

Rose

(Or Sleeping Beauty – The College Way)

By Elizabeth Dresdow ©

The burning sensation in her throat woke her up. Rose gasped and swallowed. Her throat was so swollen she could barely finish the swallow. Rose glanced at the clock and groaned. She had fallen asleep again after turning her alarm off and slept through her first class. She only had ten minutes to get to her next one. Why did this always happen to her? She swallowed again, cringing. She had always been a slightly sickly child, especially when she didn't get enough rest. It was like a curse; she guessed. She thought about just skipping her next class, but she already had used all her skips, and she really wanted to pass the class.

Rose groaned again and jumped out of bed, wishing, and not for the first time, that she could just call the Doctor, and he would take her to class in the Tardis. Or perhaps that Hermione would lend her a time turner. She needed to go to bed earlier and get more sleep. She was sick and exhausted, and it was only the third week of class.

She spit toothpaste into the sink and grabbed her blue backpack. The many buttons that represented her favorite fandoms clinked together, as she sprinted out the door, past the *Lord of the Rings* and *Tangled* posters on the wall.

She arrived at calculus late and out of breath which made her a bit light headed. Her throat felt like sandpaper. She slid into her seat. She heard a snicker and saw Will laughing at her. Her face burned. The one time she got him to notice her, he laughed at her being late. Rose felt her face flush at the thought. She had the biggest crush on a guy who barely noticed her. The

thought sent her into a daydream about how to get Will to notice her. She didn't even hear the professor talking about integration.

(^^)

Rose walked up the steps of the student center a few days later. Her throat was swollen now instead of sore, and she felt a tad better. She was going to meet Meg, her roommate, and they were going to go over what her calculus professor had talked about in class that day. Rose hadn't understood any of it, though it was probably her fault, she had daydreamed again about Will. This time they had visited Hogwarts and fought Umbridge.

“Naw, I understood what he was saying just fine,” Rose started when she heard Will’s voice. He was sitting on one of the couches with his feet up on the coffee table. His hair glinted in the sun coming in from the window and gave him a halo-like radiance. He was surrounded by a few of his friends, two girls on either side of him.

“But you weren’t confused by what he said about the numbers turning negative?” one of the girls asked.

“Nope, I could help you if you wanted,” Will said, extending his hand towards her papers.

She smiled and gave them to him. “Thanks.”

Rose turned away. She wished that Will would offer to help her.

“Rose!” Meg called her from across the student center. “I’m over here.”

Rose dragged her feet over to Meg, not wanting to work, and sat down. “Will he ever notice me?”

“Who?” Meg rolled her eyes. “Are we on the topic of Will again?”

“I mean if he at least noticed I was here. I at least just want to be friends,” Rose said.

Meg laughed, “I think you want to be more than friends!”

Rose frowned at her. She coughed. The cold was in her chest.

“Oh, come on Rose!” Meg said. “Let’s work on that calculus. I mean can’t you just let your boy craziness go?”

“I’m not boy crazy! I’m just.....I’m just waiting for my.....my prince,” Rose took a shuddering breath, she felt another cough coming.

“Do you really think a boy who doesn’t even acknowledge your existence will be your prince charming?” Meg looked at Rose with concern. “Can’t you just come out of your fantasy world and see reason, Rose? I mean look at yourself, you have barely gotten sleep. You are tired and sick. If you don’t watch yourself and wake up to the real world, you will be even sicker. Stop sleeping and wake up.”

What Meg said made Rose think of a boy that she knew from back home. He was nerdy and strange. He lived in a fantasy world. She was worried. Was she becoming like Jacob? He wasn’t exactly someone she wanted to become. In fact, she would be perfectly fine if she didn’t see him again. What if she started living in a fantasy world because of her daydreams and fantasies about Will? Would Will ever notice her?

(^^)

Rose rushed to her next class. For once she wasn’t late, but she needed to hurry because she needed to talk to the professor. She had been so sick last night that she hadn’t been able to

complete the homework. She hoped he would be understanding. This time she wished that she could somehow get transported to Narnia and not have to deal with professors and homework and due dates.

Ooofh. Rose fell back with a thump; all the wind knocked out of her. She couldn't breathe for a moment, and panic surfaced. She coughed.

"Oh, I am sorry!" a voice that Rose knew quite well said.

She looked up into the handsome face of Will. He extended a hand to her. "I wasn't looking where I was going. I apologize."

"It's....it's alright," Rose said. "I'm not hurt."

"Well, that's good," Will grinned. She took his hand, and he helped her to her feet. It was as if an electric shock ran through her body at their touch, and she shivered with excitement. "Here you are."

