

Tabitha

A scene by Joshua Fox

This is something that came out of this addled vulpine mind of mine. Enjoy!

Scene- Reaffirmation

Tabitha sat back and closed her eyes for a moment. She breathed out slowly, hoping it might release a small bit of the tension that had multiplied within her during the last few days, but found it to be of little help. Everything was set. In a short while, she would be able to do what she had thought and planned of non-stop for weeks. Tabitha had thought of everything... or at least she thought that she had. The plans flew through her mind at an incredible pace, checking off each small detail and finally ending up with the same conclusion as before.

This seems so unreal. Tabitha had dreamed and planned this for so long that she almost couldn't believe that it was actually happening; as if this were some strange and wonderful dream about to come true.

Inevitably, though, doubts began to set in. Was she doing the right thing? Was it her place to alter what had already been? Even if she was able to get back and change the course of time, could she get back here? Would it even work? Should she even try?

Tabitha opened her eyes and took a long look around her. She smiled as the lovely trees and grass which surrounded her sister's grave caught her attention. It was a beautiful spot that Chris had picked out. The final resting place for his beloved wife. Chris had hoped that Sabrina could somehow enjoy the scenery, since it reminded him so much of where he had 'officially' asked Sabrina to marry him. Tabitha chuckled to herself, remembering those first years that the happy couple had been married. They seemed more in love than they had ever been, and Tabitha remembered having to listen to the story of their engagement over and over again. Tabitha had only been a kid then, not really interested in ideas of romance and such. She had been more than willing to listen to Chris' and Sabrina's stories of their dating years when her viewpoint changed, however, after she had forgotten all about 'cooties' and the like. She had even looked forward to hearing them. The stories provided her with whimsical fantasies for her teen years and her hopes of finding the kind of love that her older sister had. All those fantasies died along with Sabrina that horrible day almost twenty years ago. Tabitha wiped a small tear from her eye, trying to control herself.

I've got to be completely collected for this to work. Tabitha reminded herself as she turned to look at her sister's marker, almost being able to see Sabrina's face.

"What should I do?" Tabitha turned her head away again, realizing it was silly to expect an answer.

"Hey, Squirt!"

Tabitha's eyes opened widely as she turned around, smiling at the large vulpine figure coming up the path. She quickly jumped up as the fur who had addressed her came within a few paces. "Josh!" Tabitha met him with a big hug.

The older looking fox placed the small package he was carrying on the ground and laughed as he caught her in his arms, returning the hug. "Now *that's* my kind of greeting."

Tabitha laughed and gave him a tight squeeze, glad to see a familiar face during this hard strain of thought.

The two separated and exchanged a smile, Tabitha then being the first to break the silence. "What are you doing up here?"

Josh grinned. "The network bumped up my vacation time, so I figured I'd drop by here before heading up to Canada," Josh gave a small bow. "And here I stand before you."

Tabitha looked down the path that Josh had come up. "Where's Susan?"

Josh sighed and shook his head. "She's still in Burbank. The network wouldn't let her take her vacation time any earlier so she's still stuck behind the news desk."

Tabitha cocked her head to one side. "You came without her?"

Josh nodded slowly. "I didn't want to, but yeah. She'll be up in a couple days. I wanted to wait and take the flight with her, but she wouldn't hear of it. Now I've got to talk to *everyone* and find out as much as I can so she'll be ready when she gets here," Josh chuckled, recalling how Susan had scolded him for his reluctance to leave without her. "Never could win an argument with her."

Tabitha smiled, recalling the way Susan had always been able to get what she wanted out of Josh. "What about your show?"

Josh only shrugged. "Reruns, of course. It's not like anyone's going to notice, anyway. I doubt anyone actually watches it-, OW!" Josh rubbed the spot on his arm where Tabitha had just hit it.

"Oh, please!" Tabitha furrowed her eyebrows and grinned, putting her paws on her hips. "I thought Susan fixed that ego of yours while you two were dating!"

Josh laughed and took his paw away from his arm. "Well, she did help, but I don't think even my beloved can change me *THAT* much," Josh grinned as Tabitha rolled her eyes. "Besides, I gotta be me."

Tabitha just grinned back and gave Josh a look over. He was in incredible shape for his age, though somewhat less muscular than she remembered. Josh really didn't look as old as he was, definitely not fifty, anyway. His headfur was beginning to gray and his voice sounded slightly different, but he was still the way she had remembered him. Tabitha looked up and saw what really struck her; his eyes. She remembered curiously staring at them when she was little, having been puzzled at the way they looked. Even back when she was still being baby-sat (a term she had always despised) his eyes had always seemed much older than he was. Even all these years later they still fascinated her.

