

Among the Roses

The sun was hanging low in the sky and tiny snowflakes drifted down in small clumps here and there. Julia clutched her thin cloak more tightly around herself, and blew on her nearly frostbitten hands. She walked slowly up the slope towards her small wood cabin. She spied her father's ax resting against the stacked wood. It reminded her of how hard her father worked to take care of Julia and her mother.

The alpine wind whipped wildly around her, burning her face. Julia could see the candlelight flickering from the windowsill sending a warm feeling through her chilled bones. For eighteen years she had lived in these mountains. She walked into the barn and set down her loaf of bread. She pulled the milk pail off of its hook and sat down on the small stool. She pulled gently on Buttercreams' udder and a warm stream of milk fell into the bucket, filling the air with its creamy scent. She fell into the familiar rhythm of milking, letting her thoughts wander. Soon the bucket was filled up with milk. She made sure all of the goats and other animals had warm fresh hay before she opened the barn door and walked into her cozy house.

She entered to see her mother bustling around in the kitchen making a warm stew and rolls with fresh churned butter. She took the full pail to the back porch and looked out up to the sky. She looked up and saw the full moon sitting proudly in the sky, staring down at her. She smiled up at her faraway friend. There weren't very many companions up on the mountain but she could always count on the faithful moon whenever she felt lonely.

She went back inside and hung her small well-worn coat on the rack. She had been needing a new coat for a long time. However, the wait was nearly over. The big market day where they made most of their money was held at the bottom of the mountain only once a year. She hoped that they would sell enough goods this year to be able to buy her a new coat. It was early spring but the frosty air and bone chilling snow still clung to the mountainside. They all sat down for dinner and ate heartily.

Tomorrow was a big day for everyone and excitement was in the air. It was the much-awaited market day. After dinner Julia rushed to her room and pulled on her stained nightgown, and shuffled into bed. She blew out the candle and dreamt of the next glorious morning and what the market would be like this year. She loved the bustle of market day, all the different people and all the little stalls with wonderful treasures. She slipped into a deep sleep of seemingly endless dreams that filled her head with wonderful thoughts and hopes. She loved her mountain, but life could get lonely up there with just her beloved parents. She awoke to the rooster crowing faintly from inside the barn. She jumped out of bed and pulled on her best dress. She had her mother style her hair up nice in a pretty crown braid. Then her mother let her pick out one of her nice hats to finish off the outfit. She picked a hat with little baby's breath flowers and a light blue feather.

She walked outside and stepped into the wagon and sat down on the creaky bench. The wagon was loaded to the brim. Julia's mother looked at her father, and her father nodded mischievously back. She rushed inside and closed the door. Julia was puzzled. What was her mother doing? She came out of the door carrying a white parasol with yellow daisies in her left hand. She handed it to Julia and told her that they had been saving it for her and thought that she would enjoy it. Julia was speechless. She had no words to thank them with for this exquisite gift. Her parents looked at her face and knew what she couldn't find words to say. "We've had an especially good year on the farm Julia." Her father said. "We both think you've worked so hard and wanted you to have something nice." She hugged him tightly. Then her father helped her ma onto the wagon. Pa pulled on the reins and off they went. The sun shone brightly down on them

as they rolled down the mountain. With the sun out and a warm breeze rolling through the trees, it truly felt like spring. She opened up her parasol and held it above her head to shade her face from the sun, feeling like a queen.

They arrived in town and parked the wagon in the stalls and unhitched the horses. The town was full of bustling streets and busy market stands. They got to work setting up their own stand filled with all their homemade goods and Father's fine wood crafts.

It was the most exciting thing that she got to do all year. All around her, women in large fancy dresses and men in suits and coats bustled about noisily, bargaining with merchants, and trying not to lose any family members in the ocean of people. Everyone from nearby mountains and valleys were here today to get supplies for the year. The warm sun shone down on Julia warming her bones. The air around her was heating up, and with every passing minute it felt more and more like summer. She was leaning up against the stall table looking out into the crowd when her mother placed two full gold coins into her hands. "One last surprise for our girl!" Ma said. Ma told her to leave the stand for the rest of the afternoon and to treat herself to something good this year. Julia felt so spoiled after the parasol and tender care from her mother this morning already. She heartily thanked her mother and ran off down the lane hardly believing her good fortune.

