

Chapter 16

Mood Swings

Rebecca looked at the raging waters of the river. It was hard to believe that they would eventually find a place to cross. Even though they had walked now for a few days, they had not yet found the fork in the river that Wolf had talked about, and both of their spirits were beginning to sag. When they looked back, the mountains they had crossed still seemed dreadfully close.

Silver Sky, who had been so excited to start this section of their journey, now found that walking along the rocky banks was more clumsy and challenging than he had at first expected. He preferred the grassy areas away from the water. He found himself continuously at odds with Rebecca, who wanted to take a more direct route.

They found themselves walking in grumpy silence a great deal of the time. Silver Sky wanted to lighten the mood, but was not sure how. Rebecca being in a foul mood was something he was not used to.

He looked up to the sky, where the sun hung heavy high above.

"How about a break, dearest?" he asked the sullen little girl.

"We need to keep going," was the curt reply.

"You're human, now. You need to eat and rest from time to time," Silver Sky prodded.

Rebecca shot him a withering glare, but found a soft spot to sit and rummage through the backpack for something to eat. She knew he was right. She also knew that she was being more than a bit rude and grumpy. She felt guilty. She hadn't found a way to talk to Silver Sky about the many things Wolf had said. And she wasn't sure she wanted to.

She pulled a piece of dried pineapple out of the backpack. They had proven to be her favorite. She sucked on the leathery fruit while staring silently towards the river. She had quickly gotten used to her new body, as, she suspected, had Silver Sky. Sure, it had its occasional unpleasantness, but overall, she thought, the pros outweighed the cons.

Perhaps that's what worried her most. She knew Silver Sky enjoyed his new body. Would he want to go back to Timothy if it meant returning to his old form? She was even having doubts about herself. Why had Joe decided to stay human? What would he say when they got there?

Seeking to lighten the mood, she dug a prune out of the bag. "Try it," she prodded Silver Sky.

Silver Sky looked at the wrinkled fruit with suspicion. "Don't wanna," he replied. "It looks gross and old," he added.

Rebecca giggled. "Come on, just taste it, silly."

Silver Sky glared at the prune like it was going to attack him. So far he had been perfectly content with the grasses and plants that were available along their trek. Rebecca seemed to really enjoy these shriveled up chewy things, though. He had to admit, it did seem tempting.

"Okay, but only a little," he said, hesitantly.

Scrunching up his eyes, he opened his mouth. Rebecca chose not to go for the "a little" idea and dropped the entire prune on Silver Sky's tongue.

Without chewing, he just sat there a moment with a horrified look on his face. "It's squishy," he stated simply.

Rebecca started to giggle, which frustrated Silver Sky who defiantly chewed the dried fruit. While he wanted to mad, he was finding the taste not altogether unpleasant. In fact, it had a sweetness that the grasses didn't have. He didn't want to admit it, but it was good.

Rebecca smiled, pulling some dried apple slices from the backpack. "Here, try these, too," she said, glad to see Silver Sky's mood changing. They both had been grumpy for far too long.

They sat in silent thought for a few minutes, each munching on the dried fruit and watching the rushing water. The sounds of the river, white noise at first, took on a relaxing gurgle and flow. As they sat, a gentle breeze brushed across the wild plants swaying them back and forth.

"It's beautiful here," said Silver Sky, breaking the silence. "Do you think it'll be as nice when we get there?" he asked.

"I don't know," replied Rebecca. "I hope so."

"Why would you leave this?" pondered the horse.

The now all too familiar knot of worry returned to Rebecca. She had no good answer for that question, either. It was a question she had asked herself many times since they left. "I don't know," she said, again.

Silver Sky looked back towards the mountains, covered in snow despite the warm spring weather. It didn't matter, he thought to himself, as long as Timothy was there. Now that he was a real horse, they could do for real all the things they pretended to do before. He imagined himself running across wide plains with Timothy on his back, charging in to battles of knights and monsters. The thought put him in a considerably better mood.

"It'll work out," he said reassuringly to Rebecca. He nudged her with his big horse nose, causing her to tip over in a fit of laughter.