

# Suikoden Side Stories: To Fly

By Leggy

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*A Suikogaiden-type story taking place not long before Suikoden III. It tells the backstory of how Estella and Rody reached Alma Kinan. Along the way Rody meets two strange people on his own little adventure.*

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# 1 - To Fly

## SUIKODEN SIDE STORIES

### To Fly...

The Kuput Forest was in its last hours of light. The only thing heard was the chirping of birds and small insects hidden in the trees. Despite the time of light on the outside world, the forest was misty and dark, the light only shining through select parts in the foliage. Dew from the mist clung to the leaves and mushrooms, rolling off silently and pattering to the clean earth below. This silent place was blessed by the Spirits, but even Spirits could not predict who would enter their forest next...

“Come along Rody, keep up!”

“Yes Lady Estella...”

A woman with short, sakura pedal pink hair and an astounding red and black outfit walked seductively amongst the trees. Her hips swayed with the breeze as she teasingly flicked her wrists this way and that. Following close behind was a young boy. His raven black hair held in a ponytail drifted shortly behind him. Dressed in a green, black and red coat and white pants, he held a simple wooden broom close to his body. His brown-green eyes nervously scanned the unknown area as he obediently followed his master.

“Lady Estella...” the young boy asked. “Where is it we are going? Are we going to find the old book you speak of so much?” The woman turned her head slightly as she continued to walk. “Not just yet.” She plainly stated. “We are going to Alma Kinnan.” She looked away and said no more. Rody was still a little confused. “Alma Kinnan? What's that?” Still walking, Estella let out a little sigh and answered once more. “It's a village of only female warriors. Some say these girls can talk to the Spirits of the forest. Hmph... I just wanna see this for myself.” Rody nodded his head, but was silent otherwise.

“Who knows...?” Estella then suddenly mentioned. “Perhaps they can teach you a thing or two. That is, if they're not completely full of it. I've never really seen any research done by Crowley on Spirits... just Runes. So I won't believe it until I see it.” After hearing this, Rody glanced up with glistening eyes. “Crowley...” he muttered. “Over one hundred Runes on his body... It's amazing to think about!” Estella suddenly stopped dead in her tracks. She seemed to be twitching slightly. Rody's eyes widened as he realized what he had said. “But um, erm... Of course no Wizard can surpass you Lady Estella! Not even the great Crowley! I hope I'm half as great as you someday!” Back still turned, Estella crossed her arms, bringing a hand to her chin in thought.

“Rody...” she said to him, turning around. He looked up at her apologetically. “What Runes have you on now?” A little confused by the random question, he looked from his left hand to his right. “Um, Blinking, Firefly and... Lightning.”

“Lightning?” Estella asked him. He winced a bit and nodded his head. “I don't ever remember telling you to have a Lightning Rune placed on your hand. Is this why our expenses have been low lately? You've been having your Runes switched behind my back?” Rody held his broom close and shook his head. “Well you see Lady Estella, one of the monsters we defeated dropped a Lightning Rune, so I took it to a Rune Sage to sell... but the magic tutor that was with her told me I had a great, natural talent for Lightning magic... And it *has* always interested me... I'm sorry...” Estella held up her hand and shook her head in a silencing manner. “Alright, alright, ok, ok... You may keep it for now. But later I am going to have you trained with the Wall Rune. It's going to be tough, so enjoy moving freely about while you can.”

“Yes Master.”

The duo began to trudge through the Kuput Forest once more. Where they walked, there was no path... not even a sign of civilization anywhere. Being overdramatic, Estella placed the back of her hand over her forehead as if feeling faint, and sat down tiredly on a fallen tree trunk. Rody stopped walking as well, awaiting an order from his mentor. Estella put her hand down beside her and looked up through the openings in the canopy above. "I could train him for Earth magic too..." she quietly mumbled to herself. Rody quickly looked up at the inaudible thought. "Rody!" She then said rather rashly. "Yes Master?" he replied. "Before coming here, I heard rumors of a powerful spell the women of Alma Kinnan use to stay in hiding. It is some kind of magical mist that makes travelers confused and only walk in circles." Rody slightly tilted his head, trying to figure out what she was getting at.

