

Series Title: Le Storie Del Sole e Dalla Luna
(Stories of the Sun and the Moon)

Book I: La Luna ed il suo Amante
(The Moon God and his Lover)

Chapter Number: One
"The Seed"

Author: D. Sanders

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It was the night of the new moon, the sky was a dark expanse of endless stars as the elderly priest made his way to the lunar temple he tended with aging and arthritic hands. Gnarled and crooked with age he leaned heavily on his staff as he traversed the stairs leading up into the ancient stone building at the top of the hill on the edge of the holy grounds.

The holy grounds consisted of two temples. One dedicated to Sol, the God of the Sun and one dedicated to his Brother, Mane, the God of the Moon. Many worshiped Sol, his light brought forth the harvest and governed the day and his temple was of gilded gold that gleamed like the sun itself. Mane's followers were few, but faithful. Mane governed the night; his light guided the lost, gave hope in the darkness and kept the shadows at bay. As a youth, the boy who would become a priest had looked upon the limestone temple, sitting lonely and lost atop the hill and had ventured into it as if drawn by unseen forces.

Those forces awaited him tonight as the Priest made his way to the altar and sat on the richly padded cushion left for him on the floor.

"Thinking of my old bones. Thank you my Lord." The priest smiled, his eyes delighted as he creaked and groaned as he settled on the cushion.

A deep voice laughed as a tall graceful figure glided into the room. His long black hair tied loosely at the nape of his neck, his black robes bejeweled with twinkling stars and his skin aglow with the color of moonlight. He leaned over and kissed the brow of the old priest and the pain of age fled, a gift to his faithful servant. "You served me well for nearly a century and I love you little Gallus."

"Hardly little anymore my lord." The old priest chuckled.

"True. It seems but yesterday you came to me a boy. To me you will always be that little boy who spoke to me without fear. I was quite lonely that day."

"You seem sad tonight too my lord. What can I do?"

Mane settled on the altar stairs and a white bloom materialized in his hand. It was a delicate flower; its large heart shaped petals caught the candlelight and seemed to shimmer as Mane stared at it with longing.

"Gallus, I will tell you a story first. One you know a little of I think. Do you recognize this flower?"

"Aye, my Lord. It is the lunar glory, the flower that blooms in your light."

"What else do you know?"

"That it loses its petals at dawn and dies."

"It didn't use to. This is the price of jealousy." Mane said laying the flower on the Priest's lap with a sigh.

"In all my realm of the night, I have but one bloom that prefers my light to that of my brother. This little white glory is my happiness and my pain. When my mother created this flower's spirit, he was given a choice and unlike his brother and sister god glories he chose my light to sustain his flowers. Endymion was his name and when first I touched him with my light, I was lost. He was my treasure, my flower, and my lover. Sol has many lovers; I had but one, Endymion. Sol grew angry that a flower would choose me over him. He tried to woo Endymion away from me. But Endymion was faithful to me; he loved me as I loved him. Sol grew jealous and flew into a rage when Endymion refused him the night, like tonight, when my light is resting on the New Moon. I was sleeping when Sol took my lover and gave him a choice. Leave me, or be cursed. Endymion chose me and paid for his fidelity with his life. I heard his call too late. I found him scorched in Sol's arms. His spirit rendered mortal. His petals falling in the light of the day."

Mane had tears in his deep midnight blue eyes as he looked out the window to the trailing vines of lunar glories trailing up his temple walls. "His curse is to be reborn as mortal, time and time again. He has been reborn seven times since then and I have had to watch Sol take him from me again every time. The first, he died as a child, too young to remember me. The second he did remember and before he could call to me he was murdered by a man sent by Sol. The fourth he never remembered and I had to watch him in silence until he died of old age, a priest of the sun. That one Sol has never let me forget. The fifth and sixth he also never remembered, his soul was trapped in sleep, never awakened. He is born again tonight. The seed of my flower took his first breath two hours ago. His soul is already awake I can feel him unlike I've ever felt him before. The mother died, unwed, the grandmother is already on her way here to deliver the child to the temple. Gallus, please care for him, Sol is sending his priest for the

boy, I am sending you. Please, convince her to leave him in your care. I cannot intervene just as Sol cannot directly. I need you more than I have ever needed you my beloved Gallus."

"I'll not fail you my Lord." The Priest replied, moved to tears by the look of anguish on his God's face. Mane turned and kissed Gallus' gnarled fingers one by one.

"I know you won't. I have ever had faith in you little Gallus. Guide him, teach him, and tell him all I've told you. I can only wait and watch, he must grow, he must flower, he must call to me on his own. Only that will break the curse. His own free mortal will must choose me over Sol. Sol is very persuasive."

"But love is blind my Lord." The Priest smiled as he stood and bowed and hurried out to the gates to meet the old lady bringing a very precious burden.

"Blind and utterly painful when lost." Mane said as he faded from the room, the candles extinguishing of their own accord.

Gallus hurried to the gates, leaning heavily on his staff just as the old woman carrying a precious, quiet little bundle reached to ring the bell.

"No need to wake the grounds Madam. May I help you?"

"His mama died, she named no father. Will you take him into the temple; I'd hate to see the little innocent die. I've got no means to take care of him myself."

"Aye madam. All lost are welcome into the temple. My lord sent me himself to you. This little one is special."

"I can believe it. Not a peep, just all quiet like, didn't even cry. He's got strange eyes he does, like he knows something we don't." The old woman said handing the baby to the old priest.

"Perhaps he does. Did his mother name him?"

"Aye, and strange too. All she done said was Endys before she died."

The baby cooed at that and the Priest smiled. "Endys, the Moon Flower."

"That what that means?"

"Aye madam. It's the ancient scholar word; I'm surprised she knew it. Never fear, Endys will be safe here. It is late and I know it has been a trying night for you. Be well and be at peace, you've done the right thing by the Gods."

"Thank you Father." The old woman said wringing her hands as she turned to head home. A younger priest, in golden robes walked up behind Old Gallus.

"Sol wants him."

"Aye, I know, as does Mane. He must choose on his own between them and you know that I'm sure as much as I do." Gallus said cradling the child as they walked back to the temple dormitories.

"We are only the Priests to Gods with their own agendas Gallus. Sol won't tell me why he wants this one, only that he must choose to worship the sun."

"As it is my duty to Mane to teach him about the worship of the Moon, Flamen. As with all children he will be taught both sides and when he comes of age he will chose himself which sect to further his studies in. Let us agree to not play tug of war with this child, he is the innocent between the Gods right now. Let him for now, just be a child."

"In that, I agree with you Gallus. Does Mane tell you why he wants this one so much?"

"Yes, and I cannot share more than I know. It comes down to love in the end. Mane loves this one, more than I think either you or I will ever hope to comprehend."

Flamen nodded. "Sol at sundown was agitated, the entire temple shook. His hunger for this one has me baffled."

"Hunger, love, want, desire, Gods have their own needs. I will serve Mane by teaching Endys all I know. You will serve Sol by doing the same. In the end, both Mane and Sol said it is up to the boy to choose. We can only guide."

"So be it. He is a beautiful child, I know I would not want to be the pawn of a pair of god brothers who despise each other one day and love each other the next."

"No, his fate I think is one neither you or I would want to embrace. But we shall see will we not?" Gallus smiled as he headed inside the dormitories that were shared by both the Sun and the Lunar acolytes. Boys orphaned or abandoned or sent by their parents to learn the ways of scholars.

The Children too young to choose were schooled in both practices along with the basics of reading and writing. At age twelve they would be interviewed by a panel of Lunar and Solar priests and the child would state his choice to serve either temple or state his wishes to leave. If the boy wished to leave the temple he would be taken to the village and apprenticed into a profession. Otherwise he would don the robes of his chosen temple. Solar acolytes wore robes of yellow and red, and then graduated to golden robes when they became priests. Lunar acolytes wore robes of pale blue and graduated to white robes when they became priests.

Two young acolytes, each of around sixteen, one Lunar one Solar were awakened by their mentors and asked to fetch one of the house maids. The women, both young and old who had come to the temple to live a pious life for various reasons and were the caretakers of the children of the dormitories. Some had come to escape abusive homes, some wanted to lead a scholarly life, some had no dowries, some, like Endys, had been brought as infants that had been unwanted.

Maegwyn, the head of the nursery came to collect the child. "What a beautiful baby. Such brilliant blue eyes. Does he have a name father?" Maegwyn asked as she took the tiny burden from Father Gallus' hands.

"Endys. Guard him well Maegwyn my daughter. Both Sol and Mane have a special interest in him."

"So I can see with both of you up and about together just to collect a baby at the gate. Never you fear Endys honey. Mama-Mae won't let them cram your head full of learning until you learn to play first." Maegwyn winked at both priests who smiled at her.