Will was handing her the books he had knocked out of her arms.

"Thanks," Rose said, smiling.

"Better watch where you're going next time," Will said. He left her without another glance.

(^^)

Rose ran along the sidewalk. The morning air pierced her lungs and made her chest tighten. She coughed into her arm, gasping as her chest exploded in pain. She was late to her first class of the day because she had overslept, again! No matter how hard she tried to get to class on time, she always ran late. Every morning she checked her phone for an email or text about a

canceled class – hoping there would be one. But there almost never was, and she always had to pull herself out of bed. It was the hardest part of the day, especially when sick.

She slipped into class with only seconds to spare. The professor eyed her. Rose couldn't read his eyes. She knew he wasn't happy. She decided to stare straight at the back of the head of the guy in front of her to avoid his gaze. His name was Will. And Rose might have a slight crush on him. She pulled out a notebook and pencil to at least appear studious. Will had sat in front of Rose so far during the semester, and she ended up dreaming about him.

As the professor went on and on about the differences of Grimm's fairytales and Disney fairytales, and how Grimm's were much darker, Rose stared at the little circular spot on the back of Will's head.

"Basically, in Cinderella, the stepsisters cut off parts of their toes and heels to fit in the glass slippers. And in Sleeping Beauty, the many princes who tried to free her, got stuck in the briars and died a horrible death....." the professor droned on and on.

Rose thought the class was pretty cool because they got to talk about fairy tales and myths and their effect on society. But it was at 8 a.m., so most of the time, she zoned out.

Will's hair was dirty blonde with a hint of red, which Rose adored. His hair curled around the little circle at the back of his head. It was short, and went up a little in the front to a point in the middle of his forehead. She coughed again, bringing her back to reality. A lingering pain stayed in her chest, and she winced.

"But....you know, the story of Sleeping Beauty is basically the same as Disney, without the evil fairy turning into a dragon and Briar Rose living with the fairies to keep her safe. She did sleep for a hundred years....."

*I wish I could sleep for a hundred years.....*Rose's eyelids drooped. Will turned his head as he wrote something down. The hair on his neck rippled with his movement. She imagined falling asleep, and Will waking her up by kissing her.

"I will see you next week. Remember to read chapters 4 and 8 for Monday. Have a great weekend," the professor said, picking up the numerous books and papers he had on his desk, his balding white hair gleaming in the morning sun coming in from the window.

Rose's head jerked up as Will stood up and collected his books. The muscles rippled in his shirt sleeves as he picked up one of his larger textbooks from the floor. He didn't look at her once and just walked out of the room. Rose sighed - dream princes would have to stay in her dreams.

(^^)

Rose fell back on her bed, groaning as she dropped the mythology book on her stomach. So much reading, and she wasn't even halfway done. She coughed; another spasm from her chest forced its way up. It didn't help that she was sick. She closed her eyes. She needed rest; yes, that's what would be most helpful now. Homework could be put off. She had so much to do. It was making her woozy just thinking about it. She threw the mythology book on the floor, not caring about marking a page, and curled up on her bed. She was going to dream about her fairy tales, not read about them for some class.

She coughed....and coughed....and a little phlegm came up. Rose looked at it in the tissue, and in her exhausted mind it registered, she had just coughed up blood. Her eyes closed, exhaustion taking over, and she fell back on the pillow, not bothering to pull up the blanket.

Her hand holding the tissue dropped over the side of the bed, and a drop of the blood transferred to her finger, as if she had just pricked herself.

(^^)

“Here, Rose, let’s travel the universe together!” Will’s outstretched hand reached for hers from where he was standing – in the doors of the Tardis.

“But Rose doesn’t stay with the Doctor! She gets separated,” Rose heard herself say, though she couldn’t see herself. Where was she? She must have been floating in space because the Tardis was not on Earth. This thought unnerved her, and she wondered what she was breathing. Then she remembered; the Tardis had a bubble around it that kept you breathing in space.

“Don’t worry, Rose. I won’t leave you. I will kiss you and make you all better,” Will said. His smile lit up his face, and he reached out even farther.

Rose still hesitated. She wasn’t sure why....why her dream-self wasn’t responding? Oh, she knew she was in a dream? Was this a dream? Rose knew about lucid dreaming, the ability to manipulate dreams. Was that what she was doing? Or was she really floating in space with her prince? And the Tardis....and....a metal dog? K-9 floated by, followed by an Ood and...a dragon?

Will’s face contorted when he saw the dragon. Rose watched, horrified, as he slowly changed, turning into a short, red haired, freckled boy with glasses, her neighbor from back home.