"I figure that I could find this cursed mist and cancel out its power... which is presumably based on Water... with my Rage Rune." A smile spread on Rody's face as he nodded his head. "That's a great idea!" he happily said. Estella crossed her legs and placed her hands on her knees. "Well Rody, since you have the aid of the Blinking and Lightning Rune with you... You could wait here for me. As a part of training of course."

"Stay here by myself?" he asked. She nodded. "Well true power *does* rely on ones self after all." He slowly tilted his head down. "Well... that's true..." Estella suddenly gave a perky little laugh. "Ah, ha-ha-ha-ha! No need to be so worried my dear boy! You surpass all the monsters in this forest by far! The most you have to worry about is a group of Spark Beetles!" She stood up and dusted off the front of her garbs, and began to turn and walk away.

"Wait, Lady Estella!" Rody called. She stopped and turned around once more, seeming a little bored and flighty. "We haven't seen a monster in ages..." he began. Estella gave a little yawn. "With no monsters... what is it you want me to do?" She gave another tiny yawn as she barely listened. With her mind elsewhere, she flicked her hand in a shoeing-away manner. Sounding very distracted and uncaring, she spoke. "Oh... I dunno... Practice flying or something..." With that, she walked away a final time, disappearing into the thickening mist of the forest.

Almost a half hour had passed by. The entire time Rody stood, perched atop his broomstick with eyes shut in total concentration. After many a moment had gone by, he opened his eyes and sadly un-mounted his broom. "Of all the things I trained for most... this I have worked hardest on." He whispered to himself. "What is it that I'm doing wrong...?" Suddenly, a bird chirped shrilly above his head. He jerked his head up, to see a small yellow bird perched atop a high branch. "Ha-ha-ha..." he laughed in relief to the bird. "I thought you were a Horo-Horo. But those things are stuck on the ground..." The little yellow bird gave another chirp and fluttered off the branch. Rody's eyes widened with an idea as he watched the little bird fly away.

"To be in touch with the sky..." he grunted as he ascended another branch. "One should be *with* the sky!" The large, old tree provided the height and support he needed to stay balanced and be able to concentrate. Once he reached the highest, safest branch he could get to he mounted his broom happily and shut his eyes. "(This is right.)" He thought to himself. "(It feels so light up here... like a bird...)" But the young magician couldn't predict what would happen next.

He was in total concentration... he could almost feel his feet lifting from the ground. "(This is it...!)" He excitedly thought. "(Don't mess up now! Just keep concentrate—)"

\*BOOP!\*

Rody's eyes popped open as a familiar sound rang through the air. A voice soon accompanied it. "Wh-where am I???" Suddenly he felt a big bump to his back. By the sound, he knew someone had teleported right next to him. Holding the broom as tight as he could, he could feel himself losing his balance. He had no idea who was on the branch with him, but whoever it was broke his concentration and was about to accidentally knock him out of the tree. Little did he know but to make matters worse, below the side he was on loomed a somewhat steep cliff which lead a long ways down. The ditzy voice came from behind him again. "Um s'cuse me but do you know where this place is??" Rody was horrified to feel a tap on his shoulder, the tap that may have sealed his fate. From that little touch, he helplessly went tumbling forward out of the tall tree.

The young girl in blue garbs left up on the branch held her hand to her cheek. "Um... oops..." she mumbled to herself as she watched the young boy fall.

Down and down the cliff he tumbled, the small, thin branches slowing him down a little. As he fell to the area unknown, everything around him grew darker. The trees were becoming thicker and light was further away. Bruised up a bit, but not terribly hurt, he could feel the land leveling out beneath him. Just as he thought he would roll to a stop, he barreled into something unstable. Whatever it was he hit also tumbled a bit, but both finally slowed to a halt. Still clinging to his broom with white knuckles, he quickly stood up. "(Where am I?!)" He anxiously thought. "(Are there monsters here?! What did I hit? Who was that teleporting girl who knocked me out of the tree?)" All these thoughts buzzed through his head at once, when suddenly he saw a dark figure shifting beside him.

He leapt back very surprised. "Who-who are you?!" he challenged, holding his broom in the ready position. The figure made a deep groaning noise. At first he thought it was a monster, or somebody in a black cape. But as the figure slowly stood, Rody's eyes widened in realization. "(...Wings...?!)" It was true. There before him stood a Winger. He had read all about them... but had never actually *seen* one. This one had stringy, dirty blonde hair. As he turned around, he seemed to have some kind of eye patch, but it was hard to tell beneath all the hair. His clothes were dark and ragged... but that was of no importance. Rody couldn't stop staring at the weapon that lay on the ground beside the Winger.

