



## WEDDING OF THE SUN

BY

TYLER McCURRY

**WHY I LIKE IT:** *Fiction Editor JOEY CRUSE writes...*

*At the beginning of Tyler McCurry's, "Wedding of the Sun," I felt that I was diving more into Haruki Murakami and less of an apocalyptic allegory, but I'm always here for surprises.*

*What would you do if you were the last man and woman on Earth? Told that you must be together to keep the concept of life on Earth alive and the Sun from dying?*

*That you knew God was bullshit, but that another form of God had turned you into his Adam and Eve, gave you the reclamation of the land to discover yourself, and had plans for you?*

*What would you do if you caught the other you were stuck with sniffing your panties one time because he'd always been into you, but you could not stand his sniveling lack of purpose and ambition?*

*I guess you'd have a lot of time to think about those questions given 12,000 years.*

*For a short story, this is long, but I mean that in a good way.*

*Reading McCurry's work, I wanted more. You could write a novel, or at least a novella, out of this concept. The dilapidation, the travel experience, the longing love story, the coming-into-yourself nuances that this work offers sets the reader up for the heartfelt and the deranged that I want more of.*

*I think that you should read this story and want more too.*

*I hope that you find your person in the Sun.*

*Enjoy.*

### **QUALITY QUOTABLES (for the love of language,,)**

"I'm hungry."

"If you want something, go out and get it."

"But I'm tired of eating nuts and berries."

Joon patted her muddy, tangled hair, sullenly trying to flatten it.

"What do you want from me?"

"A quarter pounder with cheese would be nice."

"Do I look like a McDonald's to you?"

She pulled her pack off her shoulder and slammed it on the ground with an hollow thud, screaming at him in angry Japanese.

"I can't keep doing this. We've been wandering around this forest forever and haven't found anyone."

"You want to go back to Osaka, or what's left of it?"

He went back to their building, which was still surprisingly intact, and looked through her flat, searching for any clues to her whereabouts. He could tell she hadn't been back there in the six months they'd been apart. Everything was still the way they left it when they'd escaped the city, down to the pot of moldy noodles that was still on the stove and the suitcase still on the coffee table. He used Joon's toilet, which predictably didn't flush, and left it as it was with his poo swirling the drain. She probably wouldn't like that, but then again, she wasn't there, was she? There was a nest of rats living in one of the armchairs, and the whole place was fraught with roaches and flies, but there was no sign of her. When he was sure of it, he gave up and left.

## WEDDING OF THE SUN

### A Short Story

Written by Tyler McCurry

1.

31-year-old Hirosama Hawata was just an ordinary janitor, living a modest life in the Iwate prefecture of Osaka. It was scorching hot in his small apartment and early that morning as he laid on his couch, he was practically roasting alive. He thought about asking his next-door neighbor, 24-year-old Joon Misha, whom he had a serious crush on, if he could borrow her fan, but knew she would be out at her call center job by now.

She lived a double life. By day she took calls for the rail lines, and by night, she was a cocktail waitress at one of the most fashionable nightclubs in the city, paid to entertain tourists and be flirty with important businessmen. They were both just barely scraping by and he'd asked her many times if she wanted to move in with him. With their dual incomes, they could get a much nicer place, but she always shot him down. Most of the time she pretended like he didn't even exist.

The day was already starting off on the wrong foot for Hirosama. He worked at the headquarters of the largest computing firm in his prefecture, and when 8 A.M. rolled around, he put on his coveralls, slung his bag over his shoulder and rode his bicycle to the rail line, hoping to catch the 8:30 train. He worked nights and normally he'd be asleep right now, but he'd been told the big boss wanted to have a word with him.

The secretary, a plain young woman in a flowery skirt, buzzed him in, and he took the elevator to the penthouse suite, where Rosson, the big boss, was waiting for him. Rosson was known to practice jiu-jitsu in his spare time, and he had strapping muscles under his taut blue suit. Some of the many trophies he'd won at regional sparring tournaments were displayed on the back wall

behind his desk, under an oil-print painting of Kawasaki motorcycles, which his father raced back in the day. Rosson crossed his big hands over his burly chest and said to him, in Japanese:

“Sit down, Mr. Hawata.”

Hirosama cleared his throat and had a seat in the wingback chair in front of his boss’s desk.