Josh noticed Tabitha looking over him and pointed to the ring on his finger. "Sorry, squirt, but I'm a married fur you know... but then again I guess Susan won't be up for two more days, so - OW!" Josh laughed as he rubbed his other arm now and laughed as Tabitha stuck her tongue out at him. "C'mon, Squirt! I know you've been doing that to me for thirty years now, but at least let me heal up before the next shot, okay?"

Tabitha blushed slightly at having forgot herself and looked up at Josh with very big, sad eyes. "I'm really sorry, Joshy, can you pweese forgive me?"

Josh busted out laughing immediately. "You still got it, Squirt! You can still do the voice, too!" Josh gave Tabitha another big hug, lifting her clear off her feet. "You always could get what you wanted from anyone with that little look, couldn't you?" Josh paused and grinned. "Well, except for me of course."

Tabitha giggled as Josh set her down. "Well, you're the one who taught it to me afterall."

Josh put his paws up. "Just don't tell Endora. She would KILL me if she ever found out I was the one who put that in your head."

"No problem," Tabitha looked down at the package that Josh had set on the ground. "What's that?"

Josh looked down at it and picked it back up, now looking far more solemn than he had been before. "This is just a little something I brought," He paused, pointing past Tabitha to the grave. "for Sabrina."

Tabitha nodded in comprehension, leading him over to where she had been sitting before. Josh hesitated a moment as he reached the spot, then knelt down on one knee in front of it, running his fingers over the letters on the gravestone. He stared at it for a moment, falling into his own thoughts and memories that had been triggered by the sight. Josh set the small package down in front of the marker and sat down on the grass next to it, laying his elbows on his knees and leaning forward slightly. Tabitha did the same and looked over at him, not used to seeing Josh like this.

"It's been too long," Josh placed his head in his paws and shook it slowly. "It's been too damn long."

Tabitha watched him in silence, thinking it best not to interrupt him.

"I still-", Josh swallowed and raised his head out of his paws. "I still remember it so vividly. Every minute, every moment, every second of that damned day."

Tabitha watched Josh's face intently, surprised at the amount of emotion that had suddenly manifested itself in Josh.

"For so long after... after it happened, I just wouldn't accept it," Josh looked away and appeared to wipe something from his eye. "I wouldn't... no, I just couldn't accept the fact that she was gone. I mean-", Tabitha looked on as Josh clasped his paws together and leaned his head forward. "I never told anyone this before, not even to Susan, but I loved her. More than I can ever say."

Tabitha's eyes went wide as she watched Josh hang his head, her mind somewhat in shock.

Josh picked his head up and looked out over the landscape. "She was like a sister to me."

Tabitha mentally scolded herself for jumping to the wrong conclusion. "I didn't know."

"No one knew," Josh drew his knees up and wrapped his arms around them. "It was when I started working at E.S. Productions that I first met her. I had just started college and Eric was kind enough to give me a chance. I was so different back then. My armor was pretty thick and I was very suspicious, proud and still bitter of my past. I wouldn't let anyone close to me except for the two furs whom I could really call my friends, but I didn't even trust them fully," Josh laughed softly, smiling. "Most everyone was happy to oblige the fact that I wasn't looking to make friends, but Sabrina wouldn't think of it. No matter how many times I avoided her or what ever I did to discourage her, she was always ready to greet me with that warm smile of hers."

Josh paused and took on that distant expression again. "She must have known what she was doing, because she eventually got through. I could never understand why I trusted her, but she was the first fur I'd ever really opened up to. Because of Sabrina, I was able to let go of some of my bitterness and my suspicions all but melted away. If she hadn't... I would never have been able to open up to Susan. Everything I have, I have because of what she did for me. I owe Sabrina my life."

Tabitha nodded slowly, taking in this amazing realization.

Josh bowed his head and continued. "That night that Sabrina was in that accident, I wasn't worried. I was like some stupid kid, thinking that everything would be just fine. So that's what I told Susan as we drove to the hospital, trying to calm her with my blind faith that everything would be alright," Josh closed his eyes as his lower lip began to quiver. "When we got there, it was already too late. She was... she was gone. We found Chris in the room with Allen clutching onto him, sobbing and crying his poor little eyes out. Chris didn't say a word, he didn't have to. He just looked up at me and then over at the hospital bed in front of him; the outline of Sabrina's body covered by that sheet."