"Then we are all in agreement. This child will know nothing of what we know. Let him grow just like the other boys for now. He is after all still just a child." Flamen said and Gallus nodded agreement. Maegwyn, caring nothing for the inner workings of the priesthood just snorted.

"Priests and Gods. Always an Agenda." Mae said as she carried the baby out of their hands for the next five years. Endys' contact with the priests would be limited to prayer and worship of both orders like the other little children. They'd only begin teaching him when he turned five; he was under her care until then.

She gently tucked the baby in an empty crib in the nursery and left him to sleep as she settled into her bed in the corner of the room and blew out the candle.

She never saw the figure bent low over the crib, fingers stroking the fine white blond strands of hair.

"My flower, grow and be well. I beg you one day remember me." Mane said placing a kiss on a tiny brow, the baby cooed with contentment and Mane smiled tenderly before fading from the room as dawn broke the horizon and a new figure materialized beside the crib.

"Endymion you are indeed. So beautiful a treasure, you will choose me, love me, most precious of flowers." Sol said, his golden hair falling like a cascade of fire over the youth as he bent to kiss the small brow.

The baby began to wail for the first time since coming into the temple and Mae quickly took him to her breast to comfort him. Oblivious to the God standing in the room furious at the rejection, "You WILL choose me Endymion. I am the god over flowers, Mane will not have you!" Sol growled in a fit of jealous rage as he vanished from the room, the baby settling against Mae the moment he had gone.

"I wonder what set you off Honey. You're not wet and you're not hungry. Did you have a bad dream little one? Hmmm?" Mae spoke softly until the baby was once more sleeping and then returned to her bed as the sun slowly rose on the horizon.

Series Title: Le Storie Del Sole e Dalla Luna

(Stories of the Sun and the Moon)

Book I: La Luna ed il suo Amante

(The Moon God and his Lover)

Chapter Number: Two

“The Sprout”

Author: D. Sanders



“Father Gallus!” Endys hollered to the old priest, his grey robes flapping wildly about his delicate frame. At eight years old, he was a wisp of a child next to the other children his age. His hair still so blond it gleamed white in any available light and his pale blue eyes like orbs of sky trapped in ice. He was a breathtakingly beautiful boy, gentle, serene and quiet, most of the time. Today he seemed alive with excitement as he raced to his mentor.

“Slow down lad, you will lose your breath or make me lose mine just watching you imp. What do you need child?” Gallus asked as Endys came to him with a very old looking book.

“Father Flamen gave this to me today at lectures. I wanted to show it to you.” Endys said, indeed out of breath as he handed the book, open, to the elderly priest.

“He said he found this book way back in the archive. It has pictures!” Endys smiled and pointed to the open page. “Look, it says Endys! That’s me!”

The page was a drawing of the lunar flowers that indeed the child had been named after.

“Aye, little white moon flower Endys. Named for Endymion, the flower god.” Gallus said closing the book and handing it back to the boy. “This is the story of Endymion. I think you will find it interesting. I’d like to hear your opinion on it after you read it.”

“That’s what Father Flamen said. I already read it during midday meals. Father Gordus yelled at me about food and books.” Endys said sheepishly, books weren’t allowed at the meal tables.

“Father Gordus is right. What if you had spilled food on this book, it would have been ruined.”

“I was real careful. I couldn’t stop reading it. It made me sad.”

“Why did it make you sad?”

"Because Lord Mane was left all alone. He must have been so sad. Lord Sol has all the flowers, but Lord Mane only had Endymion. The book didn't say, but I bet Mane cried. I would have cried."

Gallus nodded. "I bet he did. It is hard to lose one you love."

"Why would Sol do that? He's not a mean god. But that was real mean of him."

"I cannot answer that Endys. I don't know. Gods sometimes do things we mortals see as cruel. It could be Sol loved Endymion too, and men often fight with each other over things they love."

"But it says that Endymion loved Mane. No one asked Endymion what he wanted other than the Mother Goddess. After that Mane and Sol fought and Endymion got hurt in the end."

"Endys you are far too astute for a child. Yes, men do that and often hurt the ones they love most in the end. It is a sad part of life." Gallus patted the child's head.

"It's not fair."

"Another sad truth in life my son. Things are seldom 'fair' as you say."

"It says the Endymion was reborn mortal, I hope Lord Mane got him back. Did he? The book doesn't say."

"I don't know Endys. I think you will have to find that answer yourself."

"I don't know where to look." Endys pouted, wanting the continuation of the story.

"Most answers are found within dear boy. Look within first, then without." Gallus guided sending the boy back to his lessons smiling fondly as the reborn Endymion was beginning to show signs of awakening rapidly.

Endys sat curled upon his cot when the boy that shared his cell returned from lessons. "Have you decided yet Endys?" Poll asked as he set his books down on their shared study table.

Endys shut his well-worn book and nodded. "I think I did a long time ago. Lord Sol is good, and he makes the harvests grow and gives us light and warmth. But

Lord Mane has always been the one I wanted to learn more about. I was named after the moon flower after all, I think it's always been in me to follow him."

"That silly little book? You're basing your priesthood on a fable?"

"No. Well partly, I don't know Poll. It's hard to describe. Ever since I came here I was always shown both orders and while I see the good in both, I want and need to follow my heart here and it tells me this is the right choice for me. Whenever I consider choosing the sun priesthood, I feel sad inside. But when I think of following the lunar order, I feel at peace. Does that make any sense?"

"You always were odd Endys, you're a dreamer."

"I don't dream. I never have." Endys sighed turning his face to the window. "But I feel. Tomorrow in my interview I will choose Mane. You?"

"Sol. I'm a realist, he provides, the people prefer him too. Mane is too mysterious for me. I like cold hard facts."

"I don't want Mane lonely. I think this whole class is choosing Sol, and no one chose Mane last class. I want Mane to know he's loved too. He protects us in our sleep. He keeps the darkness at bay, he's all alone guarding the night."

"Can a god BE lonely? They're Gods!"

"I don't know. I think so. It says they can love and hate, why can't they feel other emotions too?" Endys asked and Poll shrugged.

"Who knows Endys? I'll miss you, they'll move us into different rooms tomorrow."

Endys smiled and hugged Polls shoulders. "But I'll still see you every day. We'll still be friends Poll, don't worry." Endys reassured as he finished packing his few possessions in preparation for his interview and his entering the priesthood officially and just three days away from his twelfth birthday.

"Sol is angry." Mane said as Gallus settled onto his cushion in the temple.

"Endys chose you, of course he is my Lord. We expected this eventually. Endys chose you the day he was born, he's followed his heart ever since."

Here Mane smiled and turned to look at his Priest. "Unlike his other mortal lives. I can feel Endymion's soul fighting to break free. I watch the boy, he even looks like Endymion in every way, I am just waiting now until he calls, it will be soon."

"What do you mean by call my Lord? He calls to you every day in prayer."

"He calls me by my Mortal Name. Mane is the name man gave to me. When he calls my True name, that only Endymion knows, then and only then are my shackles broken and I can regain some of that I have lost."

"Just some my lord?"

"Gallus, the curse Sol placed on Endymion has limits that Mother set. She was furious at Sol and it was she that made it so Endymion would be reborn and that neither Sol nor I could touch him unless he called our true names. First Endymion must call, then he must confess love, then he must face his final choice. Gallus, we are at the cusp of his awakening. Sol will be just as vigilant as I. He will send agents to sway if he can. Only once did he call before, only once did he confess love before, his final choice was never made, Sol will see to stopping that again if he can. Now it is more important than ever we keep Endymion safe."

"How soon my Lord?"

"Soon, he is twelve now, he is becoming a youth. The dreams will start soon now that he has made his choice. Even I cannot say when or even if he will call. I can only wait as you now. Mother is keeping this shrouded from both Sol and I."

"I will watch him, he is my personal acolyte. He will be with only me from here on out. I will protect him my lord."

"I know little Gallus. Thank you."

"I live to serve you Lord Mane." Gallus said as he returned to his quarters. His new acolyte tucked into his alcove asleep. White blond hair, splayed across the pillow, and a contented smile on young lips.

"Sleep well young one. Your life is now changing. For your sake and his, I pray you remember soon." Gallus said as he crawled into his own bed for the night.

Series Title: Le Storie Del Sole e Dalla Luna
(Stories of the Sun and the Moon)
Book I: La Luna ed il suo Amante
(The Moon God and his Lover)
Chapter Number: Three
“The Flower of Youth”
Author: D. Sanders

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Gallus heard the whimpering from his acolyte’s cubicle and got up to investigate. The youth, newly turned sixteen was crying in his sleep again and Gallus gently urged him to wakefulness.

“Endys, it’s alright. Another dream?” He asked as the boy sat up shaking into his arms for comfort.