Every market stall was filled with wonderful things. She came to a market stall where a boy her age was selling clay pots. She stopped to stare at a pretty green pitcher that was smooth and glossy. The boy working at the stall had sparkling blue eyes and a kind face. On top of his head was a messy mop of blonde hair and a blue cap the same shade as her dress. She couldn't help smiling a bit when he looked at her. She fixed her gaze back on the pitcher and absently started twisting a strand of her pretty brown hair that had fallen down from her braids. Her brown eyes continued to stare fixedly at the pitcher. Finally, he asked her in a soft voice if she would like to buy it. She answered yes and handed over one gold coin. He thanked her as he carefully wrapped up the green pitcher. As he handed it of he told Julia to come back around sometime. She nodded slowly. As she turned to leave he quickly called over to her saying his name was William. Julia said in reply, "I'm Julia." He smiled and Julia walked away. She looked back one last time before continuing on, and saw William still watching her, half hanging out of his stall. He lifted his hand in a small wave. His shy smile surprised her. She waved her hand with the pitcher in it, laughing in spite of herself. She skipped merrily away, swinging the brown paper bag.

Julia stopped and took out the pitcher to admire it. As she looked closer, she saw William's initials carved into the bottom in tiny letters. She ran her fingers across his name thinking of the way he had smiled at her. What if she never saw William again, and never see his wonderful smile? She remembered his words, "Won't you come back around sometime?" She smiled and decided to imagine seeing him in town sometime. "If only!" she thought, but she knew the world was so full of unexpected surprises.

Back at his pottery stall William could not push Julia out of his mind. He thought of how she had smiled at him, and how lovely everything about her was. He worried, like Julia that they would never meet again. Something about her bright eyes and sweet smile had him hooked. Finally, he could no longer bear the thought of never seeing Julia again. He closed up his shop and ran off to find her.

William ran down each lane looking at everyone closely. It was only when he reached one of the last lanes, that he realized how impossible his plan sounded, would she even want to see him?

In the meantime, Julia had wandered nearly the whole market. She had found a fine coat that would keep her warm for many more winters. It was time to be getting back to her parents. On her way, she paused by the big fountain in the main square and sat down. As she looked up, Julia saw William running frantically through the town square. His head was turning this way and that, as if he was looking for someone. It wouldn't be lady like, but she couldn't let him go without saying goodbye. She got up and shouted his name. He stopped quickly and saw her. "Oh Julia!", he exclaimed, "Thank goodness I've found you." he said out of breath.

He told her how he hadn't been able to stop thinking about her.

Julia just smiled.

"Come on," William said "I've got something to show you."

William grabbed her hand and began pulling her through the streets to the edge of the village. Soon they were far from the bustling noise of the market. "Where are we going..." Julia said laughing. She paused in the middle of her sentence as she stared straight ahead of her. They were in a beautiful field of flaming red alpine roses. Everywhere she looked she saw them. On the left side of the field was a beautiful waterfall! The mist rose up from the bottom of the waterfall. Together they walked through the field. Everywhere Julia looked there were roses. Too many to count. She was amazed, so bewildered that she didn't even notice that William had grasped her hand.

They sat down in the roses and talked for hours. They laughed and shared stories. Somewhere off in the distance they heard the pealing of bells, it was getting late. She quickly pinned her hat back onto the crown of her head. Together they raced back back into the town square. William helped to carry her things all the way back to her parents. The sun was hanging low in the sky when they arrived back at Julia's wagon.

Julia thanked William for the most wonderful day in all her life. As they said their goodbye's tears stung the corners of her eyes. Before William melted away into the crowd of shoppers, he promised Julia that he would find her again. Her heart was full of hope as they rolled back up the mountain. Julia noticed an alpine rose in her hair. She remembered that William had put it there. The thought of William warmed her heart with excitement.

Many years have passed since that day. William didn't forget Julia. He came to her small mountain home and asked her parents for permission to court her. It didn't take long before Julia and William were married. They soon welcomed two lovely children and she was no longer lonely with only the moon for a friend. Julia spent many wonderful years grateful, not wasting them away waiting for her dreams to come true. Julia and William spent many cheerful days walking through the same beautiful meadow of roses where they had fallen in love years ago.