong walked over to Chow Ping instead.

'There is nothing to be scared about. The roses are alive. Master Shaw Ling gave them his power to heal. He gave them the gift of life. They are all dying, and I need your help and we need to move quickly. Please tell me you can do this with me,' said Chu Wong.

'Now that I know what's going on you can count on me,' said Chow Ping.

They started to look for anything to put the roses in where they could stay alive. They couldn't find any pots because they had been shattered in the invasion, but they came across some sacks that were used for covering the ground around the roses so that weeds wouldn't grow next to them. The sacks were also used to keep the

roses warm in the winter months. Chu Wong went over to where the roses had been and found one who looked the healthiest.

‘If I get some of these sacks,’ he said, and he showed the rose the sack, ‘can I put half of you in one and the rest of you in the other and take you away from here?’

‘That will work fine,’ said the rose.

Chu Wong ran over to the sacks and got the four strongest ones he could find. He stuck them one inside the other to make them even stronger. Then they found a shovel to dig the roses from out of the ground. By the time they got the last rose in the two sacks, a total of twelve of them, they were exhausted. Chu Wong had spoken to every one of the roses before putting them into the sacks. He learned that they could stay in the sacks for three days as long, as they got a little water and fresh air every day. The rest of the story is that the two monks planted all twelve roses in different places all over the world before Chu Wong and Chow Ping died.”

“That was an incredible story.” said Eleanor.

“Who knows the rest of the story?” asked David. “How were they able to take the roses all over the world and where did they put them all?”

“Simon had bought a diary from an Old Chinese estate years ago,” said Prince Christopher. “He was able to find eight of us and even we aren’t sure if the other four are still alive.”

“Okay,” said David, “back to the business at hand. Who are we going to take with us first?”

“I know,” said Lady Hilly, “ladies should always go first, and the men should go after the last lady.”

“That sounds good to me,” said Leo, and George agreed.

“Now, which of the three ladies should go first?”

“You ladies can go first,” said Fraulein Goldy to Elizabeth and Lady Hilly. “Someone has to keep these boys in line.”

“Thank you, Fraulein,” said Elizabeth.

“Lizzy B. and Lady Hilly it is,” David said, and he started digging a one-foot hole around the base of the roses. Suddenly he stopped. “I didn’t bring anything to trim the bushes.”

“I know,” said Lady Hilly, “use the saw.”

“Good idea,” said Giovanni.

David grabbed the saw and took a hold of one of Lady Hilly’s small limbs. As soon as he started cutting, Lady Hilly screamed so loud that David fell hard on his behind from the scare. All the roses and even Eleanor started laughing so hard it took a couple of minutes for them to stop. Even David finally started to laugh.

“I’m sorry,” said Lady Hilly, “but I couldn’t resist. You walked right into that one.”

“Oh, that’s okay, I always like a good joke,” smiled David and he picked up the saw again.

“How long are you staying at the House of the Rose,” asked Elizabeth.

“About ten more days,” said Eleanor.

“Oh, we didn’t know,” said Prince Christopher.

“I don’t want to be in a pot for too many days,” said Giovanni, clipping his thorns.

They all started chatting away about it at the same time.

“We never thought about it that way,” said Eleanor. “You’re right.”

“There is no reason for us to be put in a pot until you’re ready to go home. The less time we live in a pot the better,” said Dr. Montgomery.

David looked around and saw a tree that had probably fallen during a bad storm. He got the pots, put them back on the Radio Flyer and pulled under the fallen tree. He picked up the branches and tucked the wagon underneath.

“Why are you doing that?” asked Adoni and Amadeus.

“So, no animals or birds can mess with the pots or the Radio Flyer,” said David as he returned to the group. “So, what are we going to do over the next ten days?”

“Well, I know mommy and Auntie Mabel are taking us into town sometime soon, but outside of that we can come and see the roses the rest of the time,” said Eleanor.

“Why don’t we play a game?” suggested Elizabeth. “You ask us a question about anything and then we ask you one, to get to know each other a little better.”

“A splendid idea,” said Lady Hilly.

“Okay, so who gets to go first?” asked Eleanor.

“Ladies first,” said Lady Hilly.

“Ladies first it will be,” said Eleanor. “Lizzy B., would you like to start?”

“Oh yes, let’s see... Describe for us where you live,” she said.

“Well,” said David, “that’s easy. We live in a town a couple of hours from here. We have about twelve hundred people, a small shopping center and one gas station. Everyone knows everyone else, so it won’t be that easy keeping you undercover.”

“I like that,” said George to Leo.

“We’re going under cover,” said Leo to George.

“We have a small but respectable house,” continued David, “three bedrooms, but each room is of a descent size. There’s a living room and a kitchen. The only thing I don’t like is that we only have one bathroom and whenever we are in a hurry mommy and Eleanor are always taking forever. If I ever buy a house when I get older, I am going to make sure everyone has their own bathroom.”

“Can all of you roses save anyone who’s had an accident of any sort?” asked Eleanor.

“Oh no,” said Elizabeth, “we can only help with our magical dust five times a piece. After the fifth time, we dry slowly and go to sleep.”

“Oh,” said David and he thought for a moment. “Are you telling me that because Leo and George blew dust on me, they only have four more magical dusts?”

“Oh no,” said Elizabeth, “George only has two left and Leo only has one.”

“I’m sorry,” said David, “but why did both of you do it at the same time?”

“Leo has been sick and weak lately, so when he blew first, so did I to make sure his magical dust didn’t fail you,” said George

“The climbers, after their fifth time, can still live, but they are very fragile,” explained Elizabeth.

Eleanor climbed off the boulder that she and David were sitting on. She walked over to Leo and George and gave them both a kiss on their petal cheeks.

“Thank you for saving my brother,” she said.

They both blushed.

“Can we get on with it?” whined Dr. Montgomery. “No more mushy stuff.”

“Okay,” said Prince Christopher. “Where are you going to plant us when we get back to your house?”

“I’ve been thinking about that,” said Eleanor. “We have a small storage shed that I think our mom and dad will let us use —”

“There’s really nothing important in it. I can cut a couple of holes in the roof and one of my friends, Viking. He has a couple of plastic sheets to drape over it so that the sun can come in,” said David.

“Oh, boy,” said Dr. Montgomery, “we go from a beautiful view by Little Lake to a wooden shack.”

“Beautiful view, yes,” said Fraulein Goldy, “but no one to talk to or learn about what’s going in the world. I’ll take the shack and if you don’t want to go dear Doctor, then you are more than welcome to stay here,” she finished in a huff.

All the roses agreed.

“I guess I have no real choice, I’ll go,” said the Doctor.

They all clapped and laughed.

“Can you come out of the ground without soil,” asked David?

All the roses eyed David and Eleanor for a moment, then to Elizabeth.

“Yes, we can actually pull ourselves out of the ground,” said Elizabeth, “and go a day of walking on our roots. But it puts a great strain on us, to the point where it could kill us.”