“Aye. Father Gallus it’s always the same. I hear a voice calling to me in pain, and then I feel the fire. It consumes me yet the pain of that does not equal the pain of loss that follows as I die.”

“Do you call out in your dreams?”

“I try, but it’s like I cannot. Like my voice is gone, I cannot answer the one calling me and that is where the pain comes from.” Endys sniffed rubbing his eyes. “I used to wish I could dream. Now I have just a single nightmare that repeats. Be careful what you wish for they say.” Endys added still scrubbing moisture from his eyes, a weak smile belying his troubled heart.

“Perhaps it is time you visit the temple. Sometimes when I am troubled just telling Mane’s altar is enough to find peace. He will always listen. He may not help, but sometimes just the listening in and of itself is enough.” Gallus said and Endys nodded and pulled his light blue robe closer about is delicate frame.

“I always talk to Mane, I know he listens. I would like to go though, I have never been to the temple.”

“It’s time I think.” Gallus said as Endys stood and slipped on his plain leather slippers.

“I think so too.” Endys said as he quietly slipped out into the night to make his way to the temple bathed in the full moon’s glow.

Endys entered the temple with emotions warring. Excitement and trepidation, longing and reverence battling each other as his small feet echoed in the empty stone chamber. Up on the altar dais stood a limestone statue of Mane. Endys froze before it, he had never seen the statue before and he was struck with the

sheer beauty of Mane. Tall and handsome, his hand reaching out to his followers in kindness where he stood looking sad and alone. Endys' heart lurched and before he realized what he was doing he was placing his hand in that of the statue's.

"My Lord Mane. How I wish I could end your sadness. Your eyes are so lonely." Endys whispered as his fingers traced cold stone.

Endys felt a calming, gentle warmth spread throughout his soul as his hand rested in the stone hand of his God. "My Lord, I came in order to unburden my soul and now I find I cannot. My pain seems so trivial when I look upon the sadness in your expression. A silly child having nightmares is nothing to what I see here. Please allow my company to comfort you dear Mane." Endys said as he moved to sit at the statue's feet, his brow resting against the knees of the statue.

He sat that way in silence for a long time, willing his heart toward the effigy in comfort when a voice sounded at the temple door. "Endys? I saw you leave the dorms. Are you alright?" Poll asked stepping into the moonlight. His frame was much taller than Endys remembered. The boy was no more and a young man stood in his place.

"Poll. Aye, I am fine. Thank you for your concern my friend." Endys smiled, still seated with his head resting on the Statues knees. Poll crossed the floor and knelt before Endys and laid a hand to Endys' brow.

"You're pale."

"Just tired, and I am a lunar acolyte; I don't see as much daylight hours as you do now." Endys smiled and leaned away from the touch that lingered uncomfortably long on his brow.

"I worry about you Endys. I miss you."

"I miss you too, your friendship will always mean a great deal to me." Endys said shifting away to lean further into the statue; Poll's proximity was too close.

Poll however did not notice and turned Endys' hand over in his and traced a gentle line along the palm. "As you mean to me. Endys, I care for you very much and I worry, you've always been so delicate."

"Just in appearance." Endys said taking his hand back and shifting even further away, he did not like where this was headed.

"And in manner. Gentle, beautiful Endys."

"Stop Poll. No." Endys stood and crossed the floor.

"Why? It's not forbidden for us to have lovers. Why do you refuse everyone? Even me, your Poll?"

"Poll, I do love you, just not like that. My affection lies in service to Mane, I just cannot I'm sorry. I don't mean to hurt you or any of you. Why won't anyone understand? I cannot just take a lover when my heart is not behind it. It is unfair to both involved." Endys wrung his hands. Ever since he had become an acolyte, he'd been inundated with unwanted sexual attention from his peers. It was driving him to frustration. It wasn't that he didn't have the desires as others his age; it was his need to transfer his affections to a single person. The sun priests, like their God, tended to enjoy the physical attentions of anything that sparked a momentary interest for how ever brief that interest was kindled. Lunar Priests, like their God were naturally monogamous. Choosing partnerships that were more often than not life long relationships based on sincere emotional attachments. Endys cursed his fair features more and more often the older he grew, his looks meant nothing to him, and no one but Mane touched his heart.

"You deny yourself for nothing Endys. Isn't affection enough? You've said yourself that you love me." Poll asked again getting up to follow Endys across the room.

"I do have affection for you Poll. But it's not enough, affection like a brother and a best friend but not as a lover. Oh please stop this." Endys pleaded breaking into frustrated tears. Rushing away across the room and practically cowering behind the tall, life like statue of Mane.

Poll tried approaching, hands out-stretched in a pleading gesture when he was stopped in his tracks by what seemed a wall of energy. "Endys! You block me? Do you think I, who loves you, would harm you? Drop this wall!"

"I'm not doing it. But please Poll, this is Mane's temple this is not the place for this. You disrespect Mane, please stop." Endys begged and Poll scowled.

"We will talk about this later."

"Poll, please there is nothing to discuss. Can't we just be friends like we were? I don't want to be your lover. I'm sorry."

"No Endys. I want you, I love you and I'll make you understand one day." Poll said turning and storming out of the temple. Endys collapsed to his knees and clung to the statue of Mane as he sobbed.

"Mane, forgive me. I'm sorry, I'm so sorry." Endys cried and begged forgiveness when a gentle touch seemed to settle in his head and warm fingers gently caressed his hair.

"Beloved, there is nothing to forgive a pure heart for. When you stay true to yourself, you please me." Came the soft, lilting baritone. A voice Endys knew intimately in his dreams, the voice that called to him in anguish and pain. Endys took a shuddering breath, leaning into the touch in his hair and daring not open his eyes to gaze upon the God in his presence.

"My Lord. I only wish to serve you. How may I serve you better?" Endys whispered fighting tears of joy as soft hands traced his face.

"Just remember my name Beloved. Just remember." The deep voice almost cracked with emotion and a warm breath of a kiss was placed upon Endys' brow. Endys' shivered, his whole body growing warm with need to be devoured by the God filling the room with his holy presence. As Endys' opened his eyes, the presence in the room remained, the touch on his skin lingered, but there was nothing in the room other than the still silent statue that Endys' still clung to.

"Just remember" the voice said one last time before Endys felt moist phantom lips press against his forehead and then fade. Endys felt bereft with loss.

"Mane..." Endys breathed as he shuddered and continued to cling to the legs of the statue. "I love you my Lord." He added in a whisper as he came down from the most euphoric high he'd ever experienced. His god was pleased with him; he heard his God's voice calling to him in his dreams, his God loved him as he loved his God in return.

"Go back to bed now Flower. It is safe to return and the hour is late beloved. Come to me whenever you desire, I am always here for you and always will be beloved." The voice said softly from what seemed the very air itself.

Endys stood and pressed his hands together palm to palm and bowed to the statue as he practically danced out of the temple, sleep would be hopeless tonight for him, he was too filled with joy.

Mane walked beside Endys all the way back to the dormitories, keeping a watch on his beloved until he was safely tucked back into his bed, His heart soaring, Endymion was so close to the surface now that desire was almost enough to

allow Mane to show himself to his beloved. But until Endymion called his name, he could do no more than steal the occasional touch, the barest of communication. He could not take a corporeal form until Endymion himself demanded it; Mane had hope at last however that it would be soon.

"Well you did them out of order this time beloved, but you've already confessed love, just call my name and I can be with you again." Mane smiled as Endys finally drifted off to sleep and Mane settled on the foot of the bed to just watch him sleep for a little while, gazing at the ethereal beauty of his most precious flower.

"Are you here My Lord Mane?" Gallus felt the presence and walked in to see Mane on Endys' bed.

"Aye. He had another close call tonight. This time Poll."

"Not Poll too. Will the child lose all his friends to lust?"

"Yes. He even makes Gods lust and fight over him Gallus, mortals are no different, you have our faults. And our faults tend to out number our virtues." Mane said giving a sad almost comical smile to his priest.

"So I can sense your lust in a deep sleep my Lord. Why do you torture yourself?"

"Because I also love him, you know that emotion well Gallus. You loved a long time if I recall. Fifty years with Good Praduc."

"Aye, I know love well. Praduc was like Endys in his youth. A strong wind would have blown him over." Gallus grinned remembering his lover who had passed several decades earlier; their long life together had been built on friendship, companionship, and sincere love and affection. Gallus had almost died of Grief when Praduc had passed and he had taken many years to come out of mourning.

"I remember. Dark imp of a lad, he waits for you with Father. When this is over Gallus, it will be your time."

"About time. One hundred and seven is too bloody old even for a priest." Gallus chuckled and Mane smiled and reached out to hug his faithful.

"You're as spry as twelve."

"I didn't know Gods could lie."

Mane just winked and stretched. "It's dawn, I must go before he wakes and I need my own rest. Fair the day Little Gallus."

