



Summer Blue

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Retold Fairy Tales

Once upon a time, a queen gave birth to a little princess. At least, that's what was assumed at the time. Since the child had skin like porcelain and hair dark as obsidian, the queen thought Snow White would be the perfect name for such a princess. Sadly, shortly after picking out the name, the queen passed away.

When the child grew old enough to talk, it turns out everyone was quite mistaken. He informed everyone that he was, in fact, a prince just like his two older brothers. Now, the child's father, the king, was a kind, loving, and understanding man. He remembered how his wife had said that their child had eyes as bright as the summer sky on the day they first met. Thus, he renamed the boy Summer Blue and, for a time, all was well.

But then the king remarried a duchess from a land far different than his own to stop a war between the two. No sooner did the couple return from their honeymoon did the king fall ill and die. With no close relatives to take the crown while the three sons grew into adulthood, the queen began to rule.

She was a power-hungry and wicked queen who wanted nothing more than to see her new kingdom flourish into an empire that would last a thousand years. To start off, she arranged marriages for her two oldest step-children to build alliances with powerful kingdoms that were as cruel and malicious as she was. When it came time to arrange a marriage for Summer Blue, it was not a daughter in law she wanted from him.

"It isn't right for you to go on pretending to be a prince when you're really a princess, Snow White," said the queen. "Besides, you're the youngest. Your brothers will inherit everything. I'll send you to wed a prince so that you can one day sit on a throne of your own if he dies young. You can then join his kingdom with ours."

"I shall not rule like you," argued Summer Blue, "and I shall not murder as you did our father. No one ever

believes me, but I know it to be true. I'll marry into the royal family of Fairy Land so that our kingdom can learn good magic and take our place in the world in the right way."

Furious with the prince's fiery words, the queen stripped Summer Blue of his usual clothes and only gave him only dresses to wear. She then locked him away, vowing to only let him out once he confessed he was really a princess.

There Summer Blue stayed, plotted, and listened. Spring passed into summer. Summer passed into autumn. Autumn to winter. Then, on the first day of spring, the queen set out on a journey to find a kingdom with a prince that would marry Summer Blue.

With his step-mother gone, Summer Blue slipped away from his room under the cover of night. With everyone worried about watching the kingdom while the queen was gone, no one paid the prince locked in his room much mind.

In fact, everyone found themselves so busy that he managed to steal a map of Fairy Land from the royal wizard and food from the kitchen. The one thing he didn't have time to grab was clothes he would have been more comfortable in.

For an entire day, he followed the map with little trouble, but he hadn't anticipated how menacing shadows could be at night, nor how sharp branches looked in the dark.

That night, he found a tree with enough footholds for him to climb, but he barely slept. Between the fear of falling and the distant grumbles and growls, he never once felt safe enough to nod off, even with a sword at his hip.

The second day went slower. Blue's feet dragged with exhaustion. Still, he pressed on along streams and deer paths according to the map. As dusk approached, there was not a tree he could climb in sight. They had grown to the size of houses with branches far out of his reach.

The snarls and snapping of twigs had been growing closer all day. Just as the last light melted away, a pack of wolves grew bold enough to show themselves, fangs and all. Blue had never faced wild animals, but still, he tried to hold his own, swinging and slashing at the beasts to little avail.

The wolves chased him towards a nearby stream and, with a deep breath and a prayer, he leaped into the

water. His feet hardly brushed the stones before jumping to the next. Two steps away from the bank, his foot slipped and he plunged into the water. Pulling himself from the current, he frantically felt for his blade. Wolves care nothing for honor and fairness, so they seized Blue's moment of weakness and splashed after him.

The leader's jaws were just above the prince's neck when a torch irrupted from the night and ancient foreign words boomed from the shadows. Summer Blue knew not the words, nor the short man who spoke, but the wolves did. Rather than attack a citizen of Fairy Land, they turned and bolted into the night.

The man dragged Summer Blue, sputtering and coughing, to his feet and threw his own cloak around the boy. "What's a lass such as yourself doing out here in the dark this far from your human kingdom?" asked the man.

"I'm not a lass. I'm a lad," rasped Summer Blue.

"Beg your pardon. The long hair and the dress led me astray."