“Wow,” said David, “I’d like to see that, but — err — but not if it will hurt any of you, I mean.”

“It’s our turn,” said Adoni and Amadeus. “We love to hear the new music that’s been going around. Do you have a record player at your house?”

“No, but when we go into town, I can ask Auntie Mabel to buy me one and I can almost guarantee you that she will,” said Eleanor.

Adoni and Amadeus started to do a little wiggle that they always did when they got excited. Everyone started to laugh.

“Now why do Adoni and Amadeus talk at the same time?” asked Eleanor.

“If you ask me, they share the same brain,” said Dr. Montgomery.

Fraulein Goldy eyed Dr. Montgomery.

“Dear Doctor, if you have nothing nice to say, don’t say anything at all or I will pull myself out of this dirt and give you a piece of what’s coming to you.”

Everyone started laughing.

“That’s right,” said Leo and George at the same time from the other tree.

They all laughed even harder.

“The truth is,” began Elizabeth, “that no one really knows why they talk at the same time. They just always have.”

“It’s starting to get late,” said Giovanni. “I don’t want to see you two get into any trouble.”

“Oh, we won’t,” said David, “but you’re right, it is getting late.”

Eleanor went around and said her good-byes to all the roses and David waved.

“Think of something good to ask us,” called Adoni and Amadeus, as the children slowly disappeared from view.

As David and Eleanor walked away the roses started singing a beautiful song. The children hummed the chorus all the way back to the House of the Rose.

# Chapter Ten

When they got to the House of the Rose, they could smell something delicious cooking and it made their stomachs growl. Again, they had forgotten to come home for lunch. They walked into the kitchen to see what was baking. Their mother called for them from the family room.

“So, my great explorers are back from their expedition,” she said.

“How was your day, mommy?” asked Eleanor.

“My day was swell, dear, how was yours?”

“Oh, we went out to get the roses and put them in the pots that we found in the old greenhouse,” Eleanor explained. “But when we got out there, we forgot to bring a shovel. So, David had to come back to the greenhouse to get one. Then, when he got back out there, we decided to wait a couple of days before we leave to bring the roses to the House of the Rose.”

“Why would it matter if you put them in a pot now or later?” asked her mother, “the roses won’t know the difference, they’re not people.”

“I know mommy,” said Eleanor as she gave her mother a hug. “They are just very special to me.”

“Okay, I don’t see any harm in that.” She turned to her son. “And how was your day, David?”

“Just swell,” he said.

“A full answer, like always,” sighed his mother.

“Mommy, what’s that great smell? It smells like someone is baking a cake,” said Eleanor.

“Oh, that’s no cake. That’s your Auntie Mabel making her peanut butter cookies.”

Eleanor jumped off the couch and ran for the kitchen, David hot on her heels. As they got to the kitchen the smell of the peanut butter cookies overwhelmed them both. Mabel was pulling a fresh batch out of the oven.

“Can I have one?” asked Eleanor.

“Me too?” asked David.

“Of course, you can, but just one for each of you. Supper will be served in less than fifteen minutes,” said their aunt.

Eleanor and David both grabbed a cookie from the baking tray and put the cookie in their mouths at the same time.

“My goodness,” said David, “this cookie is delicious.”

“Oh, Auntie Mabel,” said Eleanor, “you have got to show me how to bake these absolutely delicious cookies.”

“I will,” said their aunt. “It’s an old recipe that your grandmother, Lillian, taught me a long time ago when I was around your age. Before you go back home, I will teach you how to bake them.”

“Oh, Eleanor can’t bake,” said David, “but if she can come close to these cookies, please teach her so that I can enjoy eating them.”

They all found it funny and laughed.

“If you kids are not going to be home for lunch,” said Mabel, “you should have Katrina fix you both a basket so that you both don’t get back so hungry. It’s not good for you and neither one of you really needs to lose any weight.”

“Okay, Auntie Mabel,” said Eleanor. “We’re going to go upstairs to wash up for supper.”

“That’s a good idea,” said Mabel.

As they walked up to the bathroom, David looked at Eleanor.

“Can you believe everything that’s going on, with the roses, I mean,” he said.

“I know,” said Eleanor, “but we can’t tell anyone about them, and I mean no one.”

“I know, little sister, now go wash up,” he said.

Once supper had finished, Mabel told the kids that she had a little surprise for them.

“What is it?” asked Eleanor.

“I was looking through some of Simon’s things in the basement this morning,” said Mabel, “and I came across some of the films from his old exploration days. I also came upon something that might interest you both. It’s a memoir that Simon had bought from a Chinese estate sale” — Eleanor’s eyes widened — “He had someone translate it from Chinese. I have a feeling that it tells you where all the roses came from.

I also found Simon’s memoirs. I have no need for them. I lived most of these explorations with him. And, as for the trips I didn’t take, my beautiful Simon would tell me about every little thing he did, day by day, down to the smallest detail. Katrina has already set up the movie projector in the grand room...”

David and Eleanor were out of their chairs before their aunt could finish her sentence. But their mother stopped them midway out of the room.

“Not so fast, children,” she said. “First, finish your dessert, go wash up, brush your teeth, and only then you may go to the grand room to watch the films.”

Eleanor looked up at her brother with such excitement that David thought just maybe his sister would burst. They ran up the stairs toward the bathroom. They looked all around them to see if anyone could hear them.

“Can you believe it?” said David.

“No, I can’t!” exclaimed Eleanor. “Wait until we tell the roses! They are going to be so excited.”

“Maybe we could find out where the other four roses were put,” said David.

“I forgot, you’re right,” said Eleanor.

When they were done, they went downstairs, and everyone was waiting for them to start the movie projector. The first reel they watched was of a cruise that Mabel and Simon had gone on for their fifth anniversary.

“Oh, I remember that as if it were yesterday,” sighed their aunt.

The children thought the people in the movie were funny looking. They all laughed over, and over again.

“You were beautiful when you were young, Auntie Mabel,” said David.

“Are you saying that I am not beautiful anymore?” laughed Mabel.

“Oh... — err — now, Auntie Mabel,” stammered David, “you’re very beautiful now.”

His parents chuckled at their son’s recovery. The next reel was about a safari Simon had taken in Africa. There was one part where he and his crew were going after a lion. At one point, the lion turned back to the men following him and roared. All the men but Simon and the cameraman dropped everything and started to run away. They all laughed so hard that the whole family clutched their stomachs.

The third reel they watched was the one that Eleanor and David would never forget. It was shot during the final days of World War II. Airplanes and bombs filled the projector screen. Then a picture of a very young Simon came through. He was running from the back of an alleyway with a pot and a rose in it. It only took Eleanor and David a second before they realized that it was Dr. Montgomery. They both looked at each other and then looked back at the screen. The cameraman was running, too, because the picture only showed the ground moving quickly underneath it.

