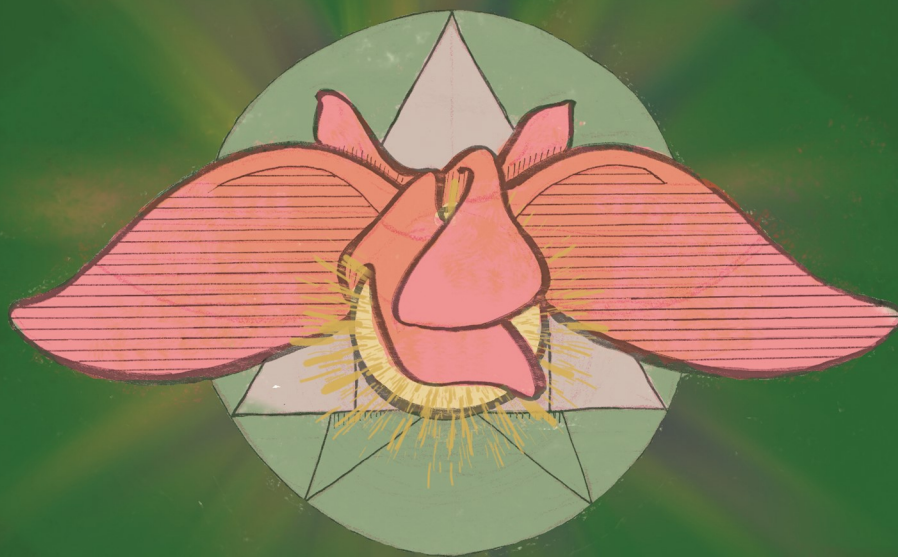


If You Don't Want to Go to Sleep, Close Your Eyes



A Story About *What the Chrysanthemum Knows*

Written and Illustrated by
Autumn Phillips Rennie

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*If You Don't Want to Go to Sleep, Close Your Eyes:
A Story About
What the Chrysanthemum Knows*

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 A4 = 432_{Hz}

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Rate and Review

For Aeden, Annabella, Ansley, and Avaline,
who definitely never, ever, go to Sleep.

Prologue

♩ = 72

PLANO

1 2 3

Melody

Harmony

Keep your

4 5 6 7

eyes o-pen dear. O-pen them wide and list-en close-ly.

8 9 10 11

There's a place we'll go, and a pl-ace we will not.



Chapter I

Nobody told me anything.

Mother shoved the thick leather coat over my shoulders. She twirled me around on my heels to get one last peek at me before sprinting out of our hut. "Let's go, Sera!" I grabbed the bucket and filled it with water for Chaza, our last urus. She always got thirsty in the afternoon.

The Northern Lake had been receding a little more each year since we had settled in the quiet village of Sleep to raise and trade uruses and the milk they made. The water was almost gone. Most of the others had taken their herd south before the winter, where the lakes were still full. The families who chose to stay in Sleep were muffled by their uncertainty. Why were they still here?

We only had Chaza left for milk, but Mother and I would run out of food in a few days if we did not sell her soon. I admired her long horns and wondered for a moment if she missed using them. I grabbed her reigns and reluctantly caught up with Mother at the bread maker's stall. Her blankets had no bread in them after the long cold day. The water boys' pitchers were as dry as the hills. The barley man's pots were empty. My feet were getting tired and dusty wandering around this deserted market.

Why didn't we go with the others and leave this boring place?

Something caught Mother's gaze high up in the sky. I followed her eyes and saw the thick clouds gathering. I inspected her. She shivered once from the top of her long black hair to the tips of her purple shoes. It happened again. I took a few steps back. "What did you see?"

She eyed me for a long moment. "Sera, I want you to go quickly now and

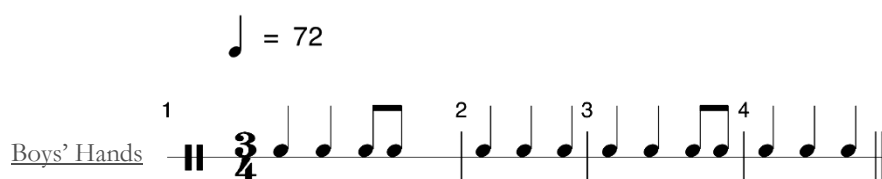




find a buyer for Chaza. Find one and come straight home. I am going back now to wrap the roof." She took off before I could explain to her that there was nobody here to sell her to. It was pointless.