Summer Blue wrapped the cloak around himself and shrugged. "It's all right. At least you're polite enough to apologize. My step-mother, the queen, hasn't been that kind at all in the time I've known her."

The short man's eyes grew wide. "The queen you say? We've heard whispers of your family. You're Snow White, are you not?"

"My name is Summer Blue. My step-mother wished for me to live as a princess and marry a prince so that she can build an empire, but I refuse. I'm running away to Fairy Land to marry into the house of their kings and queens."

The little man roared with laughter and the sound shook the branches above. "It's Fairy Land you've found, lad, seeing as I'm a dwarf. Your bravery and sense would do you well in the Faerie Court, but you do not speak our tongue, nor do you know our ways. I'm only familiar with your words because I've traded often with your human kin."

Summer Blue slouched a bit, the night wind biting a bit as his disappointment laced it.

Seeing his sad expression, the dwarf continued. "However, if you can settle for brothers, uncles, and cousins, I can give you seven, including myself. My brothers and I have been married to our mines all our lives, thus we have no children to pass it onto in our twilight years."

Summer Blue pondered the idea. "I thought fae folk never died."

The dwarf nodded. "To your mortal eyes, it may seem so, but the earth never lends life forever. She's just a bit more patient with the children who stay closest to her. Never you mind that, though, son. Such things you will learn if you come with me. Study such things well and one day you may earn yourself a fairy spouse so that our mines will never fall from family hands."

Summer Blue didn't need the allure of a fairy spouse or all the jewels and gold from mines. Truth be told, he never heard that bit. All he needed was the way the dwarf called him "son," and he knew he'd found a new home.

"I owe you my life, Sir Dwarf." The prince bowed to show his gratitude.

With a chuckle, the dwarf slapped Summer Blue on the shoulder, making the boy's knees buckle. What he lacked in stature, he certainly made up in strength. "There's nothing about me begetting the title of sir. I am known in these parts as Old Berg."

Together, Summer Blue and Old Berg made their way home.

The dwarf's six brothers rejoiced when they saw the boy and heard how Old Berg came by him. No sooner did he settle into his room in the attic did they begin fighting over him. All of them wanted to teach him to hunt, how to listen to the mountains to find the best ore and jewels, how to cut a gem so that the sunlight made it sparkle. As the oldest, Old Berg supervised who would teach Summer Blue what. As the only one who had ever liked school, he took on the task of teaching the boy the fairy tongue and their long history.

The next morning, Summer Blue's new life began and the brothers took turns teaching him all they knew about the world. One would teach how to work in the mines safely while another would teach the best way treat blisters from swinging a pick. Another would teach him which plants and animals were safe to eat and another would teach him which ones were sacred or other fairies in disguise.

With each passing year, Summer Blue felt himself changing. His body grew strong like the mountains his mined while his steps became as soft as the animals he shared the forest with. His fairy words grew quick and smart while his ability to haggle a fair price for his foster family's gems and ore came to rival Old Berg's.

By the time he was a man, Summer Blue was more fae than he had ever been human, but he was also

completely himself.

On the ten year anniversary of Summer Blue coming to the dwarves, they kicked him out of the house so they could plan a celebration. He had always found idle rest boring, so he set out to gather medicinal herbs. Old Berg had mentioned them running low on several kinds and Summer Blue wasn't sure what to do with himself if he didn't have some sort of task.

Near the stream where he had first been found, Summer Blue heard a woman scream. When he dropped his basket and ran towards the sound, he found a human man with a struggling fairy woman in his grasp. Furious with the transgression, Summer Blue tackled the man to the ground, demanding to know who the man was if he wanted to live.

His anger fell short when he recognized the man as a servant from his human household.

“Take pity on me. I didn't wish her any harm, but my queen has ordered me to find her lost step-daughter, Snow White. She'll sell my family into slavery across the sea if I return empty-handed. She's done it to many families already that I had to think of something. I told the fairy woman I'd become her servant for eternity if she pretended to be the princess for a short time. You have to understand, kind sir, that I must protect my children.”

Summer Blue got up and helped the man to his feet. Brushing him off, Summer Blue explained, “I know of this Snow White. Tell the queen to come herself and I shall tell her where she hides. If she sends anyone else or harms any other families in her service, she'll never know what became of her daughter.” He removed a ring from his finger modeled after one his father had given him—he had outgrown the old one, you see—and gave it to the man as proof.