“Oh, look at that, I’m ginger!” he said. The way he looked at his body reminded Rose of the way the Doctor always looked at himself after regenerating. Jacob looked at himself, and his surroundings in such awe.

Fire from nearby narrowly missed the Tardis and Jacob. Rose wanted Will back. Jacob was far from being a handsome prince.

“So there’s a dragon now, eh?” Jacob asked her.

“I....I guess....” Rose said.

“We shall have to defeat it!” Jacob pulled a sword out from inside the Tardis behind him and brandished it. Then, promptly dropped it into space. “Oops.”

Rose shook her head. She never got along well with Jacob, who was a very odd child and lived in a fantasy world. Rose loved fantasy and daydreamed about it a lot, but Jacob was different. He lived it - in a weird way.

One time, when they were both eleven, Jacob suddenly decided that the bus was a sea serpent and had to be stopped. This, Rose thought, was because he had just watched *Enchanted*, and saw the prince stabbing the bus, thinking it was a wild animal. Jacob beat the inside of the bus, the floor, the chairs, and even the dashboard, with his ruler. The kids had screamed and cried, and the bus driver accidentally gotten hit in the eye and was bleeding. Rose was the only one who could stop Jacob. She went up to him, and convinced him that he wasn’t in a movie. For some reason, he listened to her when she spoke, no matter what she said. But that day was very hard to get him to listen. She had been forced to go with him to the principal’s office and back home with him that day. Jacob had not been allowed to ride the bus since then.

Then in 8th grade, Jacob had been convinced that Rose was his lady who needed rescuing. He called her Rapunzel because of her long blonde hair and followed her around like a puppy, everywhere. It had been super annoying. She had always loved having natural blonde hair before then. She had dyed it strawberry blonde after this episode, and it had stuck ever since. Besides, it looked nice with her green eyes. Rose was so excited when she found out he was going to a different college than she was. She did not have to deal with him anymore.

But why he was in her dream now; made no sense. She wanted her prince back to save her from the dragon. Knowing Jacob, he would probably set the distant planet on fire trying to save her from the dragon. He was also a major klutz, and could probably set the sun on fire without trying, even though the sun was already a gigantic ball of fire. He was that strange.

Rose felt herself falling. She screamed, and wondered why she could hear her voice, because space wasn't supposed to have sound. She landed with a thud in a garden with a high tower. It looked like the garden from *Tangled*. A waterfall splashed daintily in a nearby pond. Vegetation grew rampant throughout the garden, and flowers of all colors dotted the greenery. Vines fell over a cave, creating a natural curtain. The tall tower had a roof slightly like a mushroom and had vines and briars growing around it. At the very top was a window, but no door.

Rose looked up at the tower. Will stuck his head out the window.

“Ah, has my princess come to rescue me?” He said. He was dressed like Flynn Rider, complete with smolder. He didn’t look like someone who needed rescuing. Rose was pretty sure he could just climb down the tower like Flynn without much difficulty.

“Shouldn’t it be the other way around?” Rose said. “I’m Rapunzel.”

“I’m pretty sure you are Sleeping Beauty. Yes, you look like her as well.”

Rose mumbled, “I’ve always loved Rapunzel more.” It was odd that she said this since she had hated that story ever since the Jacob incident.

“Well, then, rescue me!” Will threw his arms out and mimed letting down his hair. Rose smirked.

“I’ll try....” She stepped over to the tower and put her foot on one of the sturdier looking vines. She hoisted herself up and looked for the next foothold. The next one was covered in briars, and Rose looked down first to make sure her feet were in shoes. She didn’t want to step on anything sharp and pointy barefoot. She might fall into a deep sleep. Wait, wasn’t she already asleep? Rose wasn’t sure anymore which was real and which was fake.

Climbing the tower was slow work. She had made it about a quarter of the way up when Will called down, “Well, don’t take all day then.”

She looked up at him in the window. His face was scowling, and he leaned out, watching her. “I’ll just sit up here and wait, and when you get up here in hundred years, maybe I will still be alive.”

“I’m doing the best I can!” she yelled back.

Just then her foot slipped on one of the briars, and she sucked in her breath as she felt it cut into her. It hurt bad, even in a dream....was she still in a dream? She was bleeding. She could feel it. Her right pointer finger throbbed, and she realized she had pricked herself while she was trying to keep her balance. A little pinprick of blood showed up. She coughed. And then she fell....and fell...and fell, past the place she had started to climb.

Ooofh. She landed hard on her back, but not on the ground.

“Yikes, that was harder than I thought!” Jacob was back. And she was lying in his arms.

