

## THE STORY OF SUNNY, THE GOLDEN CAT

*I once saw a bumper sticker that read: “The meek shall inherit the earth. The rest of us will have gone to the stars...”, and a story I had heard as a child came to my mind. This is the story of The Golden Cat from Tigray, Ethiopia...*

A kitten with the most beautiful golden fur was born to Mama Cat. Mama Cat slept most of the time. Sometimes, she just closed her eyes and let her kittens suckle, or play with her tail and jump all around her.

The golden furred kitten was his mother’s favorite. Mama Cat always licked and brushed her baby’s beautiful golden fur. She named him Sunny.

Sunny grew up to be the most beautiful golden cat ever. He was the pride of Mama Cat. Sunny would lick his paws and wash his face. He would brush his golden fur until it became nice and shiny, and he would go for a stroll in the neighborhood streets.



As he walked, all the young female kittens would giggle, whistle, and some would even wink their eyes at him, trying to get his attention. And all the young tomcats would get very jealous of Sunny. But Sunny would pretend he did not hear any whistles or see any winks and would just keep walking his proud way. He would softly hum a tune as he run errands for Mama Cat, and ignore all the pretty young kittens in the area.

Word was out that Kitty, the most beautiful black haired and black- eyed cat living in the same street was madly in love with Sunny. She had refused to eat her food. She was sulking and pinning after her idol, Sunny. Her mom had scolded her; her older sister, Tina, had teased and laughed at her, but Kitty was head-over-heels in love and she could not help it. And worst of all, Sunny totally ignored her and did not pay any attention to Kitty, or to any of the neighborhood beauties for that matter.

One day after dinner, while they were all resting, sitting and watching TV, one of Sunny’s sisters mentioned Kitty’s name. All of a sudden, every thing became very quiet. You could hear a pin drop even on a carpet. Mama Cat broke the silence by turning to Sunny and casually asking him, “Kitty is a nice girl. Don’t you think so?”

Sunny blinked his eyes, but did not answer. And Mama Cat went on, “Kitty would make you a good wife, my son.”

“I don’t want any Kitty for a wife.” Sunny shouted and stormed out of the living room into his bedroom and locked himself up.

Next morning at breakfast Sunny announced, “I am leaving town very soon. I’ll go and find me a wife worthy of my looks and my beautiful golden fur.” No body said anything.

A few days later Sunny packed up his lunch box and rose to start his journey. He told his mom, “The only one that looks close to me on account of my golden fur, is the Sun. I am going to visit the Sun and ask him for his daughter’s hand in marriage.”

So, Sunny said goodbye to his family and took a long, long journey to the sun, and walked right into the sun set. All the time he walked, he was humming to himself and thinking... ‘I’ll marry me the Sun’s daughter!’

After a long, long walk, Sunny arrived at the gates of the Sun Castle. He was tired and sweating and decided to take a deep breath and rest a minute before asking to be admitted into castle. After some rest, Sunny raised his voice and shouted, “Hello. Is anybody there?”

“Who is there?” asked the Sun in a very deep voice. “Who dares disturb my peace shouting like that? Is it my enemy, the Cloud?”

“No,” Sunny hesitated. “No sir, this is Sunny, the most handsome golden cat. I have come to ask for your noble daughter’s hand in marriage.

Look at me, I was born with this golden and beautiful fur, and I think your daughter would be the one most suited to by my wife. Besides, my name is Sunny. ‘That should make a good impression on the Sun.’ He thought.

“Aha!” the Sun smiled. “That is a nice idea. But unfortunately I have a bitter enemy who would not allow it. The Cloud is the one you have to talk to. Go and settle it with him.”

“But, but...” Sunny started to stammer. “But I thought you were the strongest of all.”

“I? The strongest of all... Nooops!” said the Sun. “The Cloud is far stronger than I am. Mr. Cloud can completely cover me up, and sometimes, I cannot even breathe. Moreover, I would even totally disappear. I certainly am not the strongest. Cloud is far stronger.”