When the servant had gone, Summer Blue tended to the still shaking fairy woman.

“Thank you, sir. I think I'll be all right. I am forever in your debt.”

Summer Blue looked the woman over. Her gown was made of the finest silks and the jewels she wore had been mined from his family's land and fashioned for those in the Fairy Court. Her wild hair reminded him of fires on the coldest winter nights and her green eyes were more brilliant than any emerald he had ever seen.

Summer Blue was instantly smitten with the court lady, but he knew it wasn't proper to tell her so, as he was still a stranger.

"You're awfully far from home, miss," he said. "What brought you here?"

The woman frowned and pulled her cloak tighter around herself, just like Summer Blue had that cold night he was first found. "My father wishes me to marry a cruel, brutish man from across the Silver Sea. I ran away to make my position on the matter perfectly clear."

Summer Blue grinned and offered the woman his arm. "I know the feeling. Care to accompany me home until you decide what to do next?"

"Do you know because of this Snow White woman?"

Summer Blue chuckled. "In a matter of speaking."

As the two traveled through the woods, Summer Blue explained how he had once been called Snow White and how he had come to join the dwarves' family. The more he spoke, the more the fairy woman became entranced by him.

The way he spoke her language so elegantly. His familiarity with her customs and his attempt at fairy manners, despite his somewhat clumsy execution. By the time they reached Summer Blue's home, the fairy woman decided he was exactly the type of person she would like to marry. Being a lady, however, she knew it would be terribly improper to say so out loud during their first meeting.

The dwarves welcomed the woman into their home as warmly as they had welcomed Summer Blue, secretly rejoicing in the way the two had silently fallen for one another. Neither were quite as subtle or sly as they thought, you see. She became a part of their celebration and danced with them long into the night.

When the party ended Summer Blue offered his room. "It wouldn't be proper to have you sleep on the floor, miss. My uncles raised me better."

The woman giggled and kissed him on the cheek as she ascended the stairs. “My name is Sunrise Rose and I’ll have you call me nothing different from here on out.”

Summer Blue found himself too stunned to argue. His face turned nearly as red as her hair.

The dwarf brothers insisted Sunrise Rose stay until she made her decision, all the while secretly praying she would simply stay and marry Summer Blue. For weeks Summer Blue taught her all about the mines during the day while Sunrise Rose showed him how to bake the sweetest cakes in all of Fairy Land in the evening. For the first time since the death of his mortal father, Summer Blue felt everything in his life was just as it should be.

But just like in his childhood, his step-mother came to ruin it all.

She came on a day he was alone. He had been recovering from a cold and, despite his protests, the dwarves and Sunrise Rose insisted he stay home one more day. They were in the mines as usual and she had gone to pick mushrooms for dinner.

The queen knocked at the door dressed as an old beggar woman, her horse’s reigns in her hands, for who would let their queen wander into the woods of Fairy Land alone on foot? “It’s been so long, child,” said the queen. “When my servant said your name, I knew who you truly were. Look how you’ve grown.”

Summer Blue stiffened, recognizing the queen at once, despite her disguise. “Who do you think you are, harming people on my account? Did it ever occur to you that I might not want to be found?”

The queen frowned and pulled an old weathered picnic basket from her cloak. “I see these ten years have not changed our views of the world the least little bit. Let us have lunch and see if we can work something out. Would you not at least like a chance to meet with your brothers again? They all have families of their own that wish to know what happened to you.”

Regardless of his feelings for the queen, Summer Blue could not deny that he had missed his brothers these ten years, so he agreed. Together they walked a little way to a small field and ate the lunch the queen had prepared. As they ate all of Summer Blue’s favorite foods from childhood, the queen insisted they save the business for afterward. She listened intently to the story of his life and, while he spoke of Sunrise Rose in love-struck awe, she cut him a slice of apple pie.

“Your brothers tell me it was your favorite,” she said. “Have a slice and then we shall move on to the messy

business before us.”

Summer Blue’s mouth watered at the sight. He had never been able to make it the way the palace bakers did, so he decided to humor her for a moment more. The second he swallowed the first bite, Summer Blue realized with dread that it might be his last moment.