He had caught her fall.

She looked back up at the tower, expecting to see Will. But the tower and Will had vanished. Her surroundings had changed again. Jacob disappeared as well.

She was standing on a green hill, overlooking a large field. Horses galloped in the distance, and Rose squinted to get a better look at them. They seemed to run towards her, but they were still a long ways off. She was surprised to find a golden hall not too far off. She slowly registered where she was.

A woman dressed in white stood on the far edge of the golden hall. Her white dress billowed out behind her like a sail. Her long golden hair flapped back and forth. Rose looked back and forth between her and the riders and realized she was in Rohan. She still couldn’t see herself, but something tugged at her legs like a dress blowing in the persistent wind. Rose wished she could see what she was wearing. She loved medieval dresses.

Movement behind her made her turn, and Will was there, riding up on a beautiful strawberry roan. He wore a green sash across his chest, like part of a Scottish kilt only without the plaid. His armor was bright gold, and she had to squint to look at his face because the sun was reflected off the armor.

“Rose,” he said, extending his arm to her when he got closer. “Come ride with me! I can take you home to a safe place.”

“Why do we need to go to a safe place?”

“Because the Uruk-hai are coming. The battle is coming. It isn’t safe,” Will said. His expression was the same as it was when he was worried about a test; fake worry shown on his face so his friends would think he was worried. He was a genius at school. Tests didn’t faze him. And judging by that expression, he didn’t seem particularly worried about the impending threat.

“Will you keep me safe? Where will you take me?” Rose asked. Why was she so hesitant?

“Come with me, Rose,” Will insisted.

Rose took his hand, and he helped her swing up to the back of the horse. She put her arms around his middle and hugged his back. His armor cut into her skin, and she loosened her grip a little. They started across the plain to the golden hall. Eowyn, the girl in the white dress, had disappeared, and other horsemen were entering the city.

Will followed them inside. Rose craned her head for a glimpse of Aragorn, Gandalf, Legolas, and Gimli. She couldn’t believe that she was here. It all looked so real.

Will dismounted, and helped her down. They were at the foot of the Meduseld, the Golden Hall itself.

“Alright, stay here,” Will said. He remounted, and rode out of the gate before Rose could open her mouth. Well, that wasn’t very nice. He just dumped her. Why did she think that he liked her? She was so confused.

She walked up the steps of Meduseld to see what was going on inside. Just as she got to the top of the steps, the scene changed, however, and she was at a bridge this time.

The stone bridge crossed a small river. Mist hung in the horizon. Dark pine trees covered one side of the bank, while the bank to Rose's right opened onto another bright green plain. In the distance, Rose saw a castle and heard bagpipes were playing.

She craned her neck looking for where she might be. She was also looking to see if Will would show up. She waited on the bridge, but the only thing that changed was the mist, which kept rolling in from farther upstream. Rose shivered.

“Do you need a coat?”

Rose turned, and her heart fell. It was Jacob this time. “No, thanks,” she said.

Jacob shrugged. “You just looked cold.”

“Do you know where we are?” Rose said.

“Somewhere in the Scottish Highlands, I would guess,” Jacob said. “Let’s explore!”

“Ok....” Rose was hesitant. She wanted to wait to see if Will would show up.

“Come on!” Jacob grabbed her hand and pulled her down the bridge towards the more inviting side, the open plain. They ran through the grass, hand in hand, and Rose felt herself laughing. It reminded her of when they were kids and Jacob and she would run through the cornfields on adventures.

In the distance, they spotted a castle, and they made their way towards it. When they were almost to the town, Rose's chest contracted, and she coughed worse than before. Jacob stopped, concern rushing over his face.

“Are you alright?”

But Rose could not answer him; the coughing was too bad. Jacob scooped her up in his arms and jogged to the castle. Rose wasn't sure how he was doing it....but hey; it was a dream.

The town was surprisingly deserted when they entered. They had no trouble getting to the castle. Rose still found it difficult to breathe, and it seemed to be getting worse.

Jacob entered the castle. There were no guards. He took a dozen turns before ending up in a nursery.

"Here, I'm going to put you down in bed," Jacob said.

He walked to a baby cradle. Rose opened her mouth to say she wouldn't fit. She was twenty. Why would he put her in a baby cradle? But before she could say anything, she realized she was lying inside and curled up on her side like a kidney bean, her favorite way to sleep.

"Sleep well!" Jacob said.

Rose looked up, and almost screamed. Jacob had grown to the size of a giant. Either that....or she had shrunk? She tried to look down at herself, but still couldn't see herself.

