The Outcast Girl of Sonatina
by Rose Kocher

Once upon a time, in a city called Sonatina, there lived a dear outcast little girl named Lily. She loved music with a passion, and the city in which she lived was home to all the most brilliant musicians in the world. Bach and Beethoven, Mozart and Mendelssohn, and many more great musicians all lived there. It was where all the adept and proficient musicians went when they died, and the skill of their melodic ear determined when they got to heaven. Now this little girl died of a tragic car accident and for some reason she ended up in this strange city between the worlds. No one there knew what to do with her. To begin with, she was tone deaf as anyone could be. Her sense of rhythm was horrible. Yes, she loved music dearly, but she seemed incapable of understanding it. She could hear it but could not comprehend the technicality of it. She had a broken violin that she had brought with her from the other world, and she would play heart-rending, jarring pieces on it.

Her father, who was stupid, although musically talented, (which was why he got into that world) once boasted to Franz Liszt, a crazy, very rich Hungarian musician that she was a master at music and could play a song that would have the whole city weeping; he said this merely to impress him and thought no more of it. But Liszt was intrigued and decided to put his words to the test. He told her father to bring her to his grand studio, and locked the little girl in a room in his house, demanding that by the next morning she have a grand and tragic symphony ready for him to review, so that his orchestra could play it the next day. If she failed she would "meet with another tragic accident," Liszt told her grimly.

Lily was horrified. She sat in the room with the ink and paper and cried until her eyes were dry. She could not write music! She could not even write words. All she knew was her little violin, and that was not much. Towards the morning she had completely despaired and crumpled paper lay in a pile around her. Suddenly the door creaked and opened and then shut. Lily's tear stained face started blankly at the door and a little bird, with bright red and orange feathers, hopped into the room. Its bright beady eyes looked at her quizzically.

"Good evening, my dear! Why do you weep so?" Lily jumped when the bird spoke.

"Alas," cried Lily, " I've got to write a entire symphony, and I cannot even write words, let alone notes!" And she sobbed a little sob.

The little bird looked at her with his radiant little eyes, and then said, "What will you give me if I write it for you?"

The maiden looked around. Her dress was ragged and patched, and she had no jewels or anything to give him. The only thing was her little violin. Better that

than whatever horrible plan Liszt had for her, she supposed, so she said, "The little violin that sits there in the corner." The bird fluttered over and examined it, and Lily heard him say, "What a nice house this would make for me in winter!" and after a moment's consideration he consented and at once pulled out a little set of glasses and set to work writing notes and lines extraordinarily fast. He went on and on, until the dawn began to show in the eastern sky and all at once he and the violin disappeared at once, and Liszt opened the door and came in. When he saw the neat stack of paper with the notes and clefs written all over it, he was surprised and took it up and examined it. He soon began to sing the notes under his breath and then ran from the room and soon his orchestra was playing for all they were worth, and the whole town had gathered around to hear; everyone was crying and weeping at the soulful beauty of the music.

Liszt was amazed and impressed, but greedy for more, so the next night, he locked Lily in yet another room and told her to write a piece that would bring joy and happiness to every heart after the heartbreak of today.

Lily was at her wits' end. What would she do this time? All at once, the door creaked open the same as the night before and the little bird entered and said, "What will you give me if I write your symphony?" And Lily said, "The ink and quill that you use, you may have, if you write it for me."

So the little bird pulled out his glasses and set to work and by morning had a song so beautiful it matched the morning, and the birds in that land sang with it and the sun seemed to rise in tune with it. Liszt was amazed and delighted beyond compare.

"Tonight," he said, "write me a song that will stand the tests of time, that is graceful and glorious and magnificent. If you succeed, I shall marry you and no one will ever have a better life."

Even if she is only a poor little peasant girl, who should not have ended up here, he thought**,** *I will never find a woman like her again. What music!* How it thrilled his soul. He trembled at the thought of her sunrise song. He would be so rich in what mattered!

When Lily was left alone, the bird appeared again and said, "What will you give me if I write this last one for you?"

Lily looked around in despair. "I have nothing left to give you," she said. The bird looked at her with his bright twinkling eyes.

"Promise me the hand of your first daughter."

"But," said Lily, "You are a bird and my daughter will be human."

"I am cursed," said the bird. "Once I marry a real woman, I will return to my human form. I am very handsome," he said under his breath, stroking his beak with a wing.

Lily nearly laughed out loud. The thought of the bright eyed little bird being human was more then she could conjure, but she did not know what else to do, and time was fleeting fast. So she promised the little bird the hand of her first daughter, and he at once set to work and by morning had a magnificent, flowing symphony.

