“Someday, I will make the human pay for taking away one of our own.”

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Rose closed her eyes and felt the cold rain on her face. She enjoyed the thunderstorm. The damp of the Amazon Forest floor slowly soaked between her toes. She took a deep breath in through her nose smelling the wet greenery around her.

At an early age, Rose learned that she could turn into a fox. Her mother, Akemi, explained to Rose that the fox was part of her kitsune ancestry on her father’s side. Her father, Shen, died shortly after her birth while out on a hunt. Her mother didn’t have magic but was very protective of Rose. She wanted to keep Rose’s kitsune heritage a secret.

Rose loved her kitsune side. Her fox form was fast and agile. She also had the ability to create blue fireballs, which made for fun target games of blasting giant leaves full of water. Once, she completely drenched her frowning mother who happened to be standing directly beneath.

“Rose, get some water please!” Her mother called, jarring Rose from her thoughts.

“Ok!” Transforming into her partial kitsune form with just her white fox ears and tail with scarlet markings, Rose could reach the river faster in this form.

The icy rain stung her face as she ran. The rain was heavier now, with thunder rumbling through the clouds. Bright flashes of lightning briefly outlined her home in the distance. She bent down at the river’s edge to fill her bucket.

Something white flashed by the corner of her eye. Rose turned to look but saw nothing. She heard a low growl come from a patch of ferns in front of her. Her hair stood on end and blood rushed to her face. Frightened, Rose dropped the pot and ran back to the safety of home.

Rose stepped inside the large stone house and shook off the rain. She told her mother what happened to her just moments before.

Her mother’s face went pale. “They’ve found us. We have to move somewhere else. Quick, go pack a bag.” She ordered.

Shocked and confused, Rose stormed to her room and slammed the door.

*Moving means leaving the rain and thunder behind.* *I don’t want to leave. I should stay and find out what it wants from me.* Rose thought angrily*.*

Rose knew her mother would check on her soon. She quickly snuck out of her bedroom window and transformed into her full kitsune form. She sprinted away from safety.

Rose bounded past the river and the bush where she heard the growl. She rushed through the forest and skidded to a stop at the edge of a deep crater. Her weight combined with the heavy rain made the edge she was perched on collapse from underneath her. Paws clawed at the air. She fell to the rainforest canopy below and hit her head on a large branch. Rose blacked out.

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Rose opened her eyes to the realization that she was stuck in a tangle of branches, leaves, and damp mulch. She must have transformed back to her human self in the fall. She felt pain in her left temple and touched it with a shaky hand to see blood. She stood up and an ache in her ankle told her she’d twisted it in the fall.

A fierce growl erupted somewhere to her left.

*It’s found me! I’m injured. There’s no way I can run. I have to attack!* She thought.

Rose quickly transformed back to the kitsune. She glimpsed a flash of white fur in the thick leaves in front of her. Rose quickly conjured a fireball in her paw, just as a white figure lunged toward her. Rose threw the fireball and hit the creature’s back. It yowled in pain and tried to scratch her face with its razor-sharp claws in a downward motion. Rose jumped back, which made the beast cut the mulch instead.

Rose stared in shock at a large white kitsune with red markings. *Another kitsune? I thought I was the only one!* The other kitsune threw its own fireball at her weak leg. Still in shock, Rose didn’t move quick enough. She yelped as the ball of energy hit and knocked her down.

“Why are you doing this?” Rose yelled over the thunder.

“Because a human took someone from our clan!” It screamed at Rose. This elder kitsune stood towering over Rose and quietly muttered, “A human took my brother away from me.”

“Who took your brother away?” Rose asked.

“I did,” said a voice calling from behind her.

Rose turned, “Mom, what are you doing here?”

“I knew you would come find Ja’sa,” her mother said as she gestured to the other kitsune. “I followed your tracks.”

“It was your mother that took my brother from our clan?” The kitsune asked with a pang of anger in her voice.

“Mom, what is she talking about?”

Her mother paused for a moment and told the story of how she’d met Rose’s father and fallen in love with him. Her father’s kitsune clan thought Akemi had taken Shen, so they wanted to get him back. She told how she and Shen fled deep into the forest, to hide from the clan.

“So, this child is my kin?” Asked Ja’sa, as she walked slowly over to Rose with her head slightly tilted in curiosity. “I picked up her scent in the forest and thought I recognized it.” Sniffing Rose, Ja’sa said, “She smells like Shen.”

Ja’sa walked over to Akemi and nodded.

“I understand that you loved my brother, but I don’t know if all is forgiven yet. I would like to know my niece. We will welcome her into our clan.” She said to Akemi.

Ja’sa turned to Rose, “I will take you and your mother to meet your clan and family tomorrow.”

Rose slept soundly that night with the knowledge she had more family and people like her in the world.