“It has come to my attention that you haven’t been cleaning the third floor. Is that correct?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And why’s that?”

“It’s Sasuki, sir.”

“Who?”

“The office manager of the third floor.”

Hirosama pulled out one of the many pens he had in the breast pocket of his overalls and twiddled it in his fingers. He always did that when he was nervous.

“She told me she was tired of me rummaging through her things, even though it’s my job to clean out everyone’s lockers when they’ve left for the night. She said if I went through her locker one more time, she was going to have me fired.”

Japan was in the grip of a record-setting heat wave like much of the world, and all the windows in the office were open, though it didn’t help much. Hirosama was sweating through his overalls and there were big sweat stains under his armpits.

“Be that as it may, it is your job to clean this place from top to bottom. Regrettably, that is why I am letting you go today.”

“What?”

2.

Hirosama shot up out of his chair, sure that he had misspoken. He thought about punching him, but Rosson was a known champion, famous throughout all the region. He didn’t stand a chance in a fight against him.

“I’m sorry. Rules are rules.”

Seconds later, a woman’s voice piped up.

“Yeah, what he said.”

A shadow behind them shifted and a long dark woman in a smart red pantsuit with a white blouse came out from the back room.

“Sasuki?”

“Of course. Who do you think filed the complaint against you?”

She went and stood next to Rosson, who she was probably banging. It was obvious they were together and it became even more obvious when she started nibbling his ear as he was bending down to talk into the intercom.

“Security, get this lowlife out of my office at once.”

Two guards in starched blue uniforms came in and Hirosama was brought roughly to his feet. They took the elevator down to the first floor, and he was thrown roughly onto the pavement. It was so hot that it scalded his bare skin and he sat up and stared down at the red burns on his arms, just as all hell broke loose.

The screaming was what first alerted him to it, then BOOOOOOOOOOMMM!!!!!! In the sky, the sun glowed bright red, and a big, bright red energy field shooting from its surface appeared suddenly and quickly headed towards them, passing harmlessly through the other stars and planets. All the people in the prefecture stopped what they were doing and stunned, watched it come at them. Seconds later it hit. Strangely, buildings weren't affected by the energy, but the people were, and everyone it struck was turned to ashes. Drivers were vaporized in their vehicles, cyclists on their bikes, hikers while they hiked. A group of schoolchildren were blasted out of their uniforms and reduced to swirling mist. Hirosama shut his eyes tightly, waiting several minutes, for the same thing to happen to him.

When it didn't, his curiosity got the better of him and he opened his eyes. The sky was blue, the sun was its normal fiery yellow self and it looked for all intents and purposes like a ordinary summer's day. The buildings and the cars and the streets and the shops were all unscathed, save for a few fires. They were small fires, but with no one to put them out, they could possibly take a city down.

There was a boom in the distance. An out-of-control car with no one at the wheel whizzed past him and crashed into the office building he'd just been fired from, setting it ablaze. He wondered if the people in the buildings had been vaporized too. More explosions were heard and he knew one thing for sure.

He didn't have to go home, but he couldn't stay here.

3.

Hirosama walked up the street toward his apartment, taking the time to examine his surroundings more closely. In the local park a forlorn *mochi* cart was set up on a hill and fallen cups dotted the

pavement. He went over and opened the cart and saw the *mochi* inside was still fresh and cold. The flare hadn't even touched it, which Hirosama thought was odd.

By comparison, nothing was left of the people. Not so much as a bone had been left behind, but there were char marks here and there where the person might have stood or sat. These char marks were black and shiny, like the surface of polished obsidian. He borrowed someone's bike from a rack and pedaled home as fast as he could, not stopping for anything. It was still hot out, but not nearly as bad as it had been the last few days. Perhaps climate change as they understood it was a precursor to the phenomenon that had occurred just now.

His building was deathly quiet when he got to it. There was a lingering aroma of charcoal briquets and an inch-thick sea of ash on the carpet. He grabbed his key from behind the front desk and noticed Joon's was missing.

Hirosama took the stairs two at a time to his floor and saw her door was wide open. He'd never been in her apartment before and just for the hell of it he peeked his head in.

"Joon? Are you decent?"

The flat was deserted. A suitcase was open on the coffee table, half-full of odds and ends and women's clothes and toiletries. Joon's stove was on fire and he rushed to turn off the blazing burner.