"Fair the Day my Lord Mane." Gallus chuckled seeing the vigor of youth returning to his God the older Endys grew. It appeared as Endys reached maturity, so too did Mane grow more alive with the passions of his youth. You could hardly tell the difference anymore between their ages, Mane looked no older than a youth of twenty, his brilliant midnight hued eyes danced whenever he looked upon Endys. For the first time in a long time, Gallus had seen Mane not only smile, but laugh occasionally, even if it ended badly, for a brief moment in time, Mane seemed happy again.

The months that followed Endys first trip to the temple seemed to make the youth suddenly bloom into a serene and graceful young man. He spent every night in the temple keeping intimate solitary company with the statue that resided there. Everyday Gallus would find the statue decorated with the tiny white lunar glories and Endys asleep on altar, one hand always resting upon the statue.

"Endys, why do you sleep here night after night?" Gallus asked as once again he had found his acolyte's bed empty and the youth was asleep in the temple itself.

"Mane comforts me when the dreams come. I haven't heard him speak since that first night, but I feel him there, holding me until the fear fades again. I love him Father Gallus. Nothing makes me happier than being in his temple surrounded by his kindness. I need to be there father; it's strange, the longer I am there the less sad the statue looks. If I were asked to sacrifice my life tomorrow for His happiness, I would do so without reservation. This is my purpose. I belong to Mane." Endys said tucking a long lock of white blond hair behind his ear before kissing the hand of the statue in reverence.

"I fear for your bones. You have never been anything but far too lean my son. The stones will freeze even young joints." Gallus grinned helping Endys off the floor.

"I am never cold here. Mane keeps me warm."

"I've no doubt of that young one, but do you not think Mane would be upset if you were to forsake your health. Bring a pillow at least next time." Gallus winked as Endys rearranged the flowers adorning the effigy's shoulders like a mantle.

"I will." Endys smiled as he let Gallus lead him to morning prayers and to break their fast with the other priests and acolytes.

"See that you do. Tonight is the Lover's moon; do not forget the festival blessings tonight after mass. I will need you tonight."

"I know my duties father, never fear." Endys said absently stretching, catching his long fall of hair and as it fell and the morning light captured the waves of moonshine, head after head turned. Endys' unconscious grace and beauty never ceased to end and even priests, far too old to have thought a lustful thought in years, paused to admire and stare at the youth in the flower of his youth walk across the courtyard, arm in arm with his mentor lending him support.

"Endys!" Poll materialized before the pair and offered a bowl of Fruit. "You missed the first mess. I know you like fruit, I saved you some."

"Poll! How thoughtful! Thank you." Endys smiled and gently took the bowl in one hand and absently kissed Poll's cheek amiably. Poll flushed hotly and Gallus sighed. No wonder Sol and Mane fought to such tragedy over Endymion, he was a walking mantrap and was so blind to his own allure it was almost inconceivable. However, he had seen Endys' total devotion to Mane and how all encompassing it was, Endys noticed only Mane and nothing else. This was getting more and more dangerous for Endys; Gallus would have to talk to him soon. Poll was the worst, that boy would not wait for Endys before taking matters into his own hands, literally, with or without Endys' consent.

"You're welcome Endys as ever." Poll bowed and for now took his leave.

"Come Endys, let us take care of our duties quickly, we'll need a good rest before tonight's blessings."

"Yes, Father." Endys replied dutiful as ever and supported his mentor as they made their way to morning mass.

Once back in their chambers Gallus sighed as Endys helped settle him into bed. "Endys, sit for a moment. I need to talk to you, to warn you."

"Warn me father?" Endys asked tucking the blanket around his mentor and then sitting on the floor beside the bed, his cheek resting on the edge. He looked innocent and pure.

"Endys you are no longer a child, and haven't been for some time now. You do not realize the havoc you wreak on men. After the ceremony tonight I want you to go to the temple and stay there."

Endys looked resigned for a moment. "I know. They never let me be, they don't understand."

"They understand you are beautiful beyond words, kind and honest, gentle and giving. Yours is a beauty that transcends just your face Endys. You will always draw others to you unconsciously and tonight is a night where men will put aside common sense when into wine and a lover's moon, I would not be able to protect you, Mane can and will. As our only virgin novice, after you bless the virgin cups, I want you to go straight to the temple and stay there."

"Aye father. I planned to anyway. There is only one love in my heart after my dear mentor father and I would have spent tonight at Mane's feet anyway." Endys smiled and Gallus patted his head.

"You are such a treasure Endys. I have a bottle of mead saved there in the sideboard. I think Mane would like it if you shared that with him this night. It is Mane's wine after all, it is tradition for Virgin's to give it to their loved ones tonight."

Endys smiled and went to the sideboard and set aside the bottle after tipping out a glass.

"You are counted as a loved one Father. Please drink this tonight with my love."

"An honor it will be Endys dear. An honor it will be." Gallus said yawning as Endys shut the door and retired to his own room in their quarters.

Adorned all in white, his hair crowned with a ring of lunar glories, Endys was a vision of virginal perfection as he stood before the gathered young, boys and girls alike who were still virgins themselves and he said prayers and blessings over their bottles and pitchers of honey mead before sending them out to give the blessed wine to those they loved and cared for most. Most of the older youths come morning would no longer be virgins. It was the lover's moon, the night where new love was encouraged to bloom.

In nine months there would be many children born of this one night. As Endys had been conceived himself on this night seventeen years earlier judging by his birthday. He smiled to himself as he collected his own basket of mead and fruit and silently and quietly vanished into the night toward the temple.

What awaited him in the temple however almost sent him to his spiritual knees. Candles covered almost every available surface, the floor was strewn with lunar glories and the entire room was fragrant with their perfume. Thousands upon thousands of tiny blossoms littered the floor like a carpet, the dais itself, where night after night Endys has slept on hard stone, was covered in rich silk cushions and linen of purest white. But most shocking of all, standing where the statue always stood, was living stone. Mane himself stood there, dressed in loose black robes gathered at his waist, showing off a strong chest and bare feet. His raven black hair loosely cascading over his shoulders, his pale skin reflecting the candlelight and his tender smile as Endys entered went straight to the Endys' heart and made it pound with wondrous joy.

"My lord Mane." Endys gasped and almost fell to his knees as they gave out on him but he never fell, Mane was there in an instant holding him up and close in his arms. Inhaling deeply into Endys' hair.

"My flower. Does this please you beloved?" Mane asked as he scooped Endys' up into his arms and carried him toward the cushions on the dais, laying him down like spun glass.

Endys couldn't speak, he could only whimper and shiver with shock and happiness. His whole body quivering with elation as he nodded dumbstruck.

Mane chuckled and laid a hand to Endys' cheek. "Tonight I am at my strongest. Tonight your love makes this possible. Our love makes this possible." Mane said trailing his fingers through Endys' hair, freeing it from its flowered confinement and letting it tumble free to fall over Endys' shoulders in thick waves of silken luminescence. Mane took thick handfuls of Endys' hair and breathed deeply. "Nothing ever has or ever will be as fragrant to me than your scent my flower."

Endys' shivered from head to toe and let out an involuntary groan. Mane chuckled and let the hair fall from his fingers. "Forgive my over-indulgence beloved. I overwhelm you. Did you bring something to share with me blossom?" Mane said sitting back into the pillows leaning on his elbow, his robes slipping off his shoulder as he did so. He looked like a seductive predator and Endys' was burning within, his insides taught as harp strings.

"Aye, m-my L-lord." Endys fumbled with the basket and his hands were shaking so badly he could barely pour the cup of wine, which he almost spilled as he held it out to his God. Rather than taking it from Endys' hands, Mane leaned forward and held Endys' prisoner with his eyes as he drank from the cup in Endys' hands.

Mane leaned back licking his lips. "Lovely, but not nearly as divine as the nectar of my flower." Mane said taking the cup from Endys' hand and leaning close

pressed his lips against Endys'. Endys' gasp of shock opened the door and Mane plundered those lips like a starving man finding sustenance at last. Endys' arms grasped back of their own accord and he was flushed and panting on his back in the cushions before Mane deigned to release him from the sweetest torture he'd ever endured. Once again Mane licked his lips and smiled.

"That is far sweeter than any mead." Mane said propping himself up on his elbow as he gazed down upon the youth panting beneath him. Mane slowly ran his hands down the front of Endys' robe and as his hand passed, the robe fell open to reveal Endys' heaving chest.

"M-M-My Lord." Endys' voice quaked with need; Mane laid a finger to his lips.

"Beloved, I would have you call me but one name. Until you remember that name, I would have you just call me Mane. There is no Lord and Servant here beloved. There never was."

"I don't understand."

"Yes, you do. You've always known, you just have tried to convince yourself otherwise beloved."

