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ROXANNE RUNS AWAY

“I can’t do it,” Roxanne whispered from her hiding place in the royalberry tree. “I can’t be a Jewel Princess. I’m not ready.”

Today was the day she and her cousins would be crowned in a coronation ceremony.

It was also the day they would leave the Jewel Palace, where they had grown up.

As the Ruby Princess, Roxanne would have to move to her new castle in the Red

Mountains. The mountains lay in the far corner of the Jewel Kingdom.

“I always knew this day would come,” she murmured. “I just didn’t think it would come so soon.”

Roxanne stared glumly down at the palace courtyard. Creatures from every land were gathering there.

Nymphs with blue skin and green hair chatted with goat-footed fauns. Richly dressed lords and ladies bowed to pointy-eared elves who rode on the shoulders of smiling giants.

“There you are!” A little red bird with a rainbow plume on his head fluttered onto the limb next to Roxanne. It was Pip, the royal secretary.

“The king and queen have been looking for you everywhere!” Pip squawked.



Queen Gemma and King Regal ruled the Jewel Kingdom. Today they were giving four of the kingdom's lands to the princesses.

"Don't tell the king and queen where I am, Pip," Roxanne pleaded. "I can't face them. Not yet."

"The ceremony is about to begin." Pip tapped Roxanne's hand with his long yellow beak. "Everybody from the Jewel Kingdom is here."

Roxanne's big brown eyes widened.
"Everybody?"

"Everybody who's anybody." Pip ticked off the names of the guests on one wing. "There are the gnomes, the craghoppers, and the pixies from the Red Mountains."

Roxanne gulped.

"Then there are all those creatures from the Greenwood, Blue Lake, and the White Winterland."

Those were her cousins' lands.

"Then there are the young knights of Bronze, Silver, Iron, and—"

"Stop!" Roxanne pinched Pip's beak closed. "If you're trying to make me nervous," she whispered, "you are doing a very good job."

Pip shook his beak free from her grasp. He hopped to the limb above Roxanne's head.

“You shouldn’t be nervous,” Pip said. “You should be excited, like your cousins.”

Roxanne’s cousin Emily had been up since dawn, chattering about being crowned the Emerald Princess.

Demetra, the Diamond Princess, had spent the entire week in front of her mirror nervously brushing and brushing her shiny black hair.

Sabrina, the Sapphire Princess, was usually the quietest of the four. But even she had rattled on about sprites and striders and all of the new friends she would make at Blue Lake.

Every princess but Roxanne was happy.

“I just don’t feel like a princess,” she said with a huge sigh. “In fact, I feel very ordinary.”

“Careful!” Pip glanced nervously at the palace windows. “Someone might hear you.”

“But, Pip, look at me.” Roxanne stood up in the crook of the tree. “I’m just a regular girl. I like to climb trees, ride horses, and go swimming.”

“That will change,” Pip murmured.

“I don’t like dresses.” Roxanne gestured to her beautiful red-velvet gown. “I’d rather wear pants.”

Pip winced. “Heaven forbid.”

“And how can I rule and protect the people of the Red Mountains when I can’t protect myself?”

Roxanne showed Pip her leg. Her stockings were torn. And a very large lump had formed on her shin. “I banged my knee on the palace wall when I climbed up here.”

Pip fluttered in circles around the tree. “Oh dear, oh dear!”



Roxanne tilted her head. “How does a person rule, anyway?”

“How should I know?” Pip ruffled his feathers. “You just order people around.”

“Order people around.” Roxanne wrinkled her nose. “That doesn’t sound like fun.”

“Who said being a princess was fun?” Pip squawked.

Ta-ra ta-ra ta-ra!

The trumpets sounded at the front gate. The palace guard announced, "Presenting the great wizard Gallivant!"

"Gallivant!" Roxanne gasped, nearly falling out of the tree.

The wizard was very old and very powerful. Just hearing his name made Roxanne weak in the knees.

"There he is." Below her, Roxanne could see the big white plumes of the horses that pulled the wizard's gleaming glass coach.

Pip flew to a ledge in the courtyard to get a closer look. He called to the princess, "Gallivant is carrying the Great Jeweled Crown!"

The crown held the royal jewels of the kingdom. Four jewels from this crown would be given to the princesses today.