On his way through her bedroom, trying to find her, he simply couldn't resist taking one of her thongs out of her dirty laundry hamper and sniffing it, before putting it back. He turned and something hard and blunt hit him in the nose. He fell, landing on his butt, staring up at a pretty young woman with a frying pan in her hands.

"I knew it. I knew it was you."

The blow had shattered Hirosama's nose. It was bent at an odd angle and blood gushed from deformed nostrils.

"Joon? You survived too?"

His wounded nose immediately stopped bleeding, and shifted back into place on its own with a sharp crack. The nostrils straightened themselves out and it was as good as new. They watched this happen in shock.

"What are you doing in my room, you pervert?"

A booming explosion outside rocked the building and brought her to her knees.

"There's no time. It isn't safe in the city... we have to get out of here."

She beelined toward her suitcase, but he shook his head.

“We have to pack light. Only what we can carry on a small bike.”

“Don’t tell me what to do. I can handle myself.”

She went to her closet and pulled a backpack out of it. He went back to his apartment and fetched one of his own and came back to find her stuffing at least five packs of cookies into hers.

“Take only what you can carry.”

“Why can’t we take a car.”

“It’s like a logjam out there. A car wouldn’t get us anywhere.”

She filled her backpack full of cookies, a makeup kit, a few changes of clothes, tampons and razor blades. He stuffed his with everything from his pantry he could fit into it, filled the biggest water bottle he had to the brim, packed two changes of clothes and briefs and went to retrieve his bike from the rail line. After that she got her bike out of her garage and they set off through the ruins of Osaka, leaving it to burn in their wake.

4.

Hirosama and Joon rode for days and nights until they got to the dense forest on the outskirts of Mt. Fuji. The forests of Japan were famously known to be haunted by vengeful spirits, but that did not stop them from leaving their bikes at the trailhead and proceeding up the mountain on foot. Behind them, the city was burning but overhead the sky was blue and cloudless and the sun pleasantly bright and cheery, like nothing had happened.

They walked for hours, passing mile markers one after another, not stopping for anything. This was too much for Joon to bear after a while and she beckoned for them to stop in a wooded clearing so they could rest. When they did, she took off her battered boots and rubbed her swollen feet in their dirty socks.

“I don’t think I can go any further.”

Hirosama sat on a rock. His phone wasn’t getting any reception, so he pulled out a backup paper map and used it to figure out where they were.

“I haven’t seen anyone else. Are we the only ones left?”

“Quiet. Let me think.”

“Don’t talk to me like that.”

She sat cross-legged on the other side of the rock he was sitting on.

“When will you get it through your thick head. Just because we live next door to each other doesn’t mean I have to like you.”

Hirosama ignored her and continued fiddling with the map he’d brought. Joon pulled out her phone and thought about making a call, but the screen was blue and there was no service.

“We could be the only humans left. Like Adam and Eve.”

“I’m pretty sure that’s not how that story went.”

“Yeah. That would mean I have to fuck you.”

Hirosama put the map away, unable to make heads or tails of it.

“I just don’t get it. Of all the people I could have been stuck with, why’d it have to be you?”

“I thought I told you to be quiet.”

“You talk to me like you’re some big shot. Last I checked, you were a janitor.”

“It’s better than being a slut.”

She shut up after that and didn’t say anything for a long time. Hirosama took a long swig from his water bottle and got to his feet.

“I think that we should go due east.”

“Why east?”

“Why not?”

“Why did your nose fix itself?”

Hirosama rubbed his nose.

“I’m not sure.”

“What’s happening, Hirosama? I’m scared.”

She grabbed his arm and tried to pull it. Hirosama didn’t budge.

“Let’s just keep going and see what happens. Maybe someone else survived out there.”

Joon grabbed at her hair and pulled on it. Usually it was in a braid but now it was long and straight and sticky with sweat. Her face was moist with it too. She kept typing numbers into her phone.



“Who are you trying to call

“My parents.”

“Forget that. There’s no cell service out here.”

He took his phone and threw it in some nearby hedges.

“We might as well ditch these. I’ve always thought they were too distracting.”

“I concur.”

She took her phone and threw it away. Only later on would they come to regret it.

5.