"I can't be."

"You are." Mane smiled as he laid his cheek against Endys' chest.

"It is a mortal beat, but still true and pure. The part of you I have always loved best." Mane added as he turned to kiss the center of Endys' chest. "Your heart is your greatest virtue, my dearest Endymion."

Endys' choked sob was all the warning Mane had as arms furiously sought to embrace him, lips desperately searched for purchase. Mane drank in Endys' unadulterated joy and elation like divine elixir. "Mane! Mane! Your voice haunting me in my dreams, your pain! Let me end it please. PLEASE! That has only ever been my greatest desire." Endys' sobbed as he covered Mane's face and hands with frantic kisses. Mane just leaned back and smoothed Endys' hair from his face and laid his forehead against Endys.

"My pain was losing you beloved. My joy is loving you. You've already ended my sorrow the moment you told me you loved me again. Please beloved, call my name, look inside and speak to me the name only you have ever called me. The name you call out to me in your dreams. Please beloved."

Endys closed his eyes as Mane wrapped around him and set him on fire. "I love you and only you... My Yoru."

It was Mane's turn to whimper with joy as he crushed Endys to him, covering him in devouring kisses that took Endys' breath away.

"How I love you, dearest Endymion." Mane breathed into the crook of Endys' neck as he pressed him into the cushions, his hands divesting Endys of his robes, revealing flesh flushed pink with desire. Plains of mortal flesh that received the worshiping of a God as Mane's lips kissed every exposed inch.

"Yoru! Please." Endys voice sobbed with want as Mane sat up on his heels and divested his own robes. The innocent eyes of Endys were gone and replaced by desire so intense Mane burned.

"Slowly beloved. This body of yours is still mortal. I would not devour you for all the heavens. Tonight I could easily forget my own strength with want of you." Mane said trailing his fingers slowly down Endys body, stroking and stoking the fires of passion. Endys writhed under his touch, pressing into the touches with a need so great it was palpable.

When Mane's fingers stroked hardened flesh, Endys' gasp and immediate response was almost Mane's undoing. Mane collected the spent droplets and let them fall from his fingers to shower Endys in pearls.

"My Flower's seeds." Mane chuckled taking a pearl that had landed on Endys chest and swallowing it like a confection. "I forgot how much they please and sustain me."

Endys blushed and Mane smiled and leaned over to press one against Endys' lips. "Taste love." Mane said and Endys obediently allowed Mane to feed him the pearl. It was salty and sweet all at once, a flavor full of life and indeed - love.

"As delicate as you." Mane sighed as his hands once more traveled Endys' electrified body. Fingers pressing and finding intimate intrusion.

"Yoru! Please!" Endys wailed pressing down on those fingers and needing more.

"Aye Endymion Beloved. The moon is at its apex, now we can join." Mane whispered as he positioned himself above Endys and pushed, joining mortal flesh and divine power as one entity that moved in the unison dance of lovers long parted and no longer able to deny their love.

Time seemed to stop as two bodies crashed together in desperation. Moans and cries of passion echoing throughout the temple as voices sang of love and desire for and of each other. Endys clung to strong shoulders that shuddered and shook with exertion as Mane drove deeper and deeper, seeking his own release of centuries worth of loss and despair. Mane cried and groaned and Endys was lost in light and sensation. He was being devoured, burned alive by the power of his God, his lover. He could only hang on with a white knuckled grip and the world was obliterated beyond the immediate sphere around their bodies.

Neither of them noticed a youth, watching in horror and jealousy from the temple window. He had come seeking a lover only to find the object of his desires already being consumed and taken by near brutal force. Sudden overwhelming anger burned in narrowed eyes that watched as Endys, who appeared a willing prisoner of fierce passion, surrendered intimacy long denied to him. Poll was consumed with hatred for the man who dared take what was his. The tall, dark haired stranger who had stolen Endys' virginity and fueled Poll's rage, Endys had taken his love and shredded it and turned it into hate. How dare Endys deny him over a stranger! Poll couldn't look away and every moan of ecstasy and cry of passion burned hotter and hotter in his soul.

Sol smiled as he watched his novice burn with the same fire he burned with every time Mane took what he wanted most. He may be denied contact with Endymion, rejected at his birth. But Poll understood the need, the lust, the all encompassing desire to possess such perfection. So through Poll, Sol's fire burned. Once again, his vassal would intervene. If Sol couldn't have Endymion, no one would.

Poll glowered and the moon was already waning and the first rays of false dawn permeated the sky when the dark haired man finally reached his pinnacle and released with a cry that shook the very foundations of the temple before he collapsed atop Endys showering him with spent affections. They both drifted off to sleep soon after, amidst silken sheets and pillows, strewn flower petals, guttered candles and hundreds of tiny droplets of iridescent pearls scattered across bodies and linens, locked in each other's embrace. The dark haired man possessively wrapped around Endys as he slept.

Poll turned and fled, sick and angry and utterly furious at being spurned in favor of handsome, dark strangers.

Series Title: Le Storie Del Sole e Dalla Luna
(Stories of the Sun and the Moon)
Book I: La Luna ed il suo Amante
(The Moon God and his Lover)
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Author: D. Sanders

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Endys awoke to the concerned gaze of Mane. “I went too far. Forgive me Beloved.”

Endys just smiled and went to sit up and found he was dizzy and utterly exhausted in every pore. “I’m just tired Yoru.”

“No, you’re mortal and loving a god will consume you. Here, eat.” Mane said pressing a segment of orange fruit against Endys lips. Endys shook his head.

“I’m not hungry.”

“I know, a side effect. You must eat beloved to restore your strength. Anything high in sugar is best right now.” Mane said forcing the fruit past Endys lips. The first bite was enough to stimulate his appetite and soon he was devouring the fruit Mane fed to him with great need.

“That’s better. Let the sugar work in your system a moment. It will restore what I took from you.” Mane said leaning over to brush a kiss against sticky lips. He sat up smiling and licking his own with a wink. He seemed less like a God and more just a simple youth concerned over the one he loved.

Endys fell in love all over again and reached out to hold Mane’s hand.

“I remember so many things. Do you remember the night by the lake when you made the fireflies for me?” Endys asked and Mane nodded a fond smile tugging at his lips.

“You have ever been easy to please blossom. You remember everything?”

“Aye. Sol will be furious, we’re in danger.”

“I know. This is as far as we’ve ever gotten Flower. Now he will not rest in seeking to separate us again.” Mane sighed idly playing with Endys fingers where they lay still naked in white linen.

“Yoru, you know I have to die eventually. There is no stopping this. Even if we only have a mortal lifetime, we at least have that much.”

Mane nodded, tears falling from his eyes like diamonds, he couldn't speak and could only crush Endys to his chest. Endys ran his fingers through Mane's hair in a comforting gesture.

"You suffer the most my love. I wish so desperately to comfort you." Endys said as he held Mane to his chest.

"The best comfort for me, is knowing you love me."

"And I do Yoru. I always have and I always will." Endys said shivering and pulling the sheet up over his shoulders.

"As I love you blossom." Mane said leaning back with a sigh. "Poll saw us last night. His anger lingers."

"He is Sol's vassal this time. I can now recognize the fire for what it is."

"He's protected by Sol. I cannot stop him like last time unless you are here in the temple."

"I know love. I know. But I cannot hide here always. Endys, or rather, I have duties that do not end because I suddenly remember my past. Although studying to be a lunar priest seems a bit redundant now. Seeing as I know you better than any of your priests." Here Endys grinned and Mane chuckled.

"You know things I wish you didn't if you remember EVERYTHING." Mane smiled devilishly back and Endys leaned forward and kissed the end of Mane's nose.

"I won't let out your secrets beloved." Endys winked leaning over Mane to find his discarded robes. "Last I remember, this was white when you took it off me." Endys stated as he held the black robe up that was embroidered with what looked like moons and stars.

"You came a virgin, you are not leaving one." Mane smirked and Endys shook his head with mirth as he pulled the robe over his shoulders.

"No you did a fine job of taking care of that last night love, and this is not necessary in order to advertise the fact you loved me almost to the point of death last night. This body is still mortal, you've left marks on it."

"Just your eyes blossom. It is a consequence of knowing a god, your eyes burn now."

"And other things burn this morning too. Yoru this body is wholly male don't forget, only as a flower am I hermaphroditic. There is no womb in this body."

"I know. I can put one there if you'd like."

"You'd better not. I have enough trouble with this body as is thank you." Endys said finger-combing snarls out of his hair as he finished off the fruit left in his basket.

"I always wanted children with you." Mane said moving to comb Endys' hair himself.

"I know. I did too. Maybe someday I'll be able to return to an immortal existence and I'll let you have your way and let you pollinate your flower." Endys winked and Mane smiled as he braided Endys hair.