“You see,” said Mabel, she began explaining as the reel ran out and Katrina turned on the lights, “my love, Simon, was obsessed with finding the roses that were described in those memoirs of Chu Wong. From the day he had those memoirs translated into English it was basically all that was on his mind, outside of taking care of me. He always told me that no matter what happened in this world, nothing, not even his obsession for the roses meant more to him than I did...” — she put her head in her hands for a moment and then looked up again — “I still sometimes wonder if that’s true.”

“Uncle Simon never loved a woman or anything else than your Auntie Mabel,” said their father. “Isn’t it true, my love?”

“Most definitely,” said his wife, “nothing in this world.”

“Thank you, my dear brother,” said Mabel.

David stood up.

“Was Simon stealing that rose?” he asked.

“Oh no,” said Mabel, “he was saving it from certain death. You see, within hours, that whole part of town was wiped out. Those Germans had no care for whom or what stood in their way. If Simon hadn’t done what he did, at least half of the roses that he found would be dead. He told me that one night right here in this grand room.”

“I still don’t understand the obsession he had with those roses,” said their mother.

“Neither could I,” said Peter.

“I thought about it for months after my dear Simon passed away and I have never been able to understand it,” said Mabel. “Simon told me several times that there was just something magical about them and the feeling he would get just taking care of them. It rejuvenated him, he’d say...” and her voice trailed off.

“It’s getting late,” said Peter.

“Time for bed,” said their mother.

Before they went to bed Eleanor walked over to Mabel.

“When can we get the memoirs from you?” she asked.

“Oh, my dear,” said Mabel, “when I get up in the morning, I will take you and David down to the basement and show you what I found. Then, if you’d like, you can explore the basement. I can guarantee you’ll find some amazing things in that basement. Simon’s family has years of remembrance down there, from pictures to antiques. You name it, you can find it.”

Eleanor embraced her aunt and kissed her on the cheek.

“Thank you, Auntie Mabel, I love you,” she said.

As she let go, she looked at David with wide eyes and he knew what was on her mind.

“Let’s go, big brother,” said Eleanor, as she grabbed his hand and left the room.

“Can you believe this?” she whispered on their way up the stairs. “I can’t wait to tell the roses and go exploring in the basement.”

“Calm down, little sister,” said David, “or you will never get to sleep tonight.”

“Oh David, I was so exhausted yesterday, but how am I going to be able to sleep tonight?”

Just then, Katrina came walking towards them.

“I’m sorry, but I overheard you say that you might have a problem sleeping tonight,” she said.

“I’m just too excited about going exploring in the basement tomorrow with David and Auntie Mabel,” said Eleanor.

“I can bring you a little warm milk and a family remedy for sleep that when I was young my parents would give me,” said Katrina. “When I was in school, I used to get so nervous before a test. I would stay up all night and be so tired the next day that I would almost flunk my test. So, my parents created this remedy for me, and it works marvelously well.”

“That would be great and thank you,” said Eleanor.

“Go get ready for bed,” said Katrina, “and I will bring it up to you in a few minutes.”

“Thank you, Katrina,” said David, “Eleanor really needs something, or she will be up all night.”

Eleanor gave David a big hug. How lucky I am to have a big brother like David, she thought. She went into the bedroom and when she had just gotten herself comfortable in the bed Katrina knocked and walked into the room.

“Here you are, Missy Eleanor,” she said as she walked over with a cup of warm milk.

“Oh, thank you,” said Eleanor, “I hope it helps me go to sleep.” She took a sip, smiled, and then looked up at Katrina. “Have you ever been in the basement, Katrina?”

“As little as possible,” said Katrina. “It gives me the chills every time I need to go down there.”

“Now, if I was young like you are, I would have probably loved going exploring down there... Okay, Missy Eleanor, you sleep tight and don’t let the bedbugs bite,” said Katrina as she took the cup from Eleanor.

“Thank you again,” said Eleanor as she closed her eyes.

Within minutes Eleanor was fast asleep.

# Chapter Eleven

The next morning, Eleanor and David were up at seven thirty and anxiously waiting for Mabel to awake. About nine o'clock Eleanor and David finally heard their aunt coming down the stairs.

"Good morning, Auntie Mabel," said Eleanor as she came running over to her aunt.

"Good morning, my lovely," said Mabel.

"We've been waiting for you all morning," said Eleanor.

"I had a hard time sleeping," yawned Mabel. "I know how excited you are to explore the basement, but I need to have my breakfast before I can take you down there."

"Oh, take your time, Auntie Mabel. We have all day. I'm sorry for trying to rush you," said Eleanor.

"Oh, Little Eleanor, you have nothing to be sorry about," said Mabel.

"Call us when you're ready to take us down there," said her niece.

"I will have Katrina find you," said Mabel.

"Okeydokey," said Eleanor. "David!"

"Over here," he called from the grand room

"Auntie Mabel is up but she's going to have breakfast first and then she's going to tell Katrina to find us when she's ready to take us to the basement."

"Sounds good," said David.

Eleanor went up to her brother and sat down on the couch next to him.

"I think we should go and tell the roses the good news," she whispered into his ear, "and then come back and explore the basement."

“That sounds like a good plan,” said David and they both ran towards the back doors, only to have their mother call after them —

“No running in the house!”

“Sorry,” said David and the children slowed down.

“Where are you rushing off to?” she asked.

“Just for a quick walk,” said Eleanor.

“Okay, but don’t be too long. Remember Auntie Mabel is going to take you to the basement.”

“We know, mommy,” they said but the sound of the French doors closing was all their mother heard.

Eleanor and David ran across the back lawn, down the trail and all the way around the lake, without even so much as looking at the boulder or thinking about waving to the roses. The climbers spotted the children first.

“Oh, what’s wrong? Something’s wrong, I can tell,” said George to Leo.

“Something’s definitely wrong,” said Leo as he looked at George.

“What is it, come on what is it?” asked George as the children arrived.

“Nothing’s wrong,” panted David as he and Eleanor tried to catch their breath.

“Don’t worry about George and Leo. They get a bit nervous when they don’t know what’s going on,” said Elizabeth.

“We have some great news,” said Eleanor. “Auntie Mabel found the memoirs of Chu Wong and Uncle Simon in the basement. She’s going to let us go through all of Uncle Simon’s things down there, so we have very little time to chat today. We will probably be down there all day long.”

“We didn’t want all of you to worry about us, so we came over to give you the good news,” said David.

“That’s great,” said Lady Hilly.

“It’s great but it’s sad too,” said Adoni and Amadeus. “You’re leaving now, and we won’t see you until tomorrow.”

“That’s just fine with me,” grumbled Dr. Montgomery. “That way I don’t have to listen to the question, and answer game again and again.”

“Watch your step there,” said Fraulein Goldy.

“Well, now that you know we have got to get back,” said David.

“We will be here nice and early tomorrow, hopefully with all kinds of great stuff to discuss,” said Eleanor. “Goodbye and we will see you tomorrow!”

“Goodbye,” called the roses in harmony after her.