Hirosama and Joon spent five solid days trudging through the forest, trying desperately to find anyone who survived the cataclysm besides themselves, but it was all for naught. In no time they went through their food and clean clothes and were reduced to eating berries and nuts for their meals.

On Friday, one week after the cataclysm had occurred, they were camped out in a forest clearing with a nearby stream, trying to get their bearings. Joon had her sleeping bag set up and Hirosama was using a compass he brought to try and point them in the right direction.

“I’m hungry.”

“If you want something, go out and get it.”

“But I’m tired of eating nuts and berries.”

Joon patted her muddy, tangled hair, sullenly trying to flatten it.

“What do you want from me?”

“A quarter pounder with cheese would be nice.”

“Do I look like a McDonald’s to you?”

She pulled her pack off her shoulder and slammed it on the ground with an hollow thud, screaming at him in angry Japanese.

“I can’t keep doing this. We’ve been wandering around this forest forever and haven’t found anyone.”

“You want to go back to Osaka, or what’s left of it?”

“Is this some kind of sick game to you?”

Joon grabbed her legs and held them to her chest. Both knees of her jeans were torn.

“Look, I’m scared too, but we can’t just turn back. What if we’re all that’s left?”

“I’ll bet you’d like that, wouldn’t you?”

She picked up her empty water bottle and threw it at him. He covered his head, and it whizzed by him, landing somewhere in the forest.

“What the hell’s your problem?”

“I’ll bet this is something you’ve always dreamt of.”

“What is?”

“Being stuck in a forest with me.”

Hirosama went over to his own sleeping bag, which was set up on the opposite side of the camp, and got in it. He reached down and took off his pants, setting them in a heap by the bag.

“If you like me, you should just come out and say it. That’s what a real man does, but instead, you lurk in the shadows, sniffing my dirty underwear like a little turd.”

“Will you get off that? We have bigger things to worry about.”

“Fuck this. I’m out of here.”

She got up in a huff and tugged on her stiff, muddy clothes.

“I like you and all, but I would never be the Eve to your Adam in a million years.”

“Then go already. All you’re doing is slowing me down.”

Joon sneered at him and ran off into the brush. Hirosama was relieved at first and turned to study his map again. But second thoughts and went into the brush after her. He could not find Joon, but in the moonlight he could see her clothes strewn out in a line in front of him. The line ended some distance away with a pale bra and a dirty brown thong lying parallel to each other in the moonlight and the thought of her running around the forest naked made him both shudder and salivate. He was relieved at first but it started to sink in.

With Joon gone, he was out here all by himself.

Six Months Later...

One of the things Hirosama discovered pretty early on after Joon left was that the flare, rather than killing him, had made him immortal. He experimented with this in a few different ways, including falling off cliffs and rolling down hills, crashing into everything he could, and every time his wounds were mended. If it killed him, he only stayed dead for a few seconds, before being brought back to life with fresh breath in his lungs.

He finally gave up on trying to find his way out of the forest and decided to build a shelter in the trees where he could stay. It took an entire summer of hard work but eventually he ended up with a very nice summer shanty with a wraparound patio that gave him a perfect view of the burning decrepit cities far below. There was even a little lake nearby to drink from and wash his laundry in, and he soon became an adept hunter, so food was no longer an issue either. His clothes had long since rotted away and all he wore now was an animal hide loincloth. It was a lonely life but he enjoyed it, at least until the sun set.

Once it did, all that Hirosama could think about was Joon.

It was hard to deny that building his shelter and getting accustomed to his new life would have taken much longer if Joon was still there dragging him down, but when his eyes closed at night, he couldn't get her out of his mind. Being immortal was great, but without her, it had also set him up for a pretty prescient life in the dense forest of Mt. Fuji, as the world he once knew rotted around him. He'd been living here for six months or so, and in all that time, he had never seen another living person. It was possible that if other people had survived, they were keeping to themselves in the shadows like he was, trying to stay out of sight.

One day, about four in the morning, while he was thinking of Joon, a bright red light flashed outside his window. It was like one of those flares people used to signal planes in a storm and it piqued Hirosama's interest. He picked up his spear and held it in his dry, calloused hands and crawled, crouching to the window. Taking a deep breath, he shot up with his weapon drawn, to find an odd creature standing on his porch.