"You never let me before."

"We were young, neither of us were ready then. Even Sol does not have children yet."

"And I never wanted any." Came a rich voice from the door.

"Get out of my temple." Mane growled at his brother who stood leaning against the doorframe in the bright morning light.

"I'm not in it."

"Both of you stop it. It was old then, it is old now. Stop bickering already." Endys rolled his eyes and stood to brush off his robes of stray pearls and diamonds.

"Endymion, you're far too much like mother sometimes. Cheeky though to scold a god when you are still mortal." Sol winked and Endys sighed.

"Who made me mortal? Had you known the meaning of 'no' Yoru and I would not be in this mess."

"I love you." Sol protested.

"Yoake you love nothing more deeply than lust or affection. You killed me remember? That is not love, that was jealousy and you know it. Can we all please stop this now? You have thousands of flowers at your feet Yoake, I'm only one insignificant flower, please stop bringing innocent mortals into your games. Poll does not deserve this perversion."

"I didn't do it beautiful. That anger is all his own, you never let him blow off that steam. He was horny as hell being denied and the next thing he knew he got a nice view of your legs in the air being pounded willingly within an inch of your mortal existence. Yeah, you pissed him off all by yourself gorgeous."

"You're still vulgar too I see." Endys sighed rubbing his temples. Yesterday morning he'd have fainted dead away had he been told that in less than twenty-four hours he was going to lose his virginity making love to a god, remember being a god himself and then argue with his lover's twin-brother over breakfast the following morning. It was a horrible mockery of a mortal drama with more intense, tragic and inhuman consequences.

Mane was glowing white hot with rage and Endys laid a hand on his arm. "Don't he's baiting you on purpose."

"Yes he is." Came a new voice and Sol flinched as a graceful and beautiful woman walked past him angrily.

"Good morning mother." Both sons said in unison as she crossed the floor to embrace Endys.

"Yoake, leave. I told you once not to interfere again, don't make me any angrier than I already am." She said and Sol bowed and left, no one argued with mother.

"Endymion, little flower I am sorry." She said kissing his brow.

"Mother, I am here because of your intervention. Thank you." Endys replied as he hugged her in return.

"Nonsense little one. Yoru, dearest, please leave us a moment." The goddess said and Mane bowed.

"Yes mother." He said vanishing from the room. The mother goddess led Endys over to a low bench and they sat together, her fingers entwining with his.

"Endys, Love can be so cruel. When I made you for Yoru, I never realized how badly Yoake would react, so like his father and I loved too deeply to see the faults in the son that were the faults of the father."

"Mother, I don't blame you."

"I know pet. I know. But all these years I have cried each time I see Yoru lose you again. He is more my son where emotions are concerned than his father's. He too loves too deeply to see clearly sometimes."

"Aye. I know. I have the same faults."

"There are worse ones." The mother smiled patting Endys hand.

"True." Endys sighed. "But you came here for another reason I think."

"Always sharp you were. Yes. This is the farthest you've come to regaining yourself Endys. You've finally remembered being a god, you remember who you really are. But there will be a final trial."

"I know, and I will die again."

"In a manner of speaking yes. The mortal Endys will have to die to allow Endymion to return."

"I surmised as much. I do not fear it; I always said that I would die for his happiness. My choice is an easy one to make."

"I just needed to hear that. It is the mother in me to need to know her children understand." Here the Goddess kissed Endys cheek. "This will end. There will be sadness over Endys, but rejoicing over Endymion."

"All life is precious, I cannot say that as a mortal I don't fear the pain of death. I just do not fear death itself. I remember Endymion, but I also carry all that is Endys in me. I am both, mortal flesh and god soul coexisting in one form. There is conflict and that I cannot deny. But in the end, I am Endymion. I was created specifically for Yoru, I belong to Yoru and there is nothing in this mortal existence worth forsaking our love for. This is what I always tried to tell Yoake. If he'd ever listen."

"Pig-headed. But he will not harm you again. He cannot. He can only goad his followers into harming your mortal form and he has."

"Poll. That saddens me most. He is a dear friend, a confidant of my youth. He will suffer being a pawn in this."

"Not wholly a pawn dear. The anger is indeed his own, Yoake didn't need to goad it much. Passion can cloud common sense. He has his role to play in this, as do you. Your choices have been made, he will make his of his own free will."

"Aye. I will be glad of this all being over, I am already weary and it is still the dawn of my awakening."

The goddess laughed. "Aye. I will be glad of this ending soon too. I heard my Son mentioning Grandchildren at last."

Endys smiled. "If he's a good boy, I might just let him have his way." Endys winked and the goddess mother kissed his cheek.

"Flowers, you're the only ones who can tame bees."

"You made us this way mother." Endys grinned beatifically.

"So I did." She replied with a gentle laugh as she faded from the temple.

Mane reappeared moments later. "Have a nice chat?" He asked as he draped himself at Endys' feet.

"Always. Mother knows best."

"And never allows you forget it either." Mane grinned leaning his head back on Endys' knees to look up at him. "I have to stay out of this don't I?"

"Aye. Just watch and all will sort itself out."

"I'm going to hate this aren't I?"

"That's guaranteed. Don't blow your temper when the time comes."

"You're going to die."

"Yes. But only this mortal shell, remember that."

"Aye." Mane nodded with resignation. "Did she say how soon?"

"No. We can only wait now."

"So we wait I suppose." Mane said standing and offering his hand to his beloved. "I think I should escort you back. Gallus will be worried about now and fruit was not nearly enough for you. I can hear your mortal stomach grumbling from here."

"Do you think it wise you just stroll about the grounds in broad daylight? You'll make all the elderly priests die of shock."

"Good point. I promise only you and Gallus will see me. I can't hide from him anyway. He's always had the touch to see me, whether I wanted him to or not." Mane said as he took Endys' hand and they began to walk back to the dormitories.

"He wants to rest you know."

"Aye. But I needed him here to take care of you. I trusted him most. He will die soon and be happy. There is a special place in the heavens waiting for him." Mane smiled as they reached the courtyard and everyone dropped everything they were doing to stare.

Endys had left them an innocent young virgin the night before. Dressed in white and untouched. Now as he entered the courtyard, he wore the robes of a lunar high priest, his icy eyes were ablaze with inner knowledge and fire; Endys had not only been touched by His God, he had become his God's lover.

Mane chuckled and Endys rolled his eyes. "This is your fault." Endys hissed. "They stared at me enough before."

"You came to me on a lover's moon with mead blossom. That was an invitation and a half. I didn't hear you say stop."

"Don't be crass." Endys sighed as he reached a cluster of young solar novices that were in his age group.

"Endys? What? Who are you talking to?"

"I'll explain everything shortly. First I need mess, I am needing my strength first." Endys said trying to ignore Mane's boyish amusement at his expense.

"If you want to love me ever again, I'd suggest you stop sniggering my love." Endys stated and Mane just laughed harder.

"Endys who ARE you talking to?"

"Oh for goodness sakes Mane stop it! It's not that funny." Endys growled.

"You told me to stay invisible."

"I know I told you to stay invisible, I've changed my mind you're making me look like I've lost my mind you wretched man!" Here Endys turned back to his friends.

"Endys? Are you saying Mane is right here?"

"Right behind you making faces like a twelve year old no less."

"Right... Endys you really had us going there a minute."

"He's serious." Mane's voice sounded and when the others turned they saw nothing, but suddenly FELT his presence. "Sorry blossom. I'm just feeling rather good this morning."

"So I noticed. And if you don't want me passing out in a few minutes, I need you to behave so I can get to food. Oh ye who does not have to eat. Excuse me please." Endys said grabbing Mane's arm as he marched off in search of his breakfast.

"By Sol's Crown! Lord Mane was here!"

"Not only that, did you hear how Endys was talking to him?"

"Scolding him like a boy!"

"Does that mean what I think it means?"

"Did you see Endys eyes? I think so."

"I wonder what it's like being the lover of a god."

"Dangerous. Look how pale Endys is. I certainly would not want to be Sol's lover. They consume mortals."

"Wait a minute. Isn't Mane celibate?"

"No, remember theology idiot? He only has one lover, the lunar glory flower god. But he died when Sol and Mane fought over him."

"No he didn't die. The Goddess mother made him mortal so he wouldn't die."

"Do you think that means that Endys is him?"

"Oh gods my brain hurts. I guess we'll find out won't we?"

"Yeah I guess. We'd better get in there if we want to hear what Endys has to say."

"Man, Poll is gonna be mad when he finds out."

The small group of solar novices hurried after Endys and crowded into the already overflowing mess hall where everyone waited eagerly for Endys to devour his food hungrily, while glaring daggers at empty air.