Sunny thanked him and set out to find Mr. Cloud. He climbed high up into the mountain looking for the Cloud. When he came to the top, he found Mr. Cloud covering the whole summit. Sunny did not have to shout or raise his voice. He was already totally in the presence of the Cloud.

“Excuse me, sir.”

“Who is it?” the Cloud asked.

“This is Sunny.”

“Who are you? And what do you want?”

“Can you help me please?” Sunny was afraid. ‘The Cloud is even stronger than the Sun...’ he thought to himself.

“I said, what do you want?” the Cloud growled in a deep Voice.

“You see Sir, I am the most handsome cat and I wanted to marry the daughter of the Sun, but I learned that you, Sir, are the strongest of all. You could even cover up the Sun. And so, I have come to ask your, permission.”

“Well, well! Let me see. “The Cloud scratched his head. “Yes I am stronger than the Sun. It is true. But ... but...” And here the Cloud’s voice fell to a whisper. “But I am not the strongest of all. You see, the Wind is far stronger than I am. Wherever the Wind takes me...” there followed a long silence. “I go. I exist only to obey his commands.” The Cloud was silent for some time and then added. “Why don’t you go and ask the permission of the Wind? Sorry, I can’t help. Perhaps he might even give you his daughter.”

Sunny was very disappointed. But he thanked the Cloud and went in search of the Wind. He climbed a tall tree and waited till the wind began to blow. The Wind blew so hard the branches began to sway and the leaves made a rustling noise. Sunny wanted to speak to the wind but was afraid he might not be heard. The Wind had his cheeks full of air and was blowing so hard, and raised dust, dried leaves, and pieces of paper up in the air.

Sunny gathered his courage and said, “Excuse me, sir.” But the Wind did not answer and so Sunny repeated louder, “Excuse me, Mr. Wind.” And right at that moment the Wind stopped. All became still, and very quiet.

“Who is that calling my name? What do you want?” the Wind asked.

“This is Sunny Sir, and I would like you to help me.”

“Speak. What can I do for you?” said the Wind.

“You see sir, I am the most handsome cat with golden fur, and I wanted to marry the Sun’s daughter. But the Sun is not as strong as I thought he was. He has an enemy, you know. He told me it was the Cloud.”

“I know all about those two old enemies.” The Wind sighed. “Ah...”

And the branches swayed, and the leaves began to rustle again.

“But sir, I also learned that you, the Wind, are stronger than both of them. Perhaps I can marry you daughter, eh?” said Sunny.

“Well now. Hmm, hmmm...” Thought the Wind, and dropping his voice to a whisper added, “Yes I am stronger than those two, but I also have an enemy much stronger than myself.”

“You have an enemy, Sir? One that is stronger than you?” Sunny could not believe his own ears. “Who could be stronger, sir?” He asked.

“Yes! I have an enemy, a very strong enemy. You better go and ask his him for his daughter’s hand. I am sure he will be glad to give you one of his daughters. He has quite a few.”

“And who is this strong enemy, sir? Sunny asked again.

“It is Mr. Hill. You see. I have been blowing the trees and the leaves, but any small Hill is enough to stop me and obstruct my path. I have to go around it, over it, or I am blocked and have to give in and stop. You better go and ask the Hill for one of his daughters.” The wind concluded.

Sunny was very disappointed as he left the Wind and came down from the tree. He started walking back toward those same Hills he had passed on his way to see the Sun. And that was a very long time ago.

Sunny was weary and tired with this long journey. He never thought it was going to be this difficult to find a wife. He had imagined the Sun was going to welcome him with open arms, and immediately marry him to his beautiful daughter. It did not quite turn out that way. But Sunny was still determined, and this did not discourage him in the least. He was still humming to an old tune as he walked towards the Hill.

When he arrived at the foot of the Hill he called: “Hello there!”

“Hello there!” Echoed the Hill back at him.

“I am Sunny, the most handsome cat. I’ve come to ask for you daughter’s hand in marriage...” And Sunny continued. “Sir, I have heard that you are very powerful. I used to think that the Sun was the most powerful, but now I know you are even more powerful than the Sun, the Cloud, the Wind, and everybody else.”