"(A... a *giant scythe*?!)" he fearfully thought. He suddenly stood in full attention as the winged one began to stir once more. He started with dusting himself off, both his clothes and his wings. He then looked over directly at Rody, staring straight into his eyes. "Yuk, yuk, yuk..." he chuckled. Rody was confused. "Yuk, yuk... Quite a tumble... Yuk, yuk." Rody gave a nervous little laugh and scratched at the back of his head. "Ha-ha... um, yeah. I'm so sorry about that..." The Winger suddenly stopped laughing and glared at the young Wizard. Rody fell dead silent. Both were quiet for a while.

“.....Did the Grim Reaper send you?”

“Excuse me?” Rody was taken aback by the odd question. The man with wings only laughed. “Heeee heee heee... Of course not.” Rody was now dumbfounded. “(The books never said anything about *this*...)” He thought with nervous curiosity. Despite how freaked out he was by this strange Winger, Rody figured he would much rather befriend him then possibly deal with that huge scythe...

“M-my name's Rody...” he shakily said. He held out a trembling hand offering a handshake. The Winger only stared at it for a moment with his visible eye very wide. “RODY?” he asked loudly. The boy jumped back a bit at the little outburst. “Y-yes...” he fumbled out, putting his hand down. The Winger held his chin and looked up for a moment. Suddenly, he glared at the young Wizard once more with a big, creepy smile. “Rody's favorite food is... SNAKE-FROG.”

“(Huh?)” He thought to himself. “(I've never even had the stuff before...)” he looked up and sheepishly grinned. “Heh wow, um... good guess... How did you know?” The Winger proudly held up his scythe. “The Grim Reaper told me... Yuk, yuk, yuk.” They were both silent once more.

“...Well, um... What's your name?” Rody then asked amongst the silence. The Winger shut his eyes and faced downward. “Land—” he seemed to cut himself off short. “Land?” Rody asked. The Winger chuckled and continued. “Is.....” Rody was very confused now. “Wait... the land is what?”

“That's my name!!” he suddenly called. Rody's eyes widened with surprise. “(Huh? Land is? Wait...)”

“Landis?” he asked him. The Winger only grinned. “Yuk, yuk, yuk. Guessing games are fun.”

Now Rody knew this Winger named Landis wasn't going to kill him. Despite the difficulty in holding a normal conversation with him, Landis was the only chance Rody had for finding his way back to Lady Estella. But the thing that fascinated him were the big, black wings on his acquaintances back. “Excuse me... Landis?” the Winger looked over at him silently. “Well as you know, I fell from a far away place and now I'm... pretty lost. Do you think you could help me find my way back?” Landis stared back for a few quiet moments. He then finally spoke. “Does it matter where you go? You're gonna meet the Grim Reaper someday no matter what.” Rody winced at the thought, but he desperately needed help. “Please...” he pleaded.

Landis tilted his head. “You don't scream?” he asked suddenly. “Scream?” Rody replied. “The Grim Reaper doesn't SCARE you?” Rody shrugged. “Maybe a little. But I don't have to worry about that now. I have to find my Master.” Landis looked both shocked and confused. “Not scared of the Grim Reaper? Well if you don't run away I guess I can HEEELP YOOOU.....” He had spoken very freakishly, but offered to help all the same. “Thank you!” Rody said happily. “Yuk, yuk...” Landis chuckled. “Don't fear the Reaper...”

The odd pair walked through the Kuput Forest very quietly. It had grown very dark, so Rody summoned a small sphere of lightning into his hand. Its blue light shone the area in front of them. “Hey Landis...” Rody asked quietly to his companion. Landis cocked an eyebrow and slightly turned. “YES RODY?” he loudly replied. “With... with those wings... Do you fly often?”

“Yuk, yuk, yuk... I like to fly at travelers and SCARE them!” Despite the weird answer, Rody lightly laughed. “Ha-ha-ha... it must be so great to fly...” Landis grinned. “It gets ya around... Yuk yuk.”



"I wish I could fly." Rody mentioned. Landis gave the boy a baffled look, but managed to keep his wide grin. "But you're a huuuuman Roooody... Not a Wiiiiiiinger..."