The children walked quickly because Eleanor thought she would die if she had to run back. The roses began to sing a beautiful song that David and Eleanor had heard before on the radio. It made the walk back very peaceful, almost trance-like. As they approached the back of the House of the Rose, they saw Katrina opening the French doors for them.

“You’re right on cue,” she said as they walked in.

Mabel was standing there waiting for them with three flashlights which she handed one to David and one to Eleanor.

“Why do we need flashlights?” asked David.

“The basement is very big, and the lights are old, and you don’t want to be stuck down there without any light,” explained Mabel. “It gets horribly dark down there.”

“Good idea,” said David.

“Follow me, my lovelies,” said Mabel, intrepidly.

They walked through the kitchen and to a door next to the pantry. It squeaked as Mabel opened it and David made a spooky sound.

“Cut it out, David,” said Eleanor, but Mabel found it funny because her brother, Peter, used to do the exact same thing to her when they were young.

As they walked down the stairs, the temperature dropped by at least fifteen degrees.

“It’s a bit chilly,” said Mabel.

“It’s not too bad,” said David.

It could have been ten below zero and David and Eleanor would have still gone down there. When they got to the bottom of the stairs,

Mabel turned on the light. It flickered for a few moments but then revealed just how big the basement was. Its feeble light couldn't illuminate very much, and parts of the basement seemed to extend into a vast darkness. Even what they could see was incredibly huge. There were lots of boxes and old furnishing with white sheets over them to protect them from dust. Mabel walked over to the right side of the room and stopped at a desk that stood against the wall. She opened it, rolling the top into itself, and exposing the writing area underneath.

There were three things laying there: a worn leather-bound journal which turned out to be Chu Wong's memoirs; an old book that Simon had been reading; and, lastly, Uncle Simon's memoirs. After telling the children what everything was, Mabel started her way up the stairs.

"I am going to go upstairs and lie down," she said. "I really don't feel too good today. I will have Katrina call you when it's lunchtime. Feel free to open any box and explore every corner of the basement. Just be careful. A lot of the things down here are very old."

"Thank you, Auntie Mabel," said Eleanor.

"Yes, thank you," said David.

When Auntie Mabel closed the door to the basement, David looked over at Eleanor.

"Where do we start?" he asked.

"Right there," said Eleanor, pointing at the desk.

She walked over to it and took a seat on the chair that matched the desk. The chair itself was beautifully inlaid with different shades of decorative wood. David stood behind her. She let her fingers trace the cover of the journal that lay in front of her, over the delicate embroidery of a dragon entwined with a rose. Slowly, she opened the memoirs of Chu Wong. The first page was written in Chinese but tucked in next to it was a sheet of paper with bearing the English translation. Every page had been translated to English in this manner. David turned on his flashlight to get a better view of the text, but Eleanor shut the book suddenly.

"Eleanor," said David, "what did you do that for?"

“We should do this in front of the roses, for the first time,” she said.

“Hmm,” said David, “maybe you’re right. Should we at least read Uncle Simon’s memoirs?”

“Oh yes,” said Eleanor.

Simon’s memoirs were also beautifully bound. Its leather cover was branded with the British flag surrounded by what looked like all the roses from Little Lake. David shined his light on it. Each rose was perfectly detailed. But as they looked more closely at it, it appeared to them as though there was still space for four more roses to be drawn in.

The first page began with Simon recounting the story of how he discovered the memoirs of Chu Wong through an old friend who knew of its existence. When this unnamed friend found out that there would be an auction for the entire estate, he wired Simon.

Simon spent many days looking through everything that came with the estate. He bought the entire estate at once, not just one piece at a time. As Eleanor and David read on, they realized that Simon had written in scrupulous detail about everything from the moment he found the memoirs of Chu Wong. It was like his life began the moment he found those memoirs, and everything before the memoirs was a different life. After an hour or so, Eleanor shut the binder and looked at David.

“Incredible, isn’t it?” said Eleanor.

“Yes, it is,” said David, “but that’s just the start. I’m going to go and look over at those wooden boxes over on the right side of the basement.”

“Okay,” said Eleanor, “I’ll start with the boxes on the left side.”

As they explored the basement they came upon numerous amounts of photographs and different business papers. Some looked like deeds to properties in England and around the world. Some of the bigger boxes that Eleanor opened contained dresses sealed in plastic, beautiful gowns in different colors. David found a box with all kinds of funny hats.

He came walking over to Eleanor with one of the wackiest hats she had ever seen. In fact, he had four different hats in his hand and

kept changing into a different one every time Eleanor looked up at him. They both started laughing. Just then the door to the basement opened and Katrina called down to them.

“It’s lunchtime in ten minutes,” she said.

“Thank you,” said David, “we’ll be up in a few minutes.”

Eleanor had found an old briefcase in relatively good condition, and she placed the two memoirs into it.

“Look, David, it’s a perfect fit,” she said. She put it on top of the desk and closed it. Eleanor looked all around one more time before going upstairs.

“We still have a lot of exploring to do down here, little sister,” said David.

“I know, big brother, but what I wanted I have already,” she said.

They both went upstairs to wash up for lunch. They hadn’t noticed how dirty they had gotten. David even had to change his shirt. When they arrived in the dining room, their mother and father were already sitting at the table.

“Soup and egg salad sandwiches,” announced their mother.

“So, how was your exploration in the basement, my lovely?” asked Peter.

“Very interesting indeed,” said Eleanor. “We found all kinds of stuff from goofy hats to dresses of all kinds. There are even stacks of documents for properties all over the world. But the best part is that we have Uncle Simon’s memoirs. We read some of them, and mommy and daddy, everything he did in his life is there, at least from what we’ve read so far. I can’t wait to read the rest.”

“More exploring first,” said David.

“How is Auntie Mabel feeling?” asked Eleanor as Katrina entered the room.

“Oh, she’ll be fine, she just needs a little rest”, said Katrina.

“You see, Eleanor, your auntie has been suffering very badly ever since Simon passed away,” said her mother. “She takes her medication and sometimes it helps.”

“Yesterday,” added Katrina, “she spent a lot of time in the basement going through Simon’s things. She’s not supposed to do it

because it depresses her so. She told me that she just had to find Simon's memoirs so you and Master David could enjoy his many adventures as she did."

"Thank you, Katrina, for telling her that," said Eleanor's mother.

"My sister," said Peter, "will never change. Since we were kids your auntie has always cared about making everyone around her happy no matter what she would suffer."

"When I get older, I want to be like Auntie Mabel," said Eleanor.

"I think you already are," said her mother.

Everyone nodded in agreement.

"Okay, I'm done eating my lunch," said David a few moments later. "Is the little Auntie Mabel Eleanor ready for some more exploring in the depths of the scary basement?"

They all laughed.

"Be careful down there," said their mother.

When they got to the bottom of the basement, they turned on the light and it flickered twice then finally went on.

"Spooky, isn't it?" asked David.

"Not really, big brother. I have you to protect me," said Eleanor.