A door opened somewhere, and she could hear a man's voice and a woman's.

"I know you didn't mean to leave her out! We didn't have enough gold plates for the fairies. But now, our child has this terrible curse," the woman was saying.

An enormous, beautiful woman's face looked over the side of the cradle where Jacob's had been a moment before. He had disappeared again. Rose was thankful for that.

"Oh, my darling, baby!" the woman cried, reaching down at Rose.

Baby? Rose thought. I really hope I didn't just turn into a baby.....

“It is ok, Esmeralda. We shall get rid of all the spinning wheels so that she will never prick her finger on one,” the man said, from somewhere in the room.

“I know...you said that. But will it be enough? I want my baby safe!” The woman, Esmeralda answered.

“She will be safe. She just needs to sleep and heal,” the man said.

*Sleep and heal? I'm pretty sure that's not how the story of Sleeping Beauty goes....*Rose was suddenly jerked to the side in the cradle, as if Esmeralda had rocked her back and forth, but had pulled a little too hard.

In an instance, cradle disappeared.....and she was falling again....falling and falling into nothingness, and all she could think of was how she hoped that Jacob wasn't there to catch her again. *Let it be my prince this time!*

(^^)

Rose groaned and rolled over. Someone...somewhere was calling her name.

“Rose? Are you ok? Rose?”

Rose opened her eyes, blearily. The room was out of focus and spinning....spinning like a wheel of a spinning wheel, out of control. She coughed, deep and hard, hacking.

“Oh, my, gosh! Rose!”

She was vaguely aware of something wet dribbling down her cheek.

“Rose, is that blood?”

She turned her head towards the voice and found her roommate, Meg, standing there.

“Oh, my, gosh, Rose, that’s blood! What’s wrong with you?” Meg grabbed a Kleenex, and wiped her mouth.

Rose tried to answer, but just coughed some more.

“So.....*cough*....tired...*cough*...must sleep *cough* needle ... *cough* ... spinning wheel....*cough*.”

“Rose?” Meg asked her haltingly. “I am calling the clinic. You need to go to the hospital. Did you cut yourself?” she said, pointing to the blood on her finger.

Rose shook her head. “I want....*cough*....my prince...*cough*.”

Meg pulled out her phone and dialed the number. “You go back to sleep. I will take care of you. I will help you get well.”

Meg’s eyes were full of fear. Rose put her unbloodied hand on Meg’s arm, “Thank you.” Meg smiled at her.

“Hello, nurse? My roommate is very sick. She needs to go to the ER. She’s coughing up blood.”

Meg turned to Rose again, just as Rose started to close her eyes. “You will get well again. I promise.” She kissed her forehead. “Sleep, Rose. Sleep for as long as you need to.”

(^^)

Rose opened her eyes. For a moment, she was confused about where she was. Matt Smith’s face and the Tardis stared back at her. Nope, she was not in a dream this time. This time reality was staring back at her. She was at home in her own bed.

Slowly she sat up in bed and was surprised that she could sit up without any pain in her chest. She breathed in and sighed; smiling. No pain or discomfort. And, for once in her life, she was not tired. She jumped out of bed, eager for what today would bring.

There was a knock at her bedroom door. Rose finished pulling her Beauty and the Beast shirt over her head. “Come in!”

The door opened slowly, and Jacob poked his head in, “Hello, Rose. Are you feeling any better?”

Rose’s mouth dropped open, and she pinched herself. “Hi....hi, Jacob. I am.”

Jacob grinned. “Good! I just came over to make sure you were feeling better.” He held out his hand and revealed a small wrapped package. “I brought this over to make you feel better.”

Rose walked over to the bedroom door and took the package. Slowly pulling apart the paper, she smiled as she unwrapped the DVD of Sleeping Beauty. “Oh, Jacob.”

“I thought, since you know, Disney was our childhood, that you might want to relive it. When I’m sick, watching Disney always helped me feel better.”

Rose gave Jacob a hug. “Thank you! I love it so much.” She looked at her friend standing in the door. Maybe she had been a little hard on him. Sure he was a little odd sometimes, but he did genuinely care for her. “Do you....do you want to watch it together?”

Jacob’s face lit up, “Oh boy, I definitely would!”

Rose exited her bedroom, and she realized that since waking up, she had not thought of Will once. She didn’t care anymore. Why should she be obsessed with a boy who didn’t care for

her when she had people in her life that did care for her? Rose smiled. She was done sleeping, and ready to live in the real world surrounded by the people who did care for her.

Jacob and Rose belted out “Once Upon a Dream” as they danced around the living room, laughing, just like they were children in kindergarten.