

Land, one two three jump. Land, one two three four, one two three four, one two jump. The feeling is like no other. A musty barn smell wafts through the air as we leap over the jumps.

Horses have been most of my life ever since my mother disappeared. I could count on them, and I loved them with all my heart. For days I would feel like there was no reason to talk to my family after my mother was gone. I was crushed. They were the only thing I enjoyed, they always comforted me. I had worked hard for hours and hours to get into the Olympics with my 17.2 hand thoroughbred Black Lightning. I previously had an interest in theater, yet after my mother left us it scared me to be on stage in front of so many people. It always brought me back to reality, back to my mother, back to not knowing where she was.

The crowd was hushed, watching the arena at the London Olympics. Watching Black Lightning. Watching me. I felt my heart pounding hard as we approached the triple-bar oxer. It was the toughest jump, and we were only a few strides away. *One two three* I got in my two-point and we soared over.

"Good boy, good boy, keep going," I coaxed as I cantered on, heading for a water jump. *One two three four, one.* We popped over no problem. On we went, *one two, jump!* Then the unthinkable happened, every rider's nightmare. Lightning's leg caught on the jump and he crashed to the ground. I flipped over his head, and laid there on the ground, stunned, and then unconscious.

The world was turning around me as I awoke. Dirt was in my hair, and I hurt all over. I started to get up, to check on Lightning, probably the most important creature in my life. Yet, nothing was there that was before. Everything had changed. There was no crowd surrounding me, I was no longer inside an arena, and most of all, my horse was gone.

I seemed to be in a large open field. It looked and felt to be summer. The trees were covered in leaves and the grasses around me were multiple feet tall. There was a building in the distance that looked very abnormal, and yet it seemed vaguely familiar. No one was in sight.

I pinched myself, I screamed, I did everything I could to find out if it was a dream. Yet it all was too real. I was trapped in that place.

There is movement that I saw out of the corner of my eye. It seemed to be drawing closer. Finally, I could see a woman riding a horse and leading another. They drew closer, and I started to get a little worried.

As she got to be about 40 feet away she yelled, "Thee must comest, Hamlet is soon to begin! I saw Lightning limping rider-less and thought thee must have fallen, so I left to search for thee." She came even a little closer, and seeing me still curled up on the ground trying to shut out the world asked, "Art thou alright?"

Her clothing looks peculiar, similar to something from centuries ago, and her hair is done in an odd way, I thought. How does she know my horse's name? I have certainly never seen her before. I need to find Lightning, if he is the same as my Lightning. I hope he is all right. How could this happen?

I was at a loss for words, because then I feel like there is a connection with it all. The attire, the speech, the play, and then the building. It was all just like in Shakespeare's plays, and the structure was where they were most famous for being performed.

"I...I guess I'm alright, just a little sore, but might I ask who you are? And is lightning okay? W-where is he?" I stammered as I rubbed my aching head.

"Oh no, thee is worse off than I thought. I am Elisabeth Midland. 'Tis resting in the stable, yet seems to have an injured leg. The chance of thee being able to be ride him again is slight. Cometh, mount this horse, we must be sure not to anger Will, or the rest of the Lord Chamberlain's men!" she said.

"Alright, alright I'm coming," I said with a sigh as I walked over and mounted the other horse in disbelief, and confusion as to who Will is.

"An' remember to keep your lines nice and slow so tis understandable, and stayeth in character."

"My...lines? Might you be able to remind me of them?" I asked. I started dreading what was to happen more and more, I hadn't performed in three years, and wished to keep it that way.

"My, I myself cannot remember them all, but I will be sure to ask the tireman," she responded.

Off we cantered to the building. The feeling of riding a horse brought me back to the previous events, before I arrived here. To the events back in near my home, where I felt at least somewhat safe. Yet, it was comforting, and I felt like there was something in this odd place that I did know and recognize. Everywhere I was searching for something that was modern, as if evidence that this was really just a set for a movie, or something of the sort. I hoped that it might be a mock village of what it would be like back in these times, back in near my home in the USA. Yet, I had no such luck. Everything was authentic. Everything was truly old.

After, unfortunately, a short ride we arrived at the stables nearby the Globe. I was rushed away from the horses and into the magnificent building. I cautiously followed, yet often got distracted by the open ceiling, marvelous stage, and all of the glorious costumes people are wearing backstage. Everyone recognized me and knew my name, yet I had no recollection of theirs.