"Yes, you do," said David and he posed as if he were a body builder.

They both giggled.

"Which way are you going?" asked David.

"To the desk," said Eleanor. "I am going to read more of Uncle Simon's memoirs. If you find anything interesting, call me."

Eleanor sat down in the chair and opened the desk. She sat there for a long while, reading, until David called out.

"Eleanor, come here!"

She got up and realized she had no idea where he was.

"Where are you?"

"Over here!" came his voice from the left side of the basement.

"What did you find?" she asked as she approached him.

"Look, there are a lot of reels in these cases with dates and little flowers around the dates!" he said.

“How many are there?”

“At least twenty,” said David.

“Do you think Uncle Simon taped each time he got one of the roses?” asked Eleanor.

“It’s possible,” said David. “Where did you find that briefcase that you put the memoirs in? Were there any other cases nearby?”

“Why?” asked Eleanor.

“I want to put all these reels in there so I can watch them later,” he explained.

“Good idea,” she said.

They both walked over to where she had found the briefcase. There were four more matching the one Eleanor had found.

“A perfect match,” said David as he shined his flashlight on them to get a better view of their condition. “This one should be perfect,” he said, pulling one out from the pile.

He went back to the reels and began placing them in the briefcase. Eleanor, meanwhile, went back to reading Simon’s memoirs. She was enthralled with the detail with which he described his adventures to find the roses. Some had seemed easy to find, but others had proven very difficult. Eleanor skipped over several pages to see if he had written about any of the missing other roses. As she got near the end of the journal, Simon had written, I am getting too weak to continue, on this mission of love for my beloved roses. There are still four of you left. However, my love, Mabel, sees fit to continue my mission, let her do so.

Eleanor continued reading the last paragraph. Mabel picked me to take over the mission to find the rest of the roses, she thought. Well, not just me, but David too. I knew that Auntie Mabel knew more of the roses than she was leading on.

“David, come here!” called Eleanor.

“What is it?” he asked as he came up to her, dirtier than ever. She told him everything that she read and let him see the very last lines Simon had written:

Take care of them. I haven’t gotten to break the magic that they have over me. Just being around them makes me feel much better. Always tell them that outside of my love for Mabel, nothing means

more to me than my beautiful roses. Please do everything in your power to find the other four roses. Mabel has an account set up especially for whomever she picks to find the other four roses. That person will never do without for the rest of their life if they do this for me. I hope that you, whoever you are, can learn to love them as I have.

It was signed Simon De Carlo Delarosa.

“What a name,” said David as he repeated it several times.

Eleanor had to laugh as David tried to roll his R’s.

“So, Eleanor, we are the chosen ones, don’t you think?”

“I think we are big brother.”

“And little sister, we’re rich! Isn’t that what Uncle Simon had written and you just read?”

“Yes, big rother, but that’s only when we go and find the other four roses.”

“Oh, so we’re not rich?” asked David.

“David, cut it out,” said Eleanor.

“So, what do we do now?”

“I think we have to get some time alone with Auntie Mabel and talk to her about this.”

“That sounds like a plan,” said David.

A voice rang out from upstairs.

“Supper!” Katrina called.

Their mother was standing in the kitchen when they reached the main floor.

“What do you have in those bags, David?” she asked.

“These are just some more reels that I found in the basement. They’re probably about Uncle Simon and his expeditions to get the roses,” he said.

“What do you have in your bag, Eleanor?” asked their mother.

“I have the memoirs in my bag,” she said.

“Have you finished reading through all of them yet?”

“Oh no, not even close, there’s a lot of information in these memoirs,” said Eleanor.

“Well, you both are filthy again, especially you, David,” said his mother. “Go upstairs and take a bath now, both of you, before supper.”

The children left the kitchen in a hurry. Their mother turned to her husband and smiled.

“The children look like they’re having a jolly good time,” she said.

“Oh, I do think so,” said Peter.

“I’m so glad,” said their mother, “they’re such good children.”

“We got very lucky with them, love.”

“Yes, you did,” said Mabel as she walked into the room.

Peter went up to his sister and embraced her.

“How do you feel, big sister,” he asked, and she laughed.

“Much better, little brother,” all three began laughing.

They all sat down at the dining table as Katrina brought in a roast beef, and it smelled so good the children’s mouths were watering as they entered the dining-room. They began eating as Mabel asked Eleanor and David about their day in the basement.

“I got to read a lot of Uncle Simon’s memoirs, but I’m still not finished,” she said, looking at her aunt, directly at her. I think she understood the look, she thought to herself. “David found a bunch of reels which we think may have some of the roses on them.”

“How did you come to that conclusion?” asked their mother.

“Well, on the cover of the reels theirs a date and little roses around the cover,” explained David.

“So, we have some very good detective work going on in the basement,” said Mabel.

As they ate, Eleanor described to them some of the gowns that she had seen in the basement. David told them that it would take at least two more days in the basement to thoroughly explore every part of it.

“I got what I was looking for,” said Eleanor. “There’s nothing else down there right now that I really need.”

“Oh, you’d be surprised what one can find in a basement like this one, in the House of the Rose,” said Mabel.

Katrina entered the room with some peanut butter cookies and milk. David helped himself to six cookies and Eleanor ate four.

“Oh, how delicious!” moaned Eleanor.

When they had finished, they both got up and asked to be excused to the grand room.

“You may,” said their mother, “but wait for all of us before you watch the reels.”

“Okeydokey,” said Eleanor as they all laughed.

David went to get the first reel from his briefcase. He was setting it up on the movie projector when everyone walked in.

David turned the projector on, and the movie began very darkly. The family could barely make out two people’s shadowy figures, but no one could tell who they were. Then, a light came at them from a distance and as the camera and the two figures that it was taping came into focus, it became clear that Uncle Simon was one of the two figures. Neither David nor Eleanor could recognize the other person.

“Auntie Mabel, do you know who the other person is?” he asked.

At that moment Peter looked at Mabel, and he realized who it was. Mabel had tears in her eyes.

“He was your cousin, my dear Simon’s son, Nicolas. I never had any children, so he was like my son. He died a little while after they shot this film,” said Mabel, sniffing.

As she was explaining there was gunfire rocketing across the projector screen and they all looked up to watch the film again. The cameraman was staying very still while Simon and Nicolas took cover behind a tree and shot back at whoever shot at them. The cameraman was standing behind some bushes and the branches kept getting in the way of a clear view of Simon and Nicolas and the shooters on the other side. Gunfire, one round after another, then there was silence. Simon waved at the cameraman, gesturing him to come closer. The cameraman hesitated, then took off running fast. When he got to the tree, he focused the camera to the place whence the shots were fired. Two bodies were on the ground. The cameraman then took off running and the film bobbed up and down

and side to side, occasionally showing Nicolas or Simon running beside him.

“Boy, this is making me dizzy,” said Eleanor.