His vision blurred and his stomach churned. No matter how he gasped, he couldn’t get a proper breath. He stumbled to his feet and tried to stagger back towards the house, but his failing sight and swimming mind made him topple to the ground. The queen stood over him as he pushed himself onto his back in one final attempt to keep the darkness at bay.

“I wanted to leave you here, Snow White. I thought it would be too much work to find you,” she said. “But your kingdom has fallen on hard times. You will marry into a wealthier kingdom and save us.”

The poison and the darkness swallowed Summer Blue before he could protest.

That evening, his family began to worry the moment they realized he was missing. Together they combed the woods until they found the queen’s picnic things left behind in her rush to get away. The dwarves called on the beasts of the ground to help find Summer Blue while Sunrise Rose called on the birds of the air. All through the evening and into the night, the entire forest was in an uproar to find the heir to the dwarf mines.

The queen rode as fast and hard as she could with Summer Blue’s body, but her greed was no match for Summer Blue’s family who called the woods home and loved him more than life itself. In the darkness, she wound up lost and, in fear of the sounds in the darkness, pushed her poor horse all the harder.

The wolves that had once chased Summer Blue now pursued the horse to save him, seeing him as no different than the dwarves they shared their home with. They snapped at the queen’s heels and tried their best to grab hold of Summer Blue without hurting him. When the horse reared, they seized their chance, pulling him free by his boot and letting the queen dash into the night.

She then abandoned her plan. If she could just escape, she could consult the dark witch who had sold her the poison and find some other means to gain power for her kingdom. In her scheming, she did not see the cliff above the ravine ahead of her. She pulled on the reins too late and, while the horse was able to skid to a stop, it was horribly fed up with her nonsense and bucked her off, sending her tumbling to the rocky river far below.

Back in the woods, the wolves gathered around Summer Blue to keep him warm. One spoke to an owl, who

spoke to a crow, who spoke to a morning dove, who found Sunrise Rose and told her where to find him. When she and the dwarves arrived, she held him in her arms and mourned, as did the dwarves, for they all thought he was dead.

It was not until the morning dove, who had since spoken to a robin, who had spoken to a cardinal that had seen the entire lunch the day before, told her that he may still be alive, did she stop crying.

“That evil queen needed him alive,” said the morning dove. “So there may be hope that he’s merely sleeping. Carry him back to your home in Fairy Land and find someone who could break his spell.”

The fairy folk rejoiced and agreed to set out at once, but first, Sunrise Rose leaned over and placed a kiss on Summer Blue’s mouth as a promise to do whatever she could to save him.

As it turns out, since she was in fact, his true love, that’s all she had to do.

His eyes opened and he gasped for breath. His family made it all the harder as they tackled his with relieved hugs. Once they had settled down once more, Sunrise Rose explained what had happened and that the evil queen was dead. However, even with her danger gone, Sunrise Rose dreaded the idea of any harm befalling her beloved ever again.

“Marry me, Summer Blue, and live with me in the Fairy Court, for I am the king’s daughter. A mortal man may not of have been who my father wanted, but he will love the alliance you bring all the same. It’s not half as much as I love you, but it will keep you safe, for I can’t stand the idea being helpless to save you again.”

“Well, seeing as I was getting ready to ask you the same thing, I don’t have much a choice, do I?” said Summer Blue. “Thought I hope you’ll forgive me for leaving the ring I made you at home. My step-mother took off with me before I could grab it.”

The entire forest rejoiced, for the dwarves’ son had been found and he was to be wed to a fairy, just as he had set out to do all those years ago. Once wed in a beautiful ceremony, Summer Blue and Sunrise Rose returned to the mortal kingdom where his oldest brother had become king when the queen never returned. Truth be told, no one had really wanted to look for her after the terror she wreaked on the land for all those years.

Together with the dwarves, Summer Blue, Sunrise Rose, and the mortal brothers worked together to bring Fairy Land and the mortal world together for a thousand years to come. The dwarves’ gems and metal work

became famous throughout Summer Blue's homeland while human goods spread throughout the fairy realm. All though out the land, there was happiness.

Happiest of all were Summer Blue and Sunrise Rose, who did everything together. From managing the mines to traveling between their homelands to adopting children who, like Summer Blue, needed a home where they could be themselves, they spent their days sharing their happiness with their two worlds. I can think of no better way to live happily ever after.

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