When Liszt arrived in the morning, and saw the music, he immediately set his orchestra to play it. Upon hearing its magnificence, he kept his promise and married Lily that very day.

Eighteen years passed, and their eldest daughter was turning nineteen. She was deeply in love with Beethoven's oldest son, who was a year older than she was and very handsome. He was a great man and very rich and was called "the Prince" in that land, for his charming ways and his handsome face. She was to be married to him on her mineteenth birthday and the whole town was turned out to celebrate. Lily had quite forgotten about the little bird and when she awoke on the morning of her daughter's birthday, her heart was light.

All at once the little bird flew into her room as she was getting ready and perched on her mirror. "Now you must give me what you have promised."

Lily was horrified and offered the bird anything else of his choosing if he would give up his plan.

"No, I would rather be turned into myself again, than have anything else in all the world. Do you know what I have suffered? No, no, you cannot begin to imagine how awful it is to be a bird" and he pronounced the word with loathing and disgust.

Lily thought that it was silly, there were lot worse of things to be than a bird. But he went on. "You promised..." he said.

Then Lily began to weep and moan and beg for him to depart and leave her and her family in peace, and at last the bird had pity on her and told her that she had three days and if none of the city could guess his name by then, he would get Ilsa. If not, then Beethoven's eldest son could have her.

Lily was very upset, as the whole wedding had to be called off, and it caused a horrible stir in the land.

Her daughter, Ilsa, was extraordinarily angry at the proceedings, as was her betrothed and the riot that followed all this was quite extensive. For the the next three days all was chaos and upset as queen, daughter and suitor all madly searched for any unusual names that could possibly be found. But when the fourth day had dawned and the sun was beginning to rise high into the sky, the bird appeared again, and demanded that he be at once married to Ilsa.

And as there was nothing, any of them could do about it, they were married at once, as the bird wished it. The moment that the priest had declared the holy

words and pronounced them...bird and wife, the bird turned into a little man with fiery orange hair, dressed in red and gold. Beethoven's son, who had been waiting for the moment of transformation, first glanced at Ilsa to check her reaction and then leapt in front of the little man, crying, "A duel, a duel!"

And so the little man had nothing to do but draw his sword and fight with Beethoven, Jr.

The fight went on and on, an the whole town was gathered around cheering and Ilsa was crying and laughing by turns and all was in a riot.

The little man lived up to his orange hair, for he fought like a little demon, darting here and there in a wild frenzy and spinning away from the prince's stabs by turns. At last, the prince made a violent effort and spun the little man onto his back. With a sword at his throat the man had little he could do so he lay trembling and positively fizzing in his anger.

"I do not wish to kill you," said Beethoven, Jr., "because I feel that that would be ungentlemanly in such a situation. But, you..." and he began to shake in his anger and his love. The sword crept closer and closer to the red haired man's throat.

"Please!" he gasped, "have mercy. I am leaving, I will return to the land from whence I came!" The prince looked down at him with scorn.

"Originally!" he squeaked.

"What do you mean?" Asked everyone, and the prince allowed him a little talking space, "I am a Dwarf, from far, far over the mountains," he said. "I *hate* women with a passion which is why I was destined to be married to one," he glanced at Ilsa and wrinkled up his nose, "before my enchantment would break.

"Do any of you know what I have suffered?" he screamed. "I have had to endure this light and this freedom when all I wish is to return to my cave, to the dark!" He looked at the prince and said "If you let me go alive, I will never ever trouble you again and..."

"But," the prince cut him off, "you are now married to Ilsa!"

The little man laughed."How stupid do you think I am?" he asked "Did you think for a moment I would be staying here? I was going to leave the first chance I got, till you came charging in here with that blasted sword."

At this, Beethoven Jr.'s blood boiled to think that anyone could be so unfaithful and he leapt on the little man, and just as he was about to bring his sword down and cleave him in two, the man vanished. The crowd gasped and the Prince looked around in a dazed sort of way. Ilsa ran up to him crying and laughing and he took her in his arms and they were married on the spot. "Twice in one day!" Ilsa told her mother later, in a horrified sort of way.

Ilsa always lived in fear of the little man showing up again, although she did not let her husband know this. But he never did, and once they heard through many tongues, how the wild fire dwarfs of the north had one time in their long lifespan that they could vanish instantly, and they supposed that must have been what the little bird man had done.

And so, the couple lived a long and happy life together always playing their instruments and singing their hearts out, ever more grateful and glad for each other because of the narrow escape at the beginning of their marriage.