They finally stopped and a very clear picture emerged, zooming into what looked like a greenhouse. In the next instant Simon and Nicolas were running into the greenhouse and were back out within a minute. Nicolas was carrying a pot with a rose in it and Simon started shooting his gun at someone in the distance off to the right. The film went black.

David got up quickly and ran to the projector to try and fix it. But the rest of that reel was black.

“Is that it from the film?” asked Eleanor.

“That’s it, there’s nothing left,” said Mabel.

“Do you know what happened next?” asked the children’s mother.

“Of course, I do. I told you that my Simon would tell me everything in detail.”

“What happened, Auntie Mabel?” asked David as everyone got a little closer to hear the ending.

“Well, let’s see,” said Mabel. “Simon and Nicolas went behind enemy lines during the Korean War to find another of his beloved roses and they were in Korea at a very high official’s mansion to retrieve one of the roses. As you just saw, they were almost caught. They were fired upon four different times during this mission. Your uncle got shot in the arm, the left arm that is. They made it out because Simon had a lot of very powerful friends. He was also a good negotiator. This was one of his hardest missions to save the roses, but not his most difficult. You see, Simon paid dearly for some, but he also had no choice to save them from guaranteed death.”

Everyone sat quietly with their own thoughts for a couple of minutes.

“Did Uncle Simon kill those two men who were lying down on the ground?” asked David.

“Oh no, he just wounded them,” said Mabel. “Out of all the missions that he made in search of the roses, only his son died. It

was an accident, but Simon blamed himself for years. He would say that the roses helped him get over the death of his son. Nicolas was just as obsessed with the roses as was his father. I sometimes think that he just loved the excitement of the missions and being close to his father. You see, when he was young his mother traveled a lot with the circus, so he spent every summer with Simon and me. The reason Simon and his mother couldn't work out their marriage was due to her never being in town long enough. When Simon met me, he was separated from his wife for a little over a year."

David went over to the projector and started to load it with the next reel, but his father looked over at him.

"Son, I know you really want to see some more of the missions, but I think Auntie Mabel has had enough for one day," he said.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Auntie Mabel," said David, "I should have realized that."

"Oh nonsense, my boy, how could you know how I would feel?" said Mabel. "But thank you. Why don't we watch some more of the reels tomorrow? Eleanor, how far are you in Simon's memoirs?"

"I'm three quarters of the way done," she said.

"You read very fast, Eleanor," said her aunt.

"Best in my class," smiled Eleanor.

She buried her nose in her uncle's memoirs again while everyone else went on talking about all sorts of things, mostly happy things to make Mabel feel better.

A few hours later, the children's mother urged them to bed.

"Okay," said David, "I'm bushed."

"Me too," said Eleanor.

She kissed everyone good night and David waved, as usual. When they got upstairs and headed for their rooms, Eleanor asked David if he planned on going into the basement the next day, or if he planned to go see the roses.

"Oh, little sister, I said it would take two days to look over everything in the basement, not that I was going to do it in the next two days."

“Oh, thank you, big brother,” said Eleanor as she gave him a hug.

“Good night, little sister,” he said.

“Sleep tight and don’t let the bed bugs bite,” smiled Eleanor.

# Chapter Twelve

That night, Eleanor got up twice and turned on the light on the night stand next to her bed. She needed to read from her uncle's memoirs. By morning she had finished the entire memoir and she couldn't wait to tell David, everything that she had learned. Simon did make a film of all the missions he made for the roses. David would soon enough get a chance to see all the missions on the reels in his bag.

David knocked on the door and let himself into Eleanor's room. "Eleanor," he called, in a deep voice. "Where are you?"

She came walking out of the bathroom.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Oh nothing," he sighed. "I just came in to tell you about my dreams last night. I was on a mission with Uncle Simon and Nicolas. It was so exciting, and it felt so real. When I woke up, I didn't know where I was for a while."

"Well, big brother, I finished reading all of Uncle Simon's memoir."

"I knew you would stay up all night," said David.

"Oh, I got some sleep, David, but you'll be glad to know that he did make a film on all of his missions to recover the roses."

"Excellent," said David. "On the way to the roses you can tell me all about the memoirs. But right now, let's go downstairs and get some breakfast. I'm starving after the mission in my dream. We did a lot of running and escaping from different people."

David looked at his sister and they both laughed as they headed to the dining room. They ate quickly and told Katrina that they were going out to Little Lake.

"Wait a minute," said Eleanor. "I forgot the memoirs."

“I’ll go and get them for you, little sister,” said David.

“My hero,” giggled Eleanor.

Katrina too, chuckled a bit, listening to them from the kitchen.

“They’re upstairs, next to my bed,” she told him.

David ran upstairs and came back quickly. They headed for Little Lake, but when they had arrived at the branch that magically opened, it did not.

“That’s strange,” said Eleanor as they pushed the branch up to get it out of the way.

As they made their way through the bushes they walked over to the boulder and climbed on top to see what the roses were up to. They looked over and waved but they didn’t see a reply or hear a sound from the other side. No singing, just silence. David and Eleanor found it very strange, so they hurried towards the other side of the lake.

When they got there the roses looked very tired and drowsy. The twins, Adoni and Amadeus, were still sleeping. George and Leo were just waking up, but Leo didn’t look so good.

“David, Eleanor,” whispered Elizabeth, “over here!”

Elizabeth told them that poor Leo had been sick all night and that they all stayed up trying to comfort him.

“A couple of us, me included, actually uprooted ourselves and went over to comfort him,” she said.

Eleanor and David looked at the ground around all the roses, and sure enough, they could see that Elizabeth, Lady Hilly and Fraulein Goldy had all moved about two feet closer to Leo.

“What, if anything, can we do to help him?” asked Eleanor.

“He needs some rose food,” said Elizabeth. “You see, he only has one more shot of magic dust in his life and it makes him weak from time to time.”

“Where can we get some food?” asked Eleanor.

“Hey,” said David, “I’m pretty sure I saw a bag of rose food in the greenhouse when we went looking for the pots.”

“Yes,” said Elizabeth, “there should be some there. Please, could you go and get it for Leo and the rest of us who need a little to strengthen up, after getting out of the ground?”

David didn't even say good-bye, he just took off and Eleanor walked over to Leo and cupped her hands around him.

"Hey big guy," she cooed, "you're having a tough day, aren't you? David went to get you some rose food. You'll be just fine in a little while. You just hang in there."

"Okay," she heard Leo say.

"How are you, George?" asked Eleanor.

"I'm fine, it's Leo I'm worried about," he said.

"Yes, I know," said Eleanor. She walked from rose to rose making every one of them as comfortable as possible. Only Dr. Montgomery huffed — "I don't need any help at all," he said.

"Leave that mean rose alone," said Fraulein Goldy. "He's been nothing but a big pain all night long."

"It's just in his nature to be grumpy," said Elizabeth.

As David reached the greenhouse, he noticed several bags of rose food beneath a tarp. He lifted the tarp, and in fact, there were ten big bags lying on top of a pallet. Uncle Simon must have brought them here before he passed, he thought. David grabbed one of the big bags, but it was too heavy for him to carry all the way around the lake. He went walking around the other side of the greenhouse to see if there was anything else with wheels to use.