From behind me came a man's voice, "Alice! Alice! Pray tell, what ever happened to thee?"

"William! Give her some space! She fell of a horse out in the south pasture, and seems to have forgotten much," Elisabeth replied for me, "She does not remember her lines, and since you are right here I thought I would ask the writer themselves. Can you remind her?"

"Tis not good! I hope she will be ready for her performance! Yes, yes may time allow it," he replied. "Alice, thar't Ophelia, a beautiful young woman. Yet thou art taking a chance being in my plays as no woman has ever acted in one." He continued on, going over my numerous lines, way more than of which I could remember. He explained that if all went as planned I would not be performing in the first play, because it is the most highly attended, and was too much of a risk for a girl. So, fortunately, I had more time to memorize my lines, if I was still stuck here.

I was astounded. Not only might I have stood out because I was from a different time, but I was taking a risk being a girl in a play, performing with the Lord

Chamberlain's Men. I had no idea how I would muster the courage to perform a part as such. I was doing all I could to keep my composure.

Wait, Will...could it be? The William Shakespeare? And the legendary 'Lord Chamberlain's men'? The thought blew me away. It even seemed to be a familiar looking face, it must truly be him. This just keeps getting weirder and weirder.

Another voice came from behind me, "Alice, thee's costume! Come quickly!"

I stood there puzzled until Elisabeth gave me a little nudge toward the voice; "Go on, he will provide thee with a costume, and whatever else thee may seem to need."

I ran after him, hoping more of my questions would be answered, yet he seemed to be in no mood for talking.

"Pray tell, when is the performance?" I said, trying to speak the same way I have heard others.

" 'Tis this afternoon, when the sun is just past its highest point. Do you have anymore mindless questions to waste my time with? You need to hold your breath so I can get this on you," he replied, obviously thinking I was not in my right mind, yet still seeming like he would answer my other questions, and it was worth a shot.

"What about the next performance? The performance that I will be in?"

"Next day same time. Now, hold thou's bre- ah there we go." I went on holding my breath till I could no longer, and hoped he was done fiddling around with my costume.

"Might you have a place I could spend the night? I was kicked out of my home," I lied. I assumed there was no such as a hotel where I could reside, and may be forced to lodge with one of the Lord Chamberlain's Men. He seemed gruff, yet may be kind deep down. *What if I don't have a place to stay? Would I be allowed to sleep in the theatre?*

"Ask Master Shakespeare," he said with a sigh, interrupting my thoughts, "and if he rebukes thee, bother someone else."

"Yes sir. Might you point Shakespeare out to me? I seem to have forgotten his appearance," I asked, realizing then that I truly sound like a fool.

"He is the same one thou was just speaking with." And so, after I was ridiculously dressed for what I thought they meant to be a dress rehearsal, I went off to find Shakespeare. The one and only William Shakespeare I then knew.

"Sir, Shakespeare?" I asked as I approached him. "M-might you be able to provide me with a place to spend the night?"

"Alice, anything you need, for you are a very important part of this performance. I would be delighted." I let out a sigh and smiled for the first time since I had traveled there. I was relieved.

"Thank you sir."

"Tis' time to go home soon, meet me here in but a little while." He added.

"Yes Master Shakespeare." That is what I did, and before I knew it we were on our way to Shakespeare's home. It was then I realized that I was quite a bit tired, for the day had been an intense one.

When we had arrived to his home I was given an elegant room right next to the kitchen. It was quite small and the bed looked rather hard but I could not complain. For then I was safe and warm, and I could just shut out the world around me.

Light was creeping through the room as morning came and I slowly awoke. At first I searched for a clock or my phone to see what time it was, until I realized where I was. Unlike I had hoped, I had not come back to the real world while I slept, but I returned to the dusty smell of the little room I was provided with. Something seemed to be baking in the kitchen, filling the home with a sweet aroma that made it just a little bit more welcoming.

Eventually we were on our way back to the Globe, where I was to spend my day watching the others perform and studying my lines. It was very exciting to be back in the theater business, even though it was so much different than what I had previously experienced. I had a good start to memorizing my lines and was glad to get to watch some boy perform my whole part before I had to. That way I could learn my cues, entrances and exits, and just about everything in-between.

I was standing on stage practicing with Shakespeare when Elisabeth walked in. "Alice, please come'st here. I would like to inform you on your horse's condition, that is if it is alright with Shakespeare." She said, seeming rather worried.

"Yes, that would be just fine, I needeth to check up on the others progress." He replied.