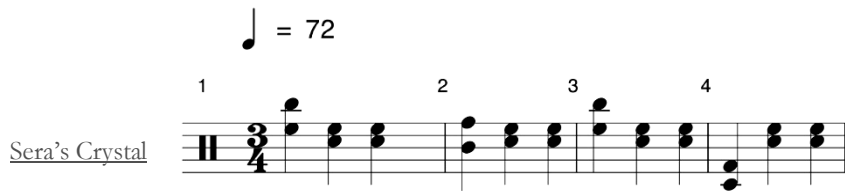
The water boys were lying on their backs on the trunk of the old bent acacia tree. Chaza was drinking her water, so I joined them under it. "Drink up, my friend. We may have a long walk south soon."

I dusted off my pants and leaned to rest my back against the tree as the younger boy jumped down and sat beside me. "Are you and your Mother leaving soon?" I wasn't sure how to answer him. It didn't seem like anyone knew what to do. I thought about all the times I'd sat here with the other children from Sleep. After a long day, the boys invited me to a song with their clapping hands.



There used to be dozens of us sitting here before our hot star fell asleep each night. Three of us remained. I could not answer him. My throat tightened and it started to burn behind my eyes.

I slowly brought my fingertips to the centers of the crystals hanging from my necklace and held them still. I ran my fingers over the crystal keys of my necklace and wondered if anyone would sing with us tonight. They spun slowly around the string that bound them and sang their commanding notes.



Lulu's wild red hair caught the evening wind as she peeked around the corner of her honey hut. She had been putting her jars away for the day. Nobody wanted honey now. The herders had traded the dregs for water and barley for their uruses. Lulu had traveled here with her honey bees last year. Mother had been wary and instructed me to keep my distance from her. But, Lulu always seemed happy to be here in Sleep.

I talked with her when I passed her hut in the market some evenings when Mother was busy doing other things. She listened to me playing under this tree each night. Her lips gave way to a soft smile as she walked over to join us. She hummed as I played. My body loosened when it heard the familiar music again. The water boys clapped along slowly as we tried to lift the darkness filling our air.

UNDER THE BENT ACACIA TREE

$\text{♩} = 72$

Lulu's Soprano

Sera's Crystal

Boys' Hands

1 2 3 4

5 6 7 8 9

10 11 12 13 14

15 16 17

Only the sounds of Chaza slurping the last of her water remained. "Where did you get this necklace?" Lulu watched the stars begin their evening sparkle inside the pink crystal. I had always had them. Mother said to always wear it with care. Lulu rose, not waiting for my answer.

She walked over to Chaza and started to pet her. "What will you do with her?" She lowered her head to the empty pot. Surely Lulu wasn't thinking of buying her. What would a bee keeper do with an urus? "I will trade her for the supplies we need to make our journey south. I think Mother is planning to join the other Sleepers there soon."

"I see. Well, she is just what I need. I will be raising a new herd to make milk for those who stay here." She walked around, smiling, to pet the other side of Chaza as though she was already hers. "I will give you these right now for her." She reached into her dress pocket and opened her hand in front of me.



"But, that is just four beans. Four fuzzy little beans!" It was getting dark now, and I remembered Mother wanted me to get home fast. Lulu continued petting Chaza gently. "Maybe I can find someone who has more than a few beans tomorrow."

Lulu stilled her fingers against Chaza's rich brown coat and turned with a stiff jerk to face me. Her steel blue eyes fixed onto mine. Her brows sank. Her smile disappeared. "Sera, these are the last of the rare beans my father gave to me before I found this place. They will fill you full. This, I can promise you."

Our star was gone and my coat felt thin now. The wind pierced it. I needed to get home. My belly felt the sharp pangs of hunger growing inside. I stretched out my arm and opened my hand. "It's a deal."

The smile came back to her face as she pulled out her leather pouch with a marking on it. The mark had six sides wrapped in three circles. She gave it to me and placed each of the four beans into my hand one-by-one. They caught the light from the sky. I dropped them inside and closed the pouch. I walked over to my old, furry friend, and put my forehead against hers. My arms floated around her neck and I kissed her between the eyes. I knew she would be in good hands. "Goodbye, girl. You belong to Lulu now."

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