"Yeah I know... But my Master told me that once I'm done training, I'll be able to fly with the aid of this!" he held his strange weapon up for the Winger to see. Landis quickly grabbed it from Rody's grasp without thinking twice. "...This thing doesn't have WINGS either..." Rody quickly took the broom back and held it close. "Well no, it's magic."

"Looks like a broom."

"That's not the point!"

He held the broom out in front of him and gazed at it. "It's not just magic though... Lady Estella, my Master, gave it to me when I became her apprentice. She told me I could do anything I set my mind to... and that I could fly if I really wanted to..."

"Then why DON'T yooou!" Landis said in an outburst. "It takes hard training." Rody replied as they continued to walk. "I can't just hop on and fly... I'd just fall flat on my—"

\*BOOP!\*

That familiar sound filled the air again, as Rody felt something heavy appear on top of him. Completely unaware and vulnerable to the event, Rody toppled over into the dirt with a mysterious figure perched on top of him. "...Face..." he muffled into the ground, finishing his previous statement. Landis stared wide-eyed at a young girl in a blue dress that sat cluelessly on top of his traveling companion. "DID THE GRIM REAPER SEND YOU?!" he asked loudly and suddenly. The girl with the long black hair gave a small shriek. "Eeeeeep! Where am I now?? Who are you?? Where AM I???"

"...You're on my back....." came a soft, muffled voice from beneath her. "Oh! Oh! Oh!" the girl chirped, quickly getting off of the squished magician. Rody slowly sat up, covered in dust with a leaf stuck to his face. He tiredly dusted himself off and looked at the girl who accidentally pummeled him. "Omigosh!" she cried as she looked at him. "You're that guy from the tree! You sure left in a hurry!" Rody let out a deep sigh and was silent. "Oh! You missed a spot!!" the ditzy girl reached over and pulled the leaf off his face. "Oh... thank you." He quietly said. Landis pointed at the girl while he wore a grin. "Sent by the Grim Reaper!" he chuckled.

The girl faced him once more. "Huh?? Grim Reaper?? That's not me. I'm Viki." Landis wore a smirk. "VIKI. Don't fear the REAPER!" the girl took a step back. "What's with this guy?" she asked. Rody walked up beside her. "Your name's Viki? I'm Rody, and this is Landis."

"Viki's favorite food is... donuts!" Landis added. "Wow, he's freaky!" Viki exclaimed. She faced Rody again. "So where is this place?? I've been trying to teleport out for a long time, but I keep ending up in the same spots!" Rody remembered the cursed mist Estella told him about. "Oh, this is Kuput forest. There's some kind of bewitched mist protecting it." Viki let out a long whine and sank to her knees. "Ooooh, bewitched? Does that mean we're stuck here??" Rody gave a shrug. "Well there's a village here called Alma Kinnan. They're the ones who conjured up the mist... My Master is working on breaking the seal now... But I'm totally lost in this forest. Landis here is my guide."

"You're lost too?" Viki replied. "I've been lost for a really long time. I've been trying to get back home for ages, but I can never seem to teleport correctly!" Rody looked concerned. "Well, where are you from?"

he asked. Viki placed a finger thoughtfully by her chin. "Oh you've never heard of it... besides, it's been so long I can barely remember!" Rody gave a sad smile. "Well... I'm sure you'll find it someday Viki." She grinned in return. "If I do... I could teleport you there too!"

"Huh? W-why?" Rody asked, looking a little red. "Well we're friends now, right? It would be fun!" Rody smiled. "Yeah, maybe it would." Meanwhile in the background, Landis gave a chuckle. "You two doone yet? Monsters come out at NIGHT... you don't wanna meet the Grim Reaper just yet, DO YOU?" Rody turned and faced his guide. "I guess you're right... And I'm sure Lady Estella is worried... or angry... or both!" he quickly began to follow Landis. Viki gave a confused glance and followed as well.

"Hey, who's `Lady Estella'?" Viki asked as they strolled in the dark forest. Rody glanced her way as he continued to focus on the very minor Lightning spell. "She's my Master. She's training me to be a powerful magician like herself... With powers that rival even the great Crowley and Mazus!" Viki gave a ditzzy yet thoughtful look. "Crowley? Mazus? Oh! I've met them before." She spoke as if it were nothing. Rody's jaw dropped after her bit of information. "You've MET the great Crowley AND his pupil Mazus?!" he asked in disbelief.

