

SOL

by

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The Sun used to shine, not just with her soft light, but also with her captivating beauty. Her face was both delicate and magical, revealing eyes flecked with rainbows and a smile that melted chill. Her long, golden curls tumbled upon the earth, swathing it in warm yellow hues.

It was no secret in the heavens that the Moon was deeply in love with the Sun. So were thousands of stars, who when ignored by the Sun, desperately flung themselves to the earth and turned into wishes. Saturn offered his rings to the Sun in vain, and had since floated aimlessly in space, writing love poems.

Earth beings also fell in love with her. But the Sun was too unreachable that they soon gave up hope—all except one.

Day after day, Amorsolo loved the Sun more and more.

Since he was a child, Amorsolo had been drawn to the Sun. At dawn he would watch the Sun rise and yawn pinks and oranges into the silvery blue sky. By the time the Sun had combed out her golden locks, it was already daybreak. Amorsolo would hurriedly go out to watch the Sun shining on the fields.

He only came back inside to eat and learn his lessons.

Lessons meant struggling to run a long black bow on the strings of her mother's violin. Its mahogany color had faded in time, but its sound still hummed pure.

When Amorsolo was born, his mother had looked at his son's fingers and knew that like her, he was born to be a violinist. So everyday, she patiently taught while Amorsolo patiently learned. After lessons, Amorsolo could still be seen playing the violin in the field, his face towards the sun.

At first, the townsfolk were amused at this smitten child, and thought he was merely infatuated. But when the years passed and he had become a young man, Amorsolo knew it was beyond youthful fancy. Some people called it a waste of time, but Amorsolo called it love.

Everyday, Amorsolo made his way through the forest outside town until he reached the river, on where the Sun often admired her reflection.

When late afternoon came, as the Sun prepared to sleep, Amorsolo brought out his violin and played the notes as if he were playing his very own heartstrings. Often, because of his passionate playing, a bowstring and curled up apologetically. Without hesitation, he pulled out several strands from his long hair and stretched them across his bow. Then he resumed playing, coaxing out the lilting notes.

Amorsolo did this everyday—plucking and playing his own hair as if the Sun could see how much he loved her through this sacrifice. But in truth, no one witnessed it.

Except for the Wood. The forest surrounding the river had been on earth since the beginning of time, but nothing had pierced his heart the way Amorsolo's music did.

The Wood carried the music in his arms and spread it throughout the forest. He thought it was a pity the Sun could not hear it. She was, as usual, preening on the river and had eyes only for herself. The Wood chose not to intervene.

One day, he changed his mind.

In the middle of his serenade, Amorsolo suddenly stopped and looked at the Sun. He had always imagined that she could see him, but today, he knew he was fooling himself. In a fit of rage, he threw his instrument and it hit a boulder. Amorsolo looked in shock at the crack on its back then buried his face in his arms.

I can help you.

Amorsolo looked up with a start.

"Who's there?"

I have been here long before you were born and remain, I shall, even after you have faded.

Amorsolo rubbed his eyes and gaped at an old, bearded man with arms of leafy branches and a head full of twigs. On his chest were never-ending rings within rings.

I am the Wood, he smiled kindly. *I have heard your music and I am pleased with the instrument that you play.*

"I-I am s-sorry." Amorsolo's hands shook as he took the broken violin and gave it to the Wood. "I didn't mean to throw it away."

It is mended, the Wood handed him back the violin. In wonder, Amorsolo ran his hand on the smooth finish where the crack had been. Its mahogany color was restored, its wood rich and sturdy.

I can make things from my own being, he explained. *Return to this river tomorrow and I will help you.*

"I don't understand," whispered Amorsolo.

Have faith in the Wood. I may be old but I still have my magic.

With that, he disappeared. Amorsolo looked up and realized it was already night. He ran all the way home.

At daybreak, Amorsolo was at the river, dressed in his best clothes. Last night, he had looked at the mirror, and realized how ridiculous he looked with his long hair and bald patches. So that morning, he had shaven off his hair.

Beside the river, he paced back and forth with his violin and bow.

Finally, the Wood appeared.

I give you another gift.

Amorsolo heard the creaking of wood and saw a horse coming out of the forest.

Its brown coat gleamed in the Sun's light, but Amorsolo thought it trotted oddly. When it came closer, he realized it was rocking to and fro. Amorsolo's face changed from shock to fascination then to anger.

"You have given me a toy!"

The Wood shook his head, sighing.

Did not I tell you that I could only make things from my being? I've given you a wooden horse because I cannot fashion a real one. It is up to you to make it real.

Amorsolo's eyes widened.

"How?"

The Wood motioned to the violin.

By making your own kind of magic.

Amorsolo looked at his violin and his bow. The wind blew, nudging the wooden rocking horse closer. He looked at the horse's eyes and remembered.