“So you want my daughter’s hand in marriage. Hmm... hmmm... well, well now.” The Hill winked his eye at Sunny.

Sunny felt very confident. He thought that the Hill was going to give him his daughter right away. "Yes Sir." He replied.

"I may be more powerful than the Sun, the Cloud, and the Wind, but I am not the most powerful. In fact, I have suffered many defeats and have sustained many wounds in everyday battles fighting my enemies. I am sore and wounded all over. See these holes in my chest. See my sides. See the holes in my flanks. I am torn and riddled in every spot." And the Hill showed Sunny all the wounds he had suffered. Everywhere Sunny looked was a deep hole. He could not even believe his own eyes.

"What happened to you Sir?" Sunny asked, rather taken aback.

"I have enemies too. The Mice, the Rats, the Moles, they are all my enemies. I am powerless against the King and Queen Mouse. I will tell you this, why don't you go to the Queen Mouse and ask her for her daughter's hand in marriage? She is far stronger than I am."

Finally, Sunny decided to see the Queen Mouse right away. Therefore, he thanked the Hill and started walking down hill and looking down the holes nearby. Sunny put his face at a mouse hole and began calling for the Queen Mouse. And immediately the great Queen Mouse herself came out and asked him what he wanted.

"Your Majesty!" Sunny began. "Your Majesty, I used to think that you mice were weak and rather powerless, but now I've learned that you are the most powerful. You are even stronger than the mighty Hill, who is stronger than the Wind, who is stronger than the Cloud, and who is stronger than the Sun. And I have come to ask you for the hand of Your Majesty's daughter in marriage".

"How very interesting." replied the Queen Mouse. "And who, may I ask do you claim to be, asking for my daughter's hand?"

"I am Sunny, the most handsome cat with a golden, blond fur."

"Well, well, well... this, indeed, is a very strange request." The Queen Mouse looked at him suspiciously. "We, mice might be strong but we also have a very strong and bitter enemy. And I am sure you know who this enemy is."

"No," said Sunny. "No, Your Majesty! Who could be stronger than you?" Sunny asked.

The Queen Mouse did not believe Sunny was ignorant of the bitter enemy of the mice. She thought this was some kind of a trick. But as she carefully watched Sunny's yellow slit eyes, there was no flash of malice in them. She thought, 'Despite his handsome features and his beautiful golden fur, he must be plain stupid. Pity, the strong it appears, are always stupid...' She thought to herself.

“You don’t know who our bitter enemy is?” She asked Sunny.

“No. Who is it your Majesty?”

“You cats, of course, you stupid! Why don’t you go to your own kind and find yourself a cat for a wife? I have not time for fools...” She shouted at Sunny and ran down into her dark hole.

Sunny was left staring down into the darkness for a long time, until the darkness of the abyss looked back at him and brought him to himself. ‘I am a fool. I must be a real fool.’ He thought. ‘I must go back to my own kind and find me a cat for a wife...’

Sunny turned and started for home. It has been a long and very tiring journey, but at last, he had learned something important. Cats were the strongest of all. He decided to go back home and marry Kitty, the black beauty next door.

When he arrived home late that evening, the family was very happy to see him. After dinner, Sunny asked Mama Cat, “Mom, how is Kitty? Is she still living next door?”

Mama Cat was very happy that Sunny asked about Kitty. It must mean that he had left his stupid notions about marrying the Sun’s daughter. However, Mama Cat was sad because Kitty, the neighborhood beauty, had given up waiting for Sunny, and was recently married to one of the tomcats in the neighborhood, and had moved away.

“No, Sunny. Kitty has been married and moved away.”

“What about Kate?” Sunny asked again.

“Kate was engaged two weeks ago.”

“What about Molly?” Sunny asked about every beautiful girl in the area. However, it appeared, all of them had either married or gone away, or were engaged to someone.

“But, don’t worry Sunny.” said Mama Cat. “Just give me a couple of weeks, and I will find you a nice young beauty for your wife, just as beautiful as kitty. May be even more beautiful...”