Viki gave a tiny shrug. "Well... Ya! I met Crowley when I was with the Liberation army... And... I met Mazus when I was living in Riou's castle!" Rody read about both of these wars as well. "Liberation army...? With Tir McDohl and Odessa Silverberg? That was so long ago... You wouldn't have even been born by then..."

"LIAR, LIAR!" Landis teased. Viki held her wand close to her face. "I'm not lying! McDohl was a real quiet guy, and Riou was very nice! I was their teleporter! Honest!"

"But then how can you be so young? You don't have a True Rune, do you?" Rody asked with wonder. "A True Rune?? No way!" She then wore a tiny frown. "To tell you the truth, with all my teleporting

mistakes... I've accidentally wound in some really weird places. Like this one time, I accidentally teleported me and a guy named Nash to some time interval thing! I had been places like that before, but he was totally freaked out!"

"FREAKED OUT." Landis repeated. "Did you ever find the Grim Reaper hmmm?" Viki stared back at him. "Um... no..." Rody then addressed Viki once more. "That's why you stay young!" She looked back over to him. "Huh?? Why??"

"The time interval! You said you've been there many times... Perhaps *that's* what kept you young!" Landis crossed his arms. "Stay young forever? That's not fair for the Grim Reaper." Viki looked nervously confused at the comments. "Well that *might* be the case... But I have no idea!" she gave a shrug and smiled. They continued walking. Rody and Viki happily chatted about their Runes and what kind of journeys they had been on. Landis remained very quiet with a creepy grin on his face. He didn't really seem to mind company as much as he thought he would.

"So Rody!" Viki asked enthusiastically. He looked up at her questionably. "What were ya doing up in that tree anyways?? Were you looking for something, or do you just like to climb?" Rody gave a small giggle. "No... You see, I'm trying to learn how to fly on a broomstick. I've been training for a long time now. I just thought that maybe if I was high in the sky it would feel more natural to fly."

"That rhymes." Landis suddenly said. Rody and Viki looked at him with a blank stare. "Well it does." He stated shortly after. ".....Um... Good luck with flying, Rody." Viki uttered, heading back to the main conversation. "I'd try to help but the only kind flying I know is teleportation!" Rody smiled at her. "Thank you all the same, Viki..." she locked eyes with him for a moment, but then quickly looked away. Rody slightly tilted his head. "Are you okay...?" Viki bashfully nodded her head. "Uh huh! Yeah! Um, I always turn red when I have a, uh... cold! Um... AH-CHOO!"

\*BOOP!\*

Even though it was a fake sneeze, low and behold Viki screwed up again!

“Where'd we GO??” Landis asked, looking very surprised. Rody glanced all around. “We're still in Kuput Forest I think... but where? Now I'll never find Lady Estella...”

“Omigosh! I'm so sorry!!” Viki exclaimed. “It's okay Viki, it was an accident.” Rody reassured. “We're gonna meet the Grim Reaper...” Landis muttered. Viki clenched her fists and faced Landis. “I didn't mess up THAT badly! Why do you keep saying we're gonna `meet the Grim Reaper'?! We're not dead!”

“We will be soon...” Landis replied. Viki's face fell. “Uh?? What do you mean??” Scythe over one shoulder, he lightly lifted his hand and pointed behind them. Eyes wide, Viki slowly turned her head. Standing before the trio was the guardian of the Kuput Forest realm...

“It's a-a-a-a... GHOST KNIGHT!” Rody cried. “It won't let us run...” Landis chuckled. “Yuk, yuk, yuk it wants us to meet the Grim Reaper.” The valiant centaur beast reared its hooves, its armor glistening with the reflection of Rody's spell. “Then prepare for battle!” Rody called out. He held his broom readily. “If you're gonna fight, so will I!” Viki agreed, gripping her Wow-wow wand tightly. Landis gave a shrug. “Can't let down the guy who doesn't fear the Reaper... Yuk, yuk.” He held up his large scythe forebodingly. The Ghost Knight held his lance high, accepting the challenge.

Rody and Viki immediately began to chant a spell. Landis let out a creepy laugh and ran up to the beast.