And so the day went. I found out Lightning was unable to walk, and thought my world would be over without him. Elisabeth was very kind to me, helping me multiple times throughout the day. I memorized most of my lines and am actually rather excited to be performing in Hamlet, yet my worries had not left me. The first performance went very well and Shakespeare was pleased. Afterwards we practiced a few more times. Then Shakespeare and I returned to his home. And for the first time I started thinking that this may not be an all-bad experience.

As I laid in bed in anticipation for the next day's performance I was full of emotions. Emotions of actual sadness, missing my family, worries of the pressure of performing, happiness that I know Shakespeare, and grief of Lightning's condition.

I woke up, prepared for the day, and we left to go to the Globe quite early. The day had come, and then the hour was soon to come as well.

"Oh Alice art thou excited?" Elisabeth asked with a smile.

"Very much so!" I replied, somewhat surprised with my own answer.

"The tireman has requested your presence, follow him," she continued. I scuttle after the short, stout man with rather broad shoulders. *I have just over one hour left to prepare! I must remember all my entrances and exits this time.*

I was fitted in my elegant gown, finding it quite funny that just the other day a boy had to wear this. In my day he would have been greatly ridiculed. Yet, it just adds to the uniqueness of olden day theater. It was then that I realized after the play I had nothing left to do, and that I must return home. Only home is where there may be some fix for Lightning, yet I was not sure anything could be done.

A sharp voice interrupted my thoughts "Alice! Cometh, there is one last run through before the performance, hurry!"

The last run through went well and I felt prepared. Soon after the doors were opened the Globe filled with a large crowd, all-waiting to see our play. I thoroughly enjoyed performing, and I realized how much I really missed it. I said all of my lines with balance of elegance and power. I thought I did a great job. Afterwards Shakespeare congratulated each and every one of us, he said the crowd loved it!

I heard footsteps from behind me, shortly after I had gotten into my original Shakespearean clothing that exclaimed, "Alice, what a fantastic Ophelia thou was! Thou seems to enjoy riding very much, and I thought that thou might want to ride to town with me, now that thee does not needeth to constantly rehearse thee's lines."

"There is nothing I would rather do! I thank thee!" I replied.

As soon as we walked into the barn I saw my horse Lightning lying there on the ground, third stall down on the right. How I wished I could ride him! Yet, instead, Elisabeth tacked up two horses; one bay and the other a beautiful strawberry roan, both about mid-size. She gave the reins of the roan to me and took the other. "Follow me," she said. She walked out, stepped up on a stump and mounted. I did the same and we rode into town at an easy canter, until a pack of seven howling wolves jumped out from the woods. Elisabeth galloped away, fortunately faster than the wolves, but my horse bucked incredibly high, and I fell off. I grimaced as I waited for a hit on the hard ground but my landing was nothing of the sort.

Shortly after my fall I awoke to a few voices saying "Heather, come quick! She is out of the coma!" which was followed with a bustle of feet and people checking my temperature and poking me with different things. I opened my eyes and there I was in a 21st century hospital bed. I let out a scream. I did not understand. Everything has changed. I then saw three nurses all rushing around, and my father standing next to me with a relieved look on his face.

"Alice! Honey, I missed you!" he said as he embraced me with a hug.

"Ca-can you explain this all to me? What is going on?" I asked.

"You were riding in the Olympics and Lightn-and you fell off," he said as if he didn't want to tell me something about my horse. "You were in a coma for about two

days. You were in fairly stable condition, but your head was hit hard. I'm so glad you're okay!"

"Dad, tell me what happened to Lightning."

"How about we talk about this later, when you are feeling better, okay?" he replied.

Dreadful thoughts popped into my head about what had become of Lightning, "No, I am fine, just tell me what happened to my horse."

"I'm so sorry. Lightning was badly injured. He would have never walked again," he replied with what seemed to be much pain, even though the horse never let my father touch him. He understood how much the creature meant to me.

"Dad, I wasn't really in a coma. I traveled back in time, along with my horse. I knew he was injured too. I traveled back to Shakespeare's time and performed in a play directed by him. I want to be an actress, along with my passion for horseback riding. I want to be like Mom."

I cried for the first time in years. I was done trying to be strong. My mother was gone. My horse was gone. Shakespeare, the kind mentor, was gone. Yet I felt that I had gained something. Like strength, or reassurance. I didn't feel afraid of the world anymore, but like I should live my life to the fullest.