It had striking black and bright gold skin that was divided into sections. The orange part was a pinstripe going down its head and the center of its body, and the other two halves of its head and body, including his arms and legs, were black. It had a triangular head, like a fox head but bereft of fur, and tiny red slits for eyes. A line appeared around its snout and opened into a mouth with a splash, as though its jaws were made of liquid.

"Hirosama? Hirosama Hawata?"

Hirosama did a double take. No one had used his last name in a long time.

"I am the sun god. Or at least, the vessel it has chosen to talk to you."

It said nothing after that and an agonizing hour passed with it just standing there as the sun slowly rose behind it, bathing it with its light.

“Your sun is more than just a star. It is a living thing, the same as you or I, and it has a message for you. As I’m sure you’re aware, there’s a reason it spared your life.”

“You’re talking about the flare?”

He lifted his spear protectively.

“But that was months ago.”

“Yeah, well, we had to make sure you were ready.”

“What do you mean ready?” Hirosama’s voice was dry and hoarse.

“The sun only acts when all hope is lost. It lost all hope for the humans last summer, and that is why it eliminated them. Similarly, you have lost all hope, and that’s why I am coming to you now.”

If Hirosama knew company was coming, he would have dressed in layers. He did have on his loincloth, but apart from that, he was naked. Not having to wear clothes was great, but at night when he had to bury himself under animal hides to keep his nude body warm, he did miss them a tad.

“The sun is dying. It requires a pair of living vessels to keep it burning hot. My wife and I were the last vessels it chose.”

He faded in and out.

“It might seem like you’re immortal, but nothing lasts forever. We’re given a lifecycle of exactly 552,000 years apiece, and my wife and I have unfortunately reached the end of ours. Usually the sun picks out new vessels well in advance.”

Hirosama set his spear down, and gritted his yellow teeth. Strangely, none of them had fallen out, even after going months without toothpaste. He had half a mind to ask if that was a product of the immortality too.

“These will be important vessels. Whoever controls the sun after us will be in charge of watching over whatever evolves into the next human race. It didn’t make its choice lightly.”

“And you’re saying it chose me.”

“Not just you. In case you’d forgotten, you weren’t the only one it spared.”

His eyes widened.

“Joon!”

“You’re sharp for a caveman. Since I was a caveman myself in a previous life, I should know.”

He faded in and out again.

“We don’t have much time. In 12,000 years, the bodies of my wife and I will deteriorate, and if that happens, the sun will go out. You and Joon must take our place before that happens.”

“12,000 years?” Hirosama scratched his shaggy hair. “Sounds like a lot of time to me. What’s the rush?”

“Like I said, the sun tries to find vessels well in advance. Normally it doesn’t give them this much of a head’s up, but with the way the world is, we wanted to give you ample time to find your beloved.”

“She’s not my beloved. Plus, I don’t even know where she is.”

He walked across his patio and stood at the edge, staring out at the misty forests below and the ruined cities in the distance.

“We...um...we had a fight, and she stormed off. That was right when everything got bad, and I haven’t seen her since.”

“That is not the sun’s concern. You must find her before it goes out.”

The strange creature kept flickering.

“You have 12,000 years.”

“No...wait...!”

He lunged at the creature but it faded and he ended up going right through it. He hit the wall of his treehouse and skidded along the patio with his loincloth flipped up and his bare ass exposed. His dick and balls had escaped the confines of underwear long ago and were small and crinkly in the cool morning air.

He came to a little later, assuring himself, when he did, that it was all a crazy dream. He was still curled up outside and a crow was pecking at his hairy buttocks. Not wanting to waste any time, he packed a few of his belongings, grabbed his crude wooden spear and set off, calling out hopelessly for Joon, and always getting radio silence in response.

7.

Hirosama started his search in the ruins of Osaka. Most of the city had burned to the ground and the rest had been left to molder. He went back to their building, which was still surprisingly intact, and looked through her flat, searching for any clues to her whereabouts. He could tell she hadn’t been back there in the six months they’d been apart. Everything was still the way they left

it when they'd escaped the city, down to the pot of moldy noodles that was still on the stove and the suitcase still on the coffee table. He used Joon's toilet, which predictably didn't flush, and left it as it was with his poo swirling the drain. She probably wouldn't like that, but then again, she wasn't there, was she? There was a nest of rats living in one of the armchairs, and the whole place was fraught with roaches and flies, but there was no sign of her. When he was sure of it, he gave up and left.