As he came around the back side of the greenhouse, Hugo came walking towards him exactly as he had done the last time David had gone looking for the Radio Flyer.

"Master David, what are you in search of this time?" asked Hugo.

"I need something, like a dolly, to take a bag of plant food to the roses on the other side of the lake," said David.

"Oh, I think I have one in my tool shed. Follow me." As David followed him, he felt bad for making fun of Hugo the last time he followed him. David could now see that Hugo had a problem with his hip.

When they got to the shed, Hugo pointed to the right corner of the shed.

"Look behind the white sheet in the corner, there should be a dolly right there," he said.

David thanked him quickly and ran back to the greenhouse to get the bag of rose food. He hurried all the way around Little Lake and was totally exhausted by the time he arrived at the garden. Eleanor could see that David was worn out.

“I can take it from here,” she said. “How do I do this, Elizabeth?”

“It’s easy,” said Elizabeth. “Just open four holes with the shovel around the base of George and Leo’s bush. Then, just drop a handful into each hole. Cover it with the dirt that you just pulled out of the ground. Take one of the pots and fill it with water from Little Lake and pour some around the bed.”

“That’s simple enough,” said Eleanor.

She proceeded to get the shovel and one of the pots where David had hidden them by the Radio Flyer and started to do what Elizabeth had instructed her to do. After Eleanor got to the fourth rose, David came over and helped with the rest.

“Last but not least,” said David to Dr. Montgomery.

Fraulein Goldy looked over at the Doctor.

“I don’t hear any grumpiness coming out of you now, do I, Dr. Montgomery,” she said.

“A rose has to eat, Fraulein,” said the Doctor.

They all laughed. When they were done with Dr. Montgomery, Eleanor and David sat down at the boulder so they could face them all. Within minutes the children could see Leo turning stronger and his petals turned a healthier, a darker red. The roses started to look brighter than they had ever seen them.

“Elizabeth,” said Eleanor, “all of you look so much brighter and more beautiful than I have ever seen you look.”

“It’s been a long time since we’ve had any rose food,” said Elizabeth.

“It does help us very much,” said Leo to George.

“Yes, it does,” said George, looking at Leo.

“I’m so glad you’re doing better,” said Eleanor. “Now that every one of you are all glowing in beautiful colors, it’s time to get down to business. We got a hold of all the memoirs, Simon’s, and Chu Wong’s. I read all of Simon’s, so I know his whole story. I

wanted to wait to open and read Chu Wong's memoirs in front of all of you."

"Oh, that was nice of you," said Prince Christopher.

Elizabeth looked a little puzzled, though.

"What's wrong, Elizabeth?" asked Eleanor.

"I don't understand why you wouldn't read Chu Wong's memoirs without us," she said.

"I guess I wanted all of you to be able to see how each one of you were placed in the different parts of the world," explained Eleanor.

"But we already know it all," said Adoni and Amadeus. "After all, we lived it. We've all talked about it a million times."

"Yes," said George to Leo, "a million times."

"A million times," said Leo to George.

"We can tell you the story better than those memoirs," said Lady Hilly.

"You know, I never thought of it that way," said Eleanor. "Of course, you'd be able to tell it all, you've lived it all!"

"You see," said David, "I could have read the memoirs in the basement that day.

"Yes," said Elizabeth, "but that was really nice of you to think about us first, Eleanor."

All the roses nodded in thanks, except, of course, for Dr. Montgomery. Fraulein Goldy looked over sternly at the doctor.

"Now that you have a little energy, it would be nice if you managed to express a little gratitude," she said.

"Thank you," grumbled Dr. Montgomery to Eleanor and David.

"That's a good doctor," smiled Fraulein Goldy triumphantly.

"I will go ahead and read Chu Wong's memoirs when I get home then," said Eleanor.

"Can we play the question game again?" asked Adoni and Amadeus.

"That sounds good to me," said David. "I have a couple questions of my own."

"Who will start with the first question?" asked Eleanor.

“Can I be first, little sister,” asked David, “before I forget my question?”

“David it is,” said Elizabeth.

“Okay, when we came here today, this morning, there’s a tree that sort of, well, it opens for us each time we come here. It always opens just before we get there, but this morning it did not open,” he said.

Leo and George both started giggling. David looked up at them.

“We are the ones who move the branch for you. This morning Leo was too sick to use any powers to even move a twig,” said George.

“Yes, too sick,” said Leo.

“So, you have more powers than just helping the sick,” said David.

“Oh yes,” said Elizabeth. “We were all given different powers. George and Leo can move any kind of plant life they want. I can control the weather” — and a breeze blew up — “Lady Hilly has the power of being able to start anything or shock you, basically, the power of electricity. Adoni and Amadeus have the power to confuse any person or any living thing to such a degree that it forgets what it has done, or even has ever done. Now, Fraulein Goldy has the power of the sun. She can set anything ablaze except another rose. Now, Dr. Montgomery can find a cure for almost anything with plants in the wild without even using a drop of his magical dust. That’s why he’s called the Doctor. Prince Christopher has the gift of making people fall in love, almost like Cupid, but without the arrow.”

Leo and George both laughed.

“Get it?” said George to Leo.

“Got it,” said Leo to George.

“And last, but not least,” continued Elizabeth, “you already know what Giovanni can do.”

Eleanor smiled at the rose who was her protector.

“Boy, this is great,” said David. “I wish I had powers like yours.”

# Chapter Thirteen

Priscilla stretched for a minute. She could see that Miss Eleanor was getting tired.

“Would you like to stop for the day, Miss Eleanor?” she asked.

“That would be a good thing,” she said. “Would you like another peanut butter cookie?”

“Not now, but if you don’t mind, might I take some home with me?”

“Of course, you may. I’ll go bag some up for you while you pick up your things,” said Miss Eleanor as she made her way to the kitchen.

But as she approached the kitchen, she heard noises coming from her bedroom. She walked down the hall to her room.

“Good day, sleepy heads,” said Miss Eleanor.

“I have been up for a long time,” declared Giovanni.

“So have we!” said Adoni and Amadeus.

“Would all of you like to meet somebody new?” asked Miss Eleanor.

“Who?” inquired Adoni and Amadeus.

“The young lady I told you about who has come by to write a book on my life,” she said.

“Oh yes, let’s go!” they all replied at the same time.

All the roses had specialized plastic pots invented by Dr. Montgomery many years earlier. They were one-gallon pots with two parts, one for water and the other for food and they only weighed two pounds each.

Miss Eleanor pulled out the cart that she used to move the roses all about the house and placed each rose onto it. She headed back down the hall to where Priscilla had been putting her things away.

Priscilla heard Miss Eleanor approaching and looked up from her things to see what Miss Eleanor was bringing. Priscilla's eyes widened incredulously, and she stepped back twice, nearly falling over the sofa.

