

Marigold: Carnation's Rescue

by Anthalia Umanetz

Marigold Blossom, the horse, climbed over the wall that marked her FlowerClan village. She was *very* thirsty, so she was headed for the stream beside Storm Forest and the field belonging to the FlowerClan. In about ten minutes of cantering across the beautiful springtime plain, she reached the edge of the forest, getting thirstier. But there it was!

Marigold galloped over, took a long, refreshing drink, and was standing up when she heard a large thunderclap and felt a strong gust of wind. She looked up, only to see that the sky was a shade of dark grey and the sun had disappeared. It was definitely a rainstorm. The rain started to pour down harder than she had ever seen, and the winds whipped her mane aside. Marigold ran and ducked under a thick tree on a small nearby hill, sheltering herself from the storm.

Out of nowhere, she heard an unfamiliar humming noise coming from a large boulder on the hill. This boulder was nicknamed 'Hologram' because there was another boulder up in the branches above it. If FlowerClan moved the boulder in the tree, the boulder on the ground seemed to shift around as if it were a hologram. The humming got louder.

Suddenly, a purple-saddled horse appeared in front of the boulder on the ground! Marigold was about fifteen feet away from him, and he flickered in and out in a crazy way. His mane stayed perfectly still, even though he was in the midst of a storm.

He began to speak in a staticky, hypnotized voice. "Your sister, Carnation, has fled. You know she is terrified of storms. When the storm became visible in your Clan's village, she fled towards FireClan territory. Your Clan thinks the FireClan has her captured. For reasons unknown, only you can save her."

Marigold gasped. She knew her sister was in terrible danger if she had indeed fled to the FireClan village. She opened her mouth, for she wanted to speak to this strange horse, but he disappeared before she could say a word.

Suddenly the wind and rain died down and gradually stopped. And, just then, a huge watermelon fell out of the sky, nearly obliterating her. She then dismissed the thought of the watermelon.

Shaking the water from her mane, Marigold worriedly trotted towards her village, hoping to set out for the FireClan village in the morning. She took a dust bath once she got back to her small yellow house. This may be the last time she ever saw her home, so she wanted to enjoy it. After which, she made some good reasoning, and with *great* difficulty, convinced her parents and King Spruce, leader of her Clan, that she could go. She then went to bed.

The next morning, Marigold stretched up and said goodbye to her comfy, flowered turf pile and headed into the main room. She nuzzled and said goodbye to her worried dad and stepmom.

"Goodbye, Marigold," said General Dandy, her dad.

"Bye, Dad," she said.

"I'll miss you," said her stepmother, Daisy. "Stay alive. We'll see you again."

"Oh, I'll miss you *so* much," Marigold said. She hoped with all her heart that she would see them again. Then she set out the door. She checked the mailbox as she left, and there was a letter for her, so she tucked it into her mane for safekeeping.

She decided to say goodbye to her schoolfriend, Tulip. She had graduated last year, when she was five. Tulip was still in school, but he would graduate next week.

She trotted across town and, in around two minutes, came to Tulip's neon orange house. It was a Saturday, so Tulip would be home. Marigold rapped on the door and heard hoofsteps approaching. Tulip opened the door. He was wearing a tuxedo!

"Hi, Marigold," said Tulip.

"Hello, Tulip. Why the getup?" asked Marigold.

"My aunt's first wedding is in an hour, so we're probably leaving in a few minutes."

"Well, I'm going on a dangerous quest to rescue Carnation from FireClan, and I might never see you again."

"Um—" Tulip said with a taken-aback expression.

"It's complicated why it's me that's going," explained Marigold.

Suddenly, Tulip's mom, Daffodil, burst out the door, saying, "Tulip—it's now, move along or we'll be late!" She grabbed him and started galloping away.

Tulip looked over his mom's shoulder and yelled, 'Goodbye, Marigold!'

After him, Marigold yelled, "Goodbye, Tulip."

Then, she took the other path, heaved over the wall, and started going.

After about half an hour, Marigold came to the thick Poppyseed River. She jumped in and swam across as fast as she could, coming out dripping wet.

"Yih!" she said, shaking her fur as best she could. But there was no time to stop. Her sister may be hurt by now. She braced herself and cantered faster and faster. She ran so fast that the early fall dandelions were yellow blurs; faster and faster across the sprawling plains. She would never stop hunting as long as the most important thing in the world to her was still alive. Driven by fierce love for her sister, Marigold ran on.

She kept it up. Her hooves were exhausted, but she did not care one bit. *Carnation was alive*, she told herself. *Alive, and I'm going to save her.* Daisy petals were caught in her tail. Her hooves were worn and tired. Her mane was tangled from the wind. All of her coat was dry and crusty from the river. But she simply did not dare to stop. *The world will turn, the sun will rise, the night will fall, but*

Carnation will not die! she told herself, fueling her more than any sleep or food ever would. Marigold would run.

After another hour, she hid behind a wall on the outskirts of the FireClan village. She was rather tired. Marigold heard a noise above her and looked up, only to see the face of a young FireClan staring down at her. Marigold nearly screamed, but then she recognized the horse.

"Phoenix!" she whispered.

"Marigold?" said Phoenix.

"Come up here," Phoenix said, pulling Marigold up into the village. "We've got lots of FlowerClan visitors. Keep this bracelet on, and you'll fit right in." She slapped a metal object onto Marigold's hoof, and they headed into the village's centre.

Marigold was silent. She had heard a noise coming from the largest cottage. Then, Marigold spoke. "Do you have Carnation here? Please tell me."

At this, Phoenix paused. "...Well... It's just... Okay, fine." Phoenix paused and took a deep breath. "We did have her captured. But maybe General Blaze shouldn't have put her in the same room as the monster world portal."

"*What?*" shrieked Marigold, loud enough that several horses nearby turned their heads to see what the commotion was.

"Please don't be mad at me for the General's mistake," said Phoenix.

"I'm not mad at you," said Marigold briskly. "But I need to go save my sister."

With that, Marigold raced into the largest cottage at terrifying speed, pretty much destroying the door. She did not stop to fix it. Sure enough, the cell was empty and—Marigold gulped—had a portal in it! And so, before she could change her mind, she swung open the gate, daisies knocking out of her mane and tail, and she jumped straight into the portal. She felt a tingling sensation throughout her body. She thought, *Carnation, you are safe now that I am coming. I am coming. You will live.* And then everything went black.