

The Old Musician

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It was during the time that I was a little girl and elderly musician was coming into our yard. He silently and solemnly opened his accordion, then dug out from his old clothes a tin cup. He then began to play. And we, the children, enchanted, looked on. While his fingers, which were withered, fluttered across the keys, creating the most harmonious sounds that you could imagine. His music, which sounded like it was sobbing, told us about the cheerless solitude of man who is truly alone. It dwelled in our minds and hearts becoming both enticing and disturbing to our souls. He did not come often and when he did, it was usually during the fall months of year that he was with us.

The leaves would fall slowly and majestically to the beat of the music. There were only a few trees growing in our yard. And the leaves would fall, seemingly in time, would cling to his gray-haired head and soon would fall silently to the ground. The music became silent and we children gladly gathered money for the old musician. We were elated when tin cup was filled with coins and bills from the admiring crowd that had been attracted by the beautiful, entrancing music. The old musician exited with bows. Women were looking after the musician with compassion. They shook their heads and were talking in low voices with each other. What? We didn't pay attention to an elder's conversation and our young hearts beating with compassion for this man.

It seemed to always happen, the good will between people, when he filled our yard's simple life with his wonderful music. Then the old musician came less and less often.

Five years passed. We went to school, and some of us learned to play music.

Then once again the old musician, as if by magic, appeared in our yard again, worn out and grown old. His clothes were tattered and torn. The old musician made his usual ritual, solemnly opening his accordion from its case, digging from his badly worn clothes his tin cup and played once again. Music, which told us about suffering, loneliness and life's experiences flowed from his accordion.

Suddenly a boy from our neighborhood played the same melody, only louder, drowning out the old musician's melody. The old musician became embarrassed and then began playing another melody. The boy, thought that he was being challenged to a competition played the same melody. The boy's Mother was smiling happily and triumphantly.

The old musician slowly rose to his full height. He placed his accordion in its case with care and great sadness. After then he hung his head and stopping, went towards the yard gate.

The boy's Mother, seemingly confused by this happening, quieted her son. One neighbor, with money in hand, immediately ran after musician. The old musician pushed aside her hand. He refused the money. And then he was gone without speaking any words. We never knew his voice, just the music that told us about him.

The years passed by rapidly. Life was changing and with it, our destiny. Everything is different now. There are many street musicians today, some young and some old, some funny while other where sad. We hurry to our work, keeping a part of these melodies in our minds.

But then there are the memories, half- forgotten, of melodies from my childhood years and of the leaves falling, seemingly to beat of the long stilled music from the wandering minstrel of long, long ago.