

The Seasons of the Singer

His name was Elarion,
and from the beginning, he was drawn to beauty.

As a child,
he wandered the orchards not for the fruit,
but to watch sunlight scatter through the blossoms.
At eleven, he carved his first flute and played to the wind,
delighted when birds paused to listen.

As he grew older,
the beauty he chased became more tangible —
laughter across a firelit room,
the brush of hands,
the thrill of glances held too long.

By sixteen, he had traded the flute for a lute
and the orchard for taverns.
He sang bold songs and kissed easily.
His music stirred hearts and opened doors,
and he followed wherever the road would carry him —
through candle-lit inns,
welcoming beds,
festivals that left garlands tangled in his hair.

Over time, though, something began to shift.
The embraces left a trace of chill behind.
The applause lingered in the air,
but not in his heart.

Beauty still called to him —
but now it seemed to speak from farther away,
in a language he hadn't yet learned.

He met Selira in that in-between time.
A noblewoman,
married to a much older lord.
Her voice was quiet,
her presence fierce.

She listened to his songs
as if searching for something beneath the melody.
They never touched. Not once.
And yet he sang for her every evening beneath her window,
his melodies thick with longing.

One night, she spoke.

“You don’t love me, Elarion,” she said.
“You love what awakens in you when I am near.”

He left that same night.
Not from shame —
but from clarity.

He wandered into quieter lands,
where no one knew his name.
He sang less,
and when he did, the songs were different —
fewer words,
gentler tones,
shaped by absence as much as desire.

He sang to wind-bent trees,
to crumbling chapels where no one prayed,
to wells that hadn’t been drawn from in years.

In a seaside village where gulls outnumbered people,
he met Maerel,
a healer who gathered herbs and spoke with the trees.

She lived in a crooked cottage
with driftwood charms hanging from the rafters.

She asked nothing of him.
They spent many evenings by her hearth in silence.
Sometimes she would hum as she worked,
and it would undo him in ways he couldn’t explain.

He loved her —
not with hunger,
but with reverence.

One morning, before dawn,
he left her a single feather
and a quiet song scratched on parchment.

He walked away not to possess the moment,
but to let it remain whole.

In his later years,
Elarion no longer wandered far.
He rarely sang,
and when he did, it was not to express,
but to listen.

The songs were spare now —
simple phrases,
silences folded into melody.

People paused when they heard them,
not out of wonder,
but out of recognition.

As if the music carried a longing
they had always felt but never named.

One evening, he climbed a hill alone
and played a final melody to the wind.

It wasn't a farewell.
It was what remained
after a lifetime of songs
had been sifted and distilled.

They found him there at dawn,
slumped over his lute,

the strings humming faintly in the wind.

— *William Zeitler*
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