Series Title: Le Storie Del Sole e Dalla Luna
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Book I: La Luna ed il suo Amante
(The Moon God and his Lover)
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Author: D. Sanders

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Endys found it incredibly difficult to eat with everyone staring at him expectantly and Mane wasn't making it any easier where he lay sprawled on top of the table making various comments only Endys could hear until Gallus arrived.

“Lord Mane, I will be so bold as to say you have a decidedly wicked sense of humor.” Gallus chuckled as he walked into the scene and sat beside Endys patting his shoulder.

“You should have seen him a minute ago, he was picking Flamen's nose.” Endys sighed.

“Is that what that was?” Flamen gasped and Mane cackled from the table.

“Yes, sorry Flamen. Mane, will you stop being worse than a child? Goodness I have forgotten you get absolutely stupid when you're in a humorous mood.”

“You love it, You're fighting the giggles blossom.” Mane winked from the table looking precisely as Endys described, a young man, being positively childish in manner. Gallus shook his head; he had never seen Mane act so... human.

“Do you remember Endys?” Gallus asked watching the interplay and what seemed to be excessive knowledge suddenly. Endys was no longer acting like himself. He was, overnight, infinitely more mature and speaking to Mane in ways he'd have never dared to before.

“Everything Gallus. I suddenly seem to outrank my mentor.” Endys smiled and Gallus chuckled.

“Endys son. I knew you would eventually. Or should I address you differently now?” Gallus asked helping himself to the juice on the table.

“I am still mortal. Endys is still perfectly fine.” Endys grinned as he finished his meal and stood. “And I think it is time I tell everyone here what is going on. Or would you like that honor father?” Endys asked and Gallus shook his head.

“Flamen and I were only sent as caretakers. This is your tale.” Gallus said as Endys nodded and made his way up to the head tables where all the senior

priests, both lunar and solar bowed with respect as they parted to make room for Endys. Mane followed, back on good behavior again and as Endys reached the center of the elevated head table, a white throne, covered in rich velvet of the darkest purple and draped with lunar glory vines appeared and the audible gasps echoed in waves.

"You always liked a good dramatic entrance didn't you?" Endys asked out of the corner of his mouth smirking.

"Of course blossom, it's fun." Mane grinned. Sitting in the throne as a smaller identical throne rose just to the right of it, and Endys sat in what was obviously 'his' throne.

As he faced the room he sighed. "What do I tell and How do I tell it?" He asked looking around the expectant gazes.

"I suppose a brief history first which will lead up to this morning is probably best." Endys began looking over to where Mane sat, one leg draped over the arm of his throne smiling at Endys with sincere affection. Endys couldn't help but smile back unconsciously. Mane always wore his emotions on his sleeve for the whole world to see. Even if currently Endys and Gallus were the only ones who could see him at all.

"As you all know. Ever since I came here the day I was born I have always been drawn to the service of Mane. It was a need, a desire that I was always at a loss to describe. I felt a pull inside I had no name for other than utter devotion to Mane. I was never able to articulate what I felt properly, because up until last night, I didn't have the words myself. All the things I've felt my entire life suddenly have new meaning to me. I recognize things within me because a part of my soul that had been sleeping is suddenly awakened." Endys began looking down at his hands folded in his lap.

"As children, we all learned the tale of Mane and Endymion. It's one of the first tales we hear as little ones here, and that story as some of you know, always struck a chord with me from the moment I learned it." Here Mane smiled brighter and leaned over to kiss Endys' cheek. Endys hand lifted to touch his cheek where Mane kissed him.

"There is more to that story which I will tell you now." Endys continued settling back in his throne and closing his eyes.

"Long before men walked this land, there was just the Father, lord of all the heavens and the Goddess mother of the earth. Together they bore twin sons. Sol, first born brought with him the Sun and warmth to this land. Mane, second

son brought with him the moon to shine on the land and protect it in the night. Two brothers as different as their given aspects. Sol, fair and volatile as fire, charming as a spring day and sultry as a summer afternoon drew to him all the flora and fauna gods the mother created and that basked in his warmth. Mane saw this and did not complain, but was lonely where he sat in the moonlight night after night. The mother saw her son's loneliness and created another flower. Endys, the lunar glory, and from that flower the god within, Endymion, was born and he was given a choice by the mother. She showed him Sol, with his vast and thriving gardens rejoicing in splendor. Then she showed him Mane, sitting alone by a lake with only the water and stones for company. He looked upon both Gods and his heart fell into despair when he saw the desperately lonely eyes of Mane. He wanted nothing more than to erase the pain held within those beautiful eyes. He chose Mane." Endys opened his eyes to look at Mane sitting beside him, his eyes misty with memories.

"Mane's nature is one based on intense emotion. The moment he met Endymion he vowed he would love no other. Endymion saw the truth in that vow; saw the sincerity in eyes that no longer held pain but joy and he too fell into a love that knew no description. That night, Mane made the fireflies for Endymion to wear like a crown, they delighted in the fields with dew and loved under the stars. But their happiness and devotion caused a reaction that neither of them anticipated. Sol, seeing his brother with a flower, which since the dawn of time had been his dominion of the sun, grew jealous and he tried to woo Endymion into his garden. Endymion refused, he loved Mane. He could not see why Sol, with so many beautiful flowers would want another insignificant plain white bloom. Mane grew angry and the brothers became estranged." Endys sighed; he hated this part of the story.

"Jealousy born of passion can cloud one's judgment and sanity. Sol, always having been a gentle and good provider to his followers did a very foolish thing with the want of possessing every flower. On the night of the New Moon, while Mane was sleeping. Sol kidnapped Endymion and tried to force him into his gardens. Endymion refused and cried out for Mane. Sol grew furious and lashed out, scorching Endymion with his flames. Endymion was consumed with wrath and died just as Mane reached him. He would die not from pain of flame, but pain of heart hearing the one he loved most in such agony." Endys' eyes were dripping with tears and he clutched his robes by his heart. Mane moved to lay a hand on Endys' hair.

"Go on beloved." Mane whispered.

"The mother intervened at the last moment. Angry with Sol for destroying one of her children and Devastated for Mane, whose grief was so palpable, the sky wept for weeks afterward. She made it so Endymion's soul would be reborn in a

mortal form. Man was just beginning to walk the earth and she captured Endymion's soul and bade it be reborn. Stipulating that when Endymion's soul remembered who he was, that he and Mane would be together again. Many times has he been reborn since that time. The first time, he died as a babe, too young to remember. His mortal shell weak and could not sustain the soul of a god. The second time, he did remember, but was murdered before he could reunite with Mane. The third time, the grief of their second denial was too great for Endymion to bear and he remained sleeping deep in his mortal shell. The fourth time, his mortal shell was too strong for the weakened soul and he could not break free. The fifth and sixth times, Endymion fought to get closer to the surface. The seventh time, he was at the surface from the first breath urging his mortal shell down a path that would lead him where he needed to be." Endys smiled fondly and reached out to take Mane's hand.

"This mortal shell has walked a path that lead directly to Mane and is here at last. Endymion's mortal shell and god spirit have become one, he has remembered who he is, his mortal name is Endys, the name of the flower from which the God was born. I am the flower, I am the God, I am the mortal Endymion. I am once again with my beloved for my only desire my entire life long was to ease Mane's pain and loneliness. I understand now why I sought so desperately for this service to Mane and none other without knowing why. My soul knew even when my mortal self did not. I have loved Mane since the dawn of time. I always have and always will. My love drives me, sustains me, and makes me whole. I am Endymion, I am Endys, I am both, God and Mortal in one." Endys said and Mane stood, and the whole room drew a collective breath as his form took shape and his omnipotent presence filled the room.

He walked forward and knelt before the throne that Endys was sitting in, showing deference to a mortal as he took pale hands into his own and kissed them both. "My pain was losing you. My joy is having you and your love again." Mane said reaching up to cup Endys' cheek in his hand. Endys closed his shimmering eyes and leaned into the touch. A crown of lunar glories appeared on Endys' head and diamonds fell from his eyes as joyful tears began to fall.

Everyone stood frozen in awe at what they were seeing before them, Endys' mortal self and god soul were in harmony at last making his form a combination of both. He was both and neither simultaneously. It was a paradox and a miracle and the silence was deafening for a moment until Poll walked in the room and as the door banged behind him and he froze, hatred and anger on his face all eyes turned toward him and the air in the room grew white hot. He hadn't seen Mane's appearance, he hadn't heard the tale, he still saw nothing more than a dark haired youth who had taken what Poll wanted most. Endys.

He fumed as he strode forward, shaking off hands of those who tried to stop him. He didn't hear their urgent warnings; he heard nothing but the blood raging in his ears. "Endys! You lied when you said you loved me." Poll growled and Mane stood, his eyes furious.

"Nay Poll, I did not. I have always loved you and as I told you before and now. I love you as a brother, a friend, a confidant but never as a lover. You heard these words time and again and are deaf to them. You hear what you wish to hear."