From there he took a gas-powered Suzuki to the docks on the other side of Osaka, hoping to find some ships that could take him across the sea. He commandeered one, stocked it with fuel and set off across the ocean, having no idea where to even begin to look for Joon. Eventually he touched down in Florida and traveled from there in a straight line up through the continent on foot, taking time to hit every tourist trap he saw, and being sure to stop at every top-secret military base he came across to switch off the nukes. Didn't want *those* going off accidentally, now did he? In his time away, he became a wild man. His hair and beard became scraggly and untamed and turned slightly gray. He eschewed the loincloth after a while and streaked naked through the United States, seeing the sights of them firsthand, or what was left of them anyway. From there he went down to Mexico, where he stayed for approximately 4,877 of the 12,000 years the sun god had allotted him. He built a home away from home in the beautiful vineyards down there and just stayed there and let time pass, in no rush to go anywhere else. Slowly but surely, man's world was whittled away into nothing, and Mother Nature took it back over, reclaiming it as her own. When Hirosama finally made up his mind to return home after bumming around Caracas for a bit, the proper boats were long since inoperable and he was forced to build a rudimentary sailboat and travel across the sea back to Japan, where he lived the lives of a thousand Ahab's, battling sea devils and debunking the myths of maneaters and merpeople. Without a map to guide him it took him roughly 7,000 years to get home and when sheer blind luck finally led him to the mossy shores of Osaka, his time to find Joon was up. He traveled by foot back up Mt. Fuji. Thankfully, way back when, he'd cut markers into the trees and plugged them with shiny stones in case he ever needed to find his way back home.

His treehouse was in disrepair. Only bits and pieces of it were still there, lost to time in the overgrown foliage. Before he left he'd built a stone shrine and left it there to watch over the place, and when he got to it, he was amazed to see a naked woman with long gray hair on her hands and knees praying to it. A twig cracked under his bare foot, and she turned. He had a serious beard going on, but to be fair, so did she. He probably wouldn't have even recognized her if it wasn't for her brilliant blue eyes, and the fact he hadn't seen another living person in all the years he'd been traveling.

"Hirosama-san."

She smiled at him.

"Well I'll be damned."

8.

They cooked fish on a spit out by the lake and spent the last few hours until the 12,000-year deadline swapping stories of their travels, until they ran out of things to talk about and just sat on the banks of the lake, staring at each other without talking. Their beards were long and the same could be said for their armpit and pubic hair. It didn't look like they'd shaved in 12,000 years, and it didn't seem to bother either one of them a bit.

"I can't believe it's you. Where have you been hiding away all these years, Joon?"

He grabbed her cheek and held it in his hand, which she allowed. Hirosama preferred to stay out of gender politics, but he was of the opinion that all the problems men and women had with each other stemmed from the fact that they just took each other for granted sometimes. After going 12,000 years without even seeing a woman, much less being intimate with one, just touching her was exhilarating, even if she was besmirched with unsightly hair.

"Traveling, same as you. Seeing the world. It was fun for a while but eventually it got boring, so I decided to come home, on the off chance you were still here."

"That's dumb. The odds of me sticking around were slim to none, you know."

"I know, but I had to come. It was like I was summoned here, beckoned here in the end."

Joon must have gotten bored with just staring at him and escalated things in a hurry by rather forwardly leaning in and kissing Hirosama right on the lips. There was many a moon where he had laid on the little fold-out bed of his apartment dreaming of kissing Joon and predictably when she kissed him it made his insides melt a little. They pulled away from each other after they'd gotten enough of it, rubbing their biceps sheepishly.

"It's funny you should say that. I didn't exactly come back of my own accord. It felt like I was being summoned here too."

"That's because you were."

There was a familiar red flare and the strange creature that had appeared before Hirosama all those years ago appeared before them now. Joon recoiled and cowered behind him protectively.

"You didn't honestly think the sun was going to just let itself burn out, did you?"

"It's you."

Joon looked out from behind him. Hirosama could feel her squeezing his hips and glanced back at her.

"You know him."

"Yeah. He came to me one night, and told me to find you."

“That’s funny. He did the same thing with me.”

“Enough.”

The creature raised a clawed black hand.

“You’ve had your fun, but it’s time we got down to business.”