"Don't be afraid," said Elizabeth.

"She looks like she saw a ghost," giggled Adoni and Amadeus.

"I-I-I wasn't sure if I should have believed you, Miss Eleanor," stammered Priscilla. "It-it just sounded too fantastic to be true. I was — forgive me, I'm so sorry — but I was wondering if maybe you had imagined all of it... But... my God... they're real!"

As everyone settled down, Miss Eleanor asked Priscilla if she would like some tea.

"Oh please," said Priscilla, as she was getting over the shock of seeing the roses.

"So, how is the biography going?" asked Elizabeth. "Do you like Eleanor's story so far?"

"Oh yes," said Priscilla, "very much."

"It's amazing, her life story, isn't it?" said Adoni and Amadeus at the same time.

Priscilla had to laugh a little and they all laughed with her.

"So, there are only four of you left?" inquired Priscilla.

"Oh, no, there are more of us," said Giovanni, "we're just in different places around the world. Miss Eleanor has let us live where we feel we are most needed or happiest."

Miss Eleanor walked over to the table with a bag filled with peanut butter cookies and the tea, which was very hot. The second she put everything down on the table, the telephone rang.

"Priscilla, honey, would you mind pouring your own tea while I find out who is calling?" she asked, and left the room. In the kitchen, Miss Eleanor picked up the telephone and answered it.

"Hello, how are you little sister?" said the voice on the other end of the line.

"Why, David," said Miss Eleanor, "I'm fine, just fine. How are you?"

"Well, I just got back from Hawaii to check on one of our friends," said David.

“How is he doing?” asked Eleanor.

“He’s doing fine, he sends his love. How are you holding up, little sister?”

“I’m good. I have the young lady here at the house who is writing my biography.”

“Does she believe you?” asked David.

“I don’t think she did at the start, but she just met Lizzy B. and the rest of the group, so I think she just woke up to the reality of our story. Like everyone else, they don’t believe it until they see it!” She paused for a moment. “When will you be back in town, David?”

“In a week or hopefully sooner,” he said. “Stephanie is driving me bananas about taking these trips all the time.”

“She just misses you, just like I do,” said Eleanor.

“I know, Eleanor, but you know we have to keep our eyes on our beloved roses.”

“David, how are the kids?”

“Fine... Eleanor is enjoying college and Peter wants to join the family business as soon as he graduates from high school. You know how he loves going on the trips with me.

“Yes, I know,” said Eleanor. “Give my love to all of you and call me when you get back into town.”

“I will little sister. Give my love to our roses and tell them I will be back soon.”

“I will. Bye, David,” she said and hung up the receiver.

She stood by the phone for a moment, thinking about how much she missed the traveling and the journeys to find the other four roses. She sighed heavily.

“How are we doing?” she asked as she walked into the room.

“Oh, we’re doing just fine,” said Adoni and Amadeus.

“So, what do you think of my roses, Priscilla?”

“They’re everything you described. This is just amazing. My boss really didn’t think it was true and neither did I, but boy, was I wrong. My boss just thought it would make a great story. I don’t know what I’m going to tell him.”

“Just don’t tell him anything until you’re totally done with the biography. Then let him read it. You can take it from there,” said Elizabeth.

“I think I’ll do that,” said Priscilla.

“I still have a little to do around here so if you don’t mind, I should be getting to it,” said Miss Eleanor.

“Oh, not at all, what time can I come over tomorrow?” she asked.

“How about nine in the morning,” said Eleanor.

“Nine it is,” said Priscilla and she said her good-byes.

When she had gone, Miss Eleanor sat down on the sofa.

“Long day for you,” said Elizabeth to Miss Eleanor.

“Exhausting, my lovely, very exhausting,” answered Miss Eleanor.

Later, when she sat down for supper with her roses, she told them a bit of what she had discussed with Priscilla.

“I told her what I could remember,” said Miss Eleanor.

“You did a great job, I just know it,” said Elizabeth.

“Thank you, Lizzy B.,” said Miss Eleanor.

“Why did you ask her to be here so early?” asked the twins.

“Early? Most people in the world aren’t sleepy heads like you three!” laughed Miss Eleanor.

Nani also started laughing.

“Yes, you three are sleepy heads,” he said.

“Oh, Nani, you’re one of the three,” laughed Miss Eleanor.

After supper, Miss Eleanor cleaned up and took the roses into the living room to watch some telly. She had three different televisions set up in the room, in different places. Giovanni had his own because he adored sports. The twins adored theirs because they would only watch cartoons, or racing — any kind of racing if it was fast. And Elizabeth and Eleanor shared one, because they both enjoyed the same programs. David had a friend of his who was good with electronics and created tiny headsets that fit the roses so that they wouldn’t disturb Miss Eleanor or Elizabeth.

“What are we watching tonight?” asked Elizabeth.

“Let’s see, it is Monday... Of course, our favorite, ‘Highway to Heaven’,” said Miss Eleanor.

They both still adored Michael Landon, even though he had passed away a couple of years before. They still enjoyed the beauty of the show.

After ‘Highway to Heaven,’ they all got ready for bed.

“Good night, my precious roses,” said Miss Eleanor.

“Good night!” they all sang in tune.

“Don’t let the bed bugs bite and let the angels kiss you good night,” she said.

As Miss Eleanor laid there, she thought about the day and how long ago it seemed. How time flies, she thought. She was wondering what tomorrow had in store when she finally fell asleep.

The next morning, Miss Eleanor got up early like always and started to bake a fresh batch of peanut butter cookies. By the time Priscilla had arrived, Miss Eleanor was already on her second batch.

“The tea is ready,” she said, as she opened the door for Priscilla.

They walked into the room where Priscilla had set up the day before.

“Priscilla,” said Miss Eleanor, “can you get the tea and some of the cookies in the kitchen while I go and see if Elizabeth is awake? I know she really would like to be here to listen to the second day of the biography... That is, if you don’t mind?”

“Not at all,” said Priscilla.

“Thank you my dear, let me see if Elizabeth is up.”

As she walked into the bedroom, she could see that Elizabeth was up and ready to be moved out.

“Good morning, my Lizzy B.,” she said.

“Good morning, Eleanor. Is Priscilla already here?”

“Here and ready to go, Elizabeth.”

“Well, let’s get started!” said Elizabeth.

As Miss Eleanor brought Elizabeth into the room, Priscilla was pouring the tea and setting peanut butter cookies out on small plates for Miss Eleanor and herself.

“Where did we leave off yesterday?” asked Miss Eleanor.

Priscilla checked her notes.

“You had just found out about the different powers that each of the roses possessed. David was wishing he had some magical powers of his own,” smiled Priscilla.

“Oh yes, I remember that day,” said Elizabeth. “That was the day you brought the rose food.”

# Chapter Fourteen



*If you enjoyed what you have read and want more, please go to **closetbooks.com** and purchase our novel. Thank you. We have many more novels that will be released in the very near future.*