Tabitha leaned to her side slightly to take a look into Josh's eyes. He seemed to be reliving the whole thing over again. She even noticed Josh's left paw beginning to shake as he went on.

"I will never... I can never forget the look in Chris' eyes. His entire world had been stolen from him. And I just stood there, staring first at him and then at the hospital bed. I couldn't move, I just stared at that outline. Susan went up to the bed and pulled the sheet back just enough to see Sabby's face," Josh nodded slowly, realizing something that he had long thought to be true. "She didn't believe it either. I know that now. She had... she had to see for herself."

Tabitha could almost sense the tears forming as Josh spoke.

Josh once again buried his face in his paws, his voice much more shaky and broken now. "I just stood there as Susan saw what neither of us could have believed possible. I just *stood there* as she started to cry. I just *stood there* as she ran into my arms and sobbed into my chest. Through all that I just *stood there*; like some kind of dead, heartless machine."

Josh clenched his fists as the memory came alive before him. "I've never forgiven myself for that night. Sabrina deserved better than that. Far better."

Tabitha was having difficulty herself as she listened to Josh recall those past events. She wanted to say something, but the words didn't come to her. Josh was obviously using every ounce of self-control he had to keep from breaking down, but he still continued.

"In Sabby," Josh tried to give a light laugh but it was drowned out easily. "I saw everything good, everything I didn't think existed anymore. Her innocence was unparalleled. Her kindness free and unselfish. She was the most trusting fur I'd ever met, ever believed could exist. When she died, my hope for this world died along with her."

Tabitha was all but in tears as she heard those words, and could tell that they came straight from his heart. Tabitha remembered what Josh had been like after Sabrina's death. She had just assumed that Josh wasn't able to show what he was feeling. She had never imagined that Josh's emotions ran so deep.

Josh grasped his shaking paw and tried to settle it, his pride still keeping him from acting 'weak' in front of another fur. He smiled as best he could after a wipe of his paw swept most of the tears from his eyes. Josh picked up the package he had brought and started to open it, turning to Tabitha. "Umm, Squirt, I hate to ask you this, but would it be okay if I had a moment alone?"

Tabitha smiled back at him and nodded, standing up. She walked down the path a bit, thinking over everything that Josh had told her. Those secrets he had kept with him for so long. She stopped a short ways up and turned, seeing Josh's back to her as he was hunched over the grave, doing something with his paws. Tabitha looked on and waited patiently as Josh finished what he was doing and came up along with her. They walked down the first bit of path together, both remaining silent.

Tabitha's thoughts were now crystal clear. All her doubts were gone. Now she knew that she was doing the right thing and, Heaven help her; she would do it, no matter what the result. *He's right. Everything he said about her. That pain... it must have been as horrible as mine. If what I do saves just one fur from that kind of pain, then it is worth it.*

Josh was the first to break the silence as they walked down to the parking lot. "If you don't mind me asking, why were you here today?"

Tabitha turned to him, finding her way out of thought. "I always come here if I have a really big problem. Being here always seems to help."

"Anything I can help with?" Josh inquired, turning his head to look at her.

Tabitha smiled softly at him. "You already have," She gave him a quick hug, standing on the tips of her toes to give him a kiss on the cheek.

Josh smiled and stared at her for a moment, not sure what she meant by that. Finally he just shrugged. "Well, as long as I helped."

They continued down to the parking lot, talking about small details of the time since they had last seen each other. When they finally reached the lot, Tabitha reached for her keycard, but

found only an empty space

"Shoot! I must have dropped my keycard up there. Would you mind waiting until I get back?"

Josh smiled and nodded. "Sure thing, Squirt."

Tabitha hurried back up the path to where they had been. Her keen eye immediately spotted the shiny surface of her keycard in the grass around Sabrina's grave. She turned to leave, but stopped and looked at the grave again. Tabitha stared at it for a moment, seeing just what it was that Josh had done. There, standing tall and proud from the ground in front of the gravestone, was a single white rose. Beneath it was a small card, no bigger than a business card, bearing Josh's elegant pawwriting. Tabitha kneeled down and looked carefully at the lettering, reading it aloud to herself:

As a single rose can bring beauty to the most desolate landscape, so did you bring beauty to this world.