"I heard you say you loved no one as a lover. Yet, I saw you last night with HIM! You take some stranger as a lover on the night of the lover's moon instead of me, your Poll! You make a mockery of me."

"POLL! You show disrespect! I told you I loved no one but Mane. I have not lied. This is He. Open your eyes and see the truth Poll before it is too late." Endys pleaded, he hated knowing Poll was walking down a path there was no returning from. His mortal heart that loved his friend ached seeing him turned into a pawn of Sol's rage with his own mortal hands.

"Poll, Novice of Sol. Do not let your hate consume you. I cannot and will not punish you for your own free will. You belong to Sol and as his vassal I have no power over you. Walk carefully the path you are choosing." Mane warned and Poll sneered.

"You are no God. You are flesh, I've seen it myself."

"You see my corporeal form Poll. I must take this form to be with mortals. You saw only what you wanted to see and are seeing that now. I warn again, Sol's fire burns from within and consumes."

"You corrupted him! He loved Mane so much you deceived him! You are no God! Endys he's lied to you! He's not Mane! He looks like the statue and he's using that to confuse you!"

"Oh Poll, you don't understand. Please..." Endys pleaded, walking forward, hands outstretched beseeching Poll to stop this madness. He walked right into the hands of fate. Poll seized him around the neck and a dagger appeared at his throat. Mane's rage exploded and the moon itself began moving to block out the sun. The sudden eclipse darkened the room and it shook with Mane's anger.

"No Yoru! Remember!" Endys gasped and Mane froze where he stood, the room reverberating with power.

"Shut up Endys! Open your eyes! I will save you from him!"

"Poll, dear Poll. You have chosen your path and I cannot help you now. You refuse to see."

"I love you! Why won't you love me?" Poll's voice sobbed as he held the blade to Endys' throat.

"I love Mane. I belong to Mane. I am his lover and he is mine. Poll, I do not love you like that and never have."

"Endys! You're cruel! Why do you reject me?"

"I do not love you more than a friend. My body, my heart, my soul belongs to Mane."

"You are deceived! Choose me, please Endys. Let me save you."

"No Poll."

"Then I will save your Soul." Poll said dragging the dagger across Endys' throat. "The Endys' I love would be destroyed when he learned the truth. I will spare you that pain." Poll said as Endys' clutched his throat and his white hair turned red with blood as he fell to the floor.

The room erupted. Men grabbed Poll and other's rushed to aide Endys when suddenly two voices reverberated in the room.

"STOP!"

Everyone froze, no one could move as the power of two God's overwhelmed them all. Sol strode forward and took the Dagger out of Poll's hand who quivered internally as his God looked at him with anger. He threw it across the Room as Mane moved forward to cradle the only being in the room unaffected by the power in the room. Endys' labored as his life rushed from his body. Sol knelt by them both on the floor and ran a hand over Endys' hair.

"I understand now. It took seeing my own actions from this perspective to realize the pain I caused you both. I am sorry, will you forgive me?" Sol asked bowing his head to his brother and Endys.

Endys could not answer and only his trembling hand reached out to grasp Sol's. Sol wept and kissed that hand. Mane reached out and laid his hand on his brother's shoulder. "He forgives you as do I brother."

Sol looked up, his eyes golden and shining with tears that fell like rubies to the floor. He embraced them both as Endys' life slowly expired.

As the moon moved and the sun returned from being eclipsed, with it a final and even more dominant presence filled the room, and a beautiful woman made of the freshest earth tones and smelling of wild roses walked through the still aware and still frozen figures in the room. She stood over the trio of her children and smiled.

"All wounds are now healed. It has come full circle. Sol's crime has been absolved, Mane's grief shall end and Endymion it is now time to return to us my dear child." She said and Endys' form grew blindingly bright for a moment in Mane's arms.

When the light receded, where Endys had been now stood a form that resembled the mortal youth. Long white hair flowed down his back in waves, his sky blue eyes danced with inner light, his skin now even more pale than it had been before shimmered with the same internal light. He was dressed in white linens, draped almost shamelessly over his very graceful form. It hardly seemed possible the already fey Endys could become even more androgynous in his appearance. He was spell binding in beauty, male and female in equal measures in his face and natural grace. His bare feet on the stone floor stood in a carpet of Lunar Glories. He had been reborn. When he spoke, even his voice had taken on a dual, melodious pitch as if he had two voices, one female, and one male speaking in perfect unison. It made everyone in the room shiver within.

"I am whole at last." Endymion said as he turned to kiss Mane tenderly and then Sol. "All is forgiven." He said then he turned to Poll and walked forward and as he did so, only Poll was released by the power holding everyone prisoner to witness. Poll collapsed in sobs and Endymion only collected the youth in his arms.

"All is forgiven Poll. You did free my soul. Believe that. In your heart you loved me, you thought you were doing what was right in a moment of erred passion. I will never bear you ill will, I have always loved you, my dearest and best of friends in my mortal youth." Endys kissed Poll on both cheeks and he fell asleep instantly in Endymion's arms.

"Father Flamen, please take care of Poll. He will be distraught with overwhelming grief. Make him believe he chose the right path in the end." Endymion asked and Father Flamen, now also released walked over to cradle Poll in his arms.

"I vow, my Lord Endymion." Flamen said and Endymion smiled.

He then walked over to Gallus and embraced him. "Father, mentor, teacher and friend. You protected me, loved me, and gave me great happiness all my life. Now I give you yours." Endymion said placing a kiss on Gallus' forehead. He seemed to fade into sleep where he sat and a transparent form of a handsome and tall youth, unbent by years or age stepped from the ancient and crooked body. His thick brown hair tied at the nape of his neck with a leather lacing, and his white priest's robe barely contained the broad chest of the young man who stood there.

Mane walked forward and hugged the spirit. "Little Gallus, you served me faithfully your whole life. Now you will be rewarded with my love and pleasure." Mane said waving his hand and where the thrones sat, the room rippled and a field at twilight with a full moon's glow appeared. In the field stood a slender form, looking up at the full moon. His white robes looked too large for the slender frame and sandy blond hair kissed his shoulders and blew in a gentle breeze. Large green eyes turned toward Gallus and he smiled brightly.

"Praduc!" Gallus' soul cried out and raced to the youth who held out his arms. Gallus gathered the youth in his arms and wept as he showered his long lost love with desperate kisses. They had been given eternal youth, to live in nirvana together for all time. Gallus clutched his beloved to his chest and turned grateful eyes to his God.

Mane only smiled fondly and the scene faded and the room returned to normal again. Mane walked over and scooped Endymion up in his arms and they too shared a long lingering kiss of joy. They evaporated from sight and a statue of Mane appeared, standing over a second effigy at his feet. Mane was smiling down at Endymion, his hand cupping a stone chin and their eyes met each other with overwhelming affection and love. A vine of lunar glories grew up and around the statue; it's flowers always in bloom and never fading in beauty. Unlike their wild counterparts, the petals on this holy vine would never fade and would never fall.

Sol turned to Poll's sleeping form and laid a hand over his heart. "I will not let you suffer my son." Sol whispered kissing Poll's brow before fading away himself.

The mother Goddess was the last to leave and she said nothing but only faded, releasing the room from power.

Everyone moved again and it was as if time crawled. Father Flamen carried Poll away and the other's took care of the body of Gallus and the bloody robe which was all that was left of the mortal Endys and it was with a mixture of Joy and Sadness that they mourned Gallus' passing and Endys' rebirth into Endymion.

Poll spent many years in mourning and contemplation. He visited the statue in the Mess every evening with a gift of fruit for Endymion and Mane and come Every morning the fruit was gone and only an empty bowl remained.

Mane smiled as he watched Endymion collect the fruit every night. "Why does he do that?" He asked and Endymion smiled as he ate the offering.

"Because it was Endys' favorite." Endymion replied as he shared the fruit with his beloved. Mane only nodded.

In time all mortal wounds healed and Poll eventually found a companion to love that loved him in return. Poll had turned into the only monogamous solar priest the temple had known in a very long time. He had fallen for a lunar priest, who had tamed Poll's volatile passion. Together they left offerings for Mane and Endymion until they eventually died as old men. Happy and at peace and it was Endymion with Sol who met Poll's spirit and guided him home.

As for Endymion and Mane, it is said in the scriptures you'll find in the temple archives, if they still exist, that they eventually had a son together they named Calanthe and he was the god of the lunar glories that had appeared so many centuries ago now that no one remembered anymore a time when the only lunar flower was white. Calanthe bloomed pink under the night sky and was always found growing near running water where it is said he had become the lover of the water spirit who had fallen in love with the young god when he spied him in his Father's moon garden.

But those are tales for other times...

*finito mi amore.