The clearing around them glowed. Bright orange streamers with striking orange and black flowers materialized in the canopies of the trees and a glowing stage appeared under them, rising up out of the ground. A long carpet unfurled behind the creature, surrounded on either side by rows of chairs with more sun creatures sitting in them.

“Now that you are here, the wedding of the sun can begin.”

Joon and Hirosama looked at each other.

“You mean like marriage?” she said, twiddling her thumbs.

The sun creature crossed its arms.

“The sun requires two vessels, and they must be married to each other.”

A sparkling ceremonial robe appeared around Hirosama’s body. A similar kimono sheathed Joon. Both outfits were orange and black, in keeping with the theme.

“Get on with it.”

“But I can’t just marry Hirosama. I don’t even know him.”

“He is the last man on Earth. You don’t really have a choice.”

“I could always run.”

The red slits the creature had for eyes glowed fearsomely. Joon gulped, and turned back to Hirosama, who was looking at its feet.

“For whatever it’s worth, I’m sorry for what I said, about you being a slut and all.”

“You were just scared. If anyone should be apologizing, it’s me.”

She looked down at her feet, which were now clad in glowing orange greaves and nice wooden sandals.

“I never should have run away and left you alone. I’m so stupid...”



“No, you’re not.”

He took her hands.

“I’m the stupid one. For as long as I’ve known you, I’ve only ever stalked you like a creep. I shouldn’t have waited 12,000 years to tell you this.”

He holds her hands against his chest.

“I love you, Joon Misha. I always have, and I always will.”

Joon yanked her hands out of his and put them on her hips.

“Sure you’re not just saying that because I’m the last woman on Earth?”

“This is serious. I’m not playing games...I really do care about you.”

His hair had fallen in his eyes. She pushed it aside for him.

“Thank you for apologizing to me. I know I don’t really know you, but we’ll just have to make this work.”

They both turned and stared at the vessel of the sun god one last time, before turning to each other and locking eyes.

“Guess that’s why we have to do this, for the planet’s sake, if not for our own, and you are a hell of a lot nicer than the boyfriend my parents were trying to set me up with, so...”

“In that case, Joon, will you marry me?”

He was expecting a slap or a knee to the groin or something else in keeping with her character. Instead of any of that, she merely bowed her head.

“Yes, I will. Will you marry me then?”

“A thousand-percent yes.”

They kissed, and as they did, they changed. Their pruney skin became smooth and black and orange, and in no time, they’d become like the previous vessel. A glowing staircase appeared, leading up to the sky. They climbed it, which didn’t take as long as it would seem to, and went straight into the sun itself, where they found a glowing living quarters. There was a table, a kitchen, many bedrooms and several bathrooms, all with the same uniform black and orange motif.

“Who knew you could live in the sun?”

“Yeah. We should rent this place out for cocktail parties.”

They went into the master bedroom, which had a tasty-looking king-size bed in it. Joon wrapped her arms around his waist.

“You know, now that we’re married, we should probably get to work on starting a family.”

“Yeah, if we’re not too old for it.”

She laid down on her back and splayed her legs, getting into position. Her new body was different from her old one, but it still had the necessary slit. Ditto for his, which had a penis and a low-hanging scrot.

“I’ve always wanted a daughter.”

“I don’t know.”

They went down on each other with the fire as their view.

“I’ve always been partial to suns.”

#### **AUTHOR’S NOTE:**

*My inspiration for this story was actually very simple.*

*Two years ago when I wrote this piece, there was a terrible heat wave going around all over the world, and I thought it would be interesting if this was actually a precursor to an extinction-level event, laying the groundwork for the premise of the sun being alive. It also gave me a good excuse to write a story set in Japan, something I’ve always wanted to challenge myself to do.*

*I think more than anything, I was struck by the idea of a janitor, one of the lowest common denominators of most civilizations, being chosen above everyone else to become the sun’s vessel. To me it shows that no one is worthless, no matter what they do for a living, and everyone should be treated with respect. If you treat people like shit, I guaran-damn-tee it’ll come back to bite you in the end.*

*In the end, when a cataclysm like this strikes, there won’t be anything we can do about it. All we can do is love and cherish each other right up until the end, because if there really is a heaven and a hell, and you pass on with hate in your heart, don’t count on yourself going to a posh home in the sun in your next life.*

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