He had a rocking horse like this when he was a child, just as he was starting his lessons with his mother. He would practice playing on the horse, and he would close his eyes and imagine he was in a faraway place where dreams came true.

Without hesitation, he now climbed on his back. Cradling the violin on the length of his left arm, he lifted the bowstring.

He played everything he felt. He played about desires wished on dead stars. He floated in that tiny space between dreams and reality. He was in a hall with red velvet curtains and a green carpet. He was high in the clouds. He was playing for the Sun who was listening.

Suddenly a bowstring broke. Instinctively, he reached for his hair. But before he could realize that he was completely bald, he was shocked to see that he was really floating among the clouds!

"Ahh!"

Amorsolo nearly fell off his horse when he looked down at the river, reduced to a size of a puddle. His horse neighed a warning; Amorsolo realized that it was real. Its tail swished and patted him on the back.

Don't stop.

And Amorsolo looked in front of him and beheld the face that had given him the reason to play.

Please continue.

He couldn't move. He was drowning in the swirling colors of the Sun's eyes. The colors shifted and Amorsolo saw own his dumbstruck reflection. He forced himself to speak.

"I-I beg your pardon. My bowstring broke and I have no more hair to replace.... aaw!"

The horse had thumped his back with its tail.

"...the broken string...aaw!"

This time, the horsetail had really whipped his back. Amorsolo grabbed it in his hand, and when it swished back to place, he was clutching a few strands of its hair. He had an idea.

"Just a moment, please."

And Amorsolo quickly strung the horsehair in his bow. He continued playing.

When he was finished, the Sun was staring at him, enraptured.

What wonderful magic! What is it called?

"A song," Amorsolo breathed. "I have made it for you."

For me? The Sun gazed at him. *No one has ever made a song for me.* She smiled. *And its made of little pieces with different sounds, isn't it?*

"Pieces? Oh, I see. You mean notes. Like this."

And Amorsolo played a note, sweet and clear.

Beautiful.

"Not as beautiful as you."

The Sun giggled.

"And each note has its own name," Amorsolo hurriedly explained, abashed by his forwardness.

What is the name of that note you just played?

"Sol."

Because I am more beautiful than that note, I deserve to have its name, she teased.

Amorsolo blushed.

From that day on, Amorsolo rode his horse and serenaded the Sun, who quickly fell in love with his music.

The Moon looked at all this in disgust. He thought of a way to win back his beloved. He knew he had to act quickly.

That day, while the Sun was setting, the Moon rose.

The young man has captured your heart, I see.

The Sun sighed dreamily. *He has magic. He played me songs. He is different from anyone here in the heavens.*

But my dear, he is a mere mortal. The Moon took her hand. *I have loved you since the heavens were made.*

Pouting, the Sun withdrew her hand. *You have nothing new to offer me.*

But I do.

And the Moon brought out a crown, so bright and golden, it made the Sun cover her eyes.

I have crafted this from my own beam, from the glow harnessed from my depths. It is my light, and I share it with you.

The Sun took it, awed by its blinding radiance.

If you accept it, we will be sharing one light and we will be forever bonded.

The Sun knew what this meant. Amorsolo's music flashed in her ears and for a moment, her heart ached.

But when she saw her reflection, ephemeral on the crown's shiny surface, she knew what she wanted.

The following day, Amorsolo rode his horse towards the sky. But he had not even reached the clouds when he felt the blazing heat. He could not breathe. In desperation, he played a note.

Amorsolo?

"Sol! Show me your face so I will be relieved of this insufferable heat."

Here I am, wearing the Moon's light. Don't I look more beautiful than ever?

Amorsolo covered his eyes with his arm.

"Where are you?" He gasped, "What has happened to you?"

And the Sun came closer, with light thousands of times brighter, her gentle warmth turned to deadly, fiery heat.

I am wed to the Moon. We share the same light. I'm now brilliant and dazzling!

Amorsolo's violin strings snapped and curled up from the heat. He could feel his skin on fire. His horse was crying out in pain. Before he knew it, he was falling.

A lush treetop broke his fall. Amorsolo looked down and saw that his horse had turned back into wood in splinters and ashes on the ground. His violin was burnt black. He longed to cry but the Sun had dried his tears even before they fell.

The Sun shines now not gently, but fiercely. It is impossible to see her beauty because of her blinding radiance. Her heat scorches and burns, but she continues to shine everyday, convinced that she is the most beautiful thing in the sky.

She still longs for Amorsolo's songs, even after he has departed and returned to the ground. They say a huge tree has grown on top of where he lays, its sturdy trunk in rich mahogany. When the wind blows through its branches, a singular note is heard, whooshing clear across the woods. But it no longer reaches the heavens.