He took a mighty swing with his scythe and quickly made a bound backwards. Before their opponent could make a move, Viki opened her bright eyes. "Landis, look out!" she called, holding her wand in the air. Landis nodded and ran off to the side, defensively holding up his weapon. The symbol of the Blinking Rune shone above the teleporter's head. "Set!" she cried out. Suddenly, random objects began to fall from the sky hitting the giant centaur many times. The portal finally shut. With Rody still chanting, the centaur made his move. He turned towards Landis and swung his lance swiftly. Landis was knocked back a bit, but not terribly injured.

Only seconds later, Rody opened his eyes. Holding his broom in front of him, the symbol of the Lightning Rune quickly flashed above his head. "...Soaring Bolt!" A large, blue sphere began to form above him. With electrical bolts within it, purple ribbons of energy poured into its center. Growing brighter by the second, a flash of pale blue light shone, as many little dark, electrical spheres pummeled the Ghost Knight. Immediately after, Viki quickly teleported in and gave a whack to the beast's side. Landis ran over on the opposite side and gave it another taste of his scythe.

Ready once more, the Ghost Knight made the area grow foggy and darker. Holding its lance outward, it charged at the three with amazing speed. Sparkles of light were left behind after the beast ran them all through. The scenery returned to normal, but their conditions were far from fine. "Ow... that was... a critical hit..." Viki huffed. Landis was hunched over his weapon. "Ugh... I'm gonna meet the Grim Reaper soon... Yuk... yuk..." Rody ignored the damage he had been dealt best he could. He squeezed his eyes shut as he quietly chanted another spell.

Landis made another attempt and attacked the Knight with all the power he had left. Fortunately, his Draining Rune returned some energy to him that had been lost. He stood up straight once more, chuckling to himself during the critical situation. Viki feebly reached in her pocket meanwhile. "Ow... here!" she hurled her arm upward, sending a magical gold light over Rody and herself. They too had some energy restored. He would have thanked her, but he really needed to concentrate for this spell. Meanwhile, the great guardian turned its attention to Viki. It gave another thrust of its lance. "Ahhhh!" the strike sent Viki stumbling backwards. She leaned on her staff, heaving in breaths of pain.

He heard the sound, but it did not break his concentration. Rather, it gave him more will to attack, the

extra boost he needed. This time, and this time alone his chanting seemed to speed up much quicker than normal and he had more power in what he said. He opened his eyes and glared at the Ghost Knight. "FURIOUS BLOW!" he angrily called. Another blue orb appeared in front of him much larger than the last. It was filled with powerful electrical bolts. In seconds, the orb exploded forward with a blast of blue lightning. It electrocuted the monster with full force, sending it into great convulsions. As the light grew dim, they all noticed the great creature slightly hunched over. Landis quickly took his chance and gave a powerful strike to the opponent. The Ghost Knight then kicked both of its front legs forwards as a light shone from within its chest. The light consumed the guardian as it disappeared into nothingness.

The three unlikely companions all sank to the floor. Viki slowly reached in her pocket once more and handed everyone a medicine C. "That's the advantage of teleporting..." she tiredly laughed. "You can find a whole lot of herbs!" Rody let out a happy sigh, as Landis just sat looking into the darkness. "Okay, maybe we won't meet the Grim Reaper just yet, yuk, yuk, yuk." He finally said. After taking the medicine, Viki also let out a sigh. "Wow Rody that sure was quick magic use! And at such a high level too!" he gave a shrug. "Well, I saw you in trouble so I had to act fast. I didn't even know I had that kinda power though!" Viki held her hand to her face and giggled.

Only a few moments later, they could see a soft light shining through the trees. "Morning?" Landis asked aloud. "Hey, look!" Rody then exclaimed. "We're on a path!" he continued, looking down. Landis grinned. "Here it is. This one leads to Alma Kinnan." Rody smiled as he looked down the path. "And the fog that was lingering... it's gone! Lady Estella must have broken the seal!"

"Now I can teleport outta' here!" Viki happily exclaimed. Landis looked back and forth between the two. "Everyone's leaving? Oh well." Rody walked up to Landis and smiled. "Well, thanks for being my guide. I couldn't have made it without you." Landis grinned. "You don't fear the Reaper. Kinda interesting..." he looked from the two magicians, back to the forest. "I'm gonna go scare the fearers that walk around here. Or maybe join some random travelers. Whatever I feel like doing. And it might be neat to see a non-Winger fly, even if it is on a broom." He turned around and started to walk away.

