

The guitar rested in the corner of the dusty shop, its surface worn smooth by countless hands long gone. Its body was timeworn, the varnish faded to a dull amber, yet something about it held a quiet dignity, as if each scratch whispered stories of evenings around firelight or dimly lit stages.

When I reached for it, the strings gave a faint, trembling sigh, and a chord seemed to reverberate through the room even before I strummed. The sound was fragile, but it carried a strange resonance, one that lingered inside my chest like a heartbeat I hadn't known was missing.

The shop's owner, a grey-haired luthier, emerged from behind a counter stacked with tools and shavings of spruce and maple. His hands bore the indelible stains of varnish, each groove in his skin marked by years of crafting and repairing. He didn't speak at first—just watched me cradle the instrument as though I had stumbled across an old friend.

"This guitar has seen more lives than either of us," he finally said, his voice quiet, reverent. He ran his hand across the neck, where the wood had been polished not by sandpaper, but by the sweat and passion of players whose names had long since faded into yore.

I brushed my fingers across the strings again, and a melody rose, hesitant at first, then lilting like a remembered lullaby. The notes seemed to waft through the dusty air, curling between shafts of afternoon light and settling gently around us.

A sudden ache swelled in my chest—half-joy, half-lament—as though the guitar carried not only music but the emotions of those who had held it before. Every chord was intertwined with laughter, grief, love, and loss, woven together so tightly they could no longer be separated.

For a moment, I felt something stir inside me, a flicker of forgotten courage, a reminder of nights spent playing until my fingers ached, when the world was smaller and dreams were transcendent. The guitar seemed to breathe that memory back into me, urging me to remember not only who I was but who I still could be.

The luthier's eyes softened as he saw the change in me. "It chooses its player," he murmured, almost to himself.

I knew then that I couldn't leave it behind. It wasn't just wood and strings—it was a vessel of stories, bound across time, waiting for its next chapter. And in the quiet, I promised to give it voice again.