"Well... bye Landis! Maybe I'll see you again sometime." The Winger turned and faced the two a final time. "Bye bye. Enjoy the Snake-Frog." With that, he walked into the forest, disappearing into the

darkness. "He's weird... but not so bad." Viki stated. "It's strange though... I really DO like donuts! How odd!" Rody smiled and laughed. "Ha-ha, well I've never really had Snake-Frog before so..." he trailed off from his sentence. Both were silent for a moment.

"So where are you gonna go?" Rody then asked her. Viki quickly looked up. "Oh... Wherever! I'm gonna keep tryin' to get home, even though it's nice meeting so many people. Like you!" Rody turned a faint red. "Well I hope you do find your home someday."

"If I do, I'll come find you and take you there!"

"That would be nice..."

"And you're off to Alma Kinnan to find your Master... So I guess this is goodbye!" Rody let out a sigh. "Yeah, I guess so..." Viki wore a sad smile. "Well, another good thing about traveling all over is all the neat stuff I learn! This is how they say goodbye in Karaya!" she suddenly wrapped her arms around Rody's shoulders, and pulled him close. "May somebody be with you and protect you!" Rody turned a bright red, but laughed all the same. He returned the hug and smiled. "You too, Viki. But maybe I'll see you again." They both pulled back and smiled. "Yeah, let's hope! Goodbye Rody!"

"Goodbye Viki." She raised her arm high and waved. Only a few seconds later, that familiar sound rang through the air...

\*BOOP!\*



“For the last time... I don't want any!!” Estella walked quickly as the Celarian trader pursued. “But ma'am! It is so good for you and cheap too! Please buy some Snake-Frog!” Estella held her head like it hurt. “Grrrr... I don't even know how a Celarian *man* like you could have gotten here anyways... Fine! One hundred potch you say?” she dug into her pocket angrily. “Take it! Now leave me alone!” the trader looked blissful. “Thank you miss! Thank you!” he handed her the strange food as he accepted the money. Shortly after, he left the small village.

“Hm...” Estella pondered. “It's morning already? Now that I've finally gotten into this place, I suppose I should go and get—” her eyes widened as she saw her young apprentice walk through the main gates. “Rody!” she called. He glanced over and grinned wide once he saw her. “Lady Estella!” he happily sighed. He rushed over to where she stood. “How did you get here?” she then asked. “I thought I told you to wait for me?” He looked uneasy, but happy all the same. “It's a long story, Master. I hope you can forgive me...” she gave a surrendering hum as she looked at his happy, innocent face.

“Tch, okay Rody I'll let you off this time... But this only means your training shall get tougher!”

“Yes Master.”

“Oh, and I almost forgot... I uh, bought you a present.” She presented him with something that resembled a soft, blue-green carrot. “It's the tail of a Snake-Frog... You eat it.” Not wanting to offend his Master, he accepted the moist thing, and reluctantly took a bite. To his surprise, it was one of the tastiest things he had ever eaten. It tasted almost like beef, but with sort of a sweetness to it. “Mmm, sthank yoo, Lady Eschtella...” he said with a full mouth. “Oh Rody, don't talk with your mouth full.” He gave a swallow, but then something came back to his memory...

*“Rody's favorite food is... SNAKE FROG.”*

*“Bye bye. Enjoy the Snake-Frog.”*

“(Wow...)” he thought to himself as he took another bite. “(Maybe he *is* on terms with the Grim Reaper...)”

“Rody!” Estella called to her pupil. He turned and faced his mentor. “I've rented out a room at the inn for the next couple of days. I want you on your best behavior... Men usually aren't permitted in this place so don't spoil it!” she walked into the inn, hips swaying. Rody looked back off into the thick Kuput Forest. “Something tells me...” he quietly said aloud. “That I'll get to see those guys again. Not necessarily with the Grim Reaper...” he chuckled at the thought. “But I really hope I do get to see them again. I hope Viki makes it home ok...” With that, he walked up the stairs to the inn. He would rest for that day, but tomorrow would be another day of training.

Little did he know, but not only he, but his Master, the teleporter, and even the Winger were born under a star that linked their fates. He would indeed see them again.

**The End**

