



Salty Tears

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Historical, Magic

There was once a mother who had just one child. This child had stars in his eyes, plump, rosy cheeks, and the blackest curls anyone could imagine. And his mother doted on him. He was her most precious possession – the first thing she thought of when she awoke, and the last thing she saw at night. She did everything she could to keep him close.

As he grew from chubby babe to a clumsy toddler, and from toddler to adventurous child, she did her best to keep him close. She told him frightening stories about the world that lay outside their little garden, encouraging him to stay within the fence – lest he get hurt. But as he continued to grow, he began to resent how closely she guarded him, and long to venture beyond the place he called home. No longer could the allure of the garden creatures, or the beauty of the many flowers in his mother's beds interest him. And every day, he could hear the sounds of other children running past the house, chattering and laughing excitedly. He begged his mother to let him join them, and, begrudgingly, she gave in.

He could go out with the other children for an hour a day, she told him. But only one hour, no more. And for a while, this arrangement satisfied him. But after a few weeks had passed, he began to beg her to allow him another hour. And then another.

Because of her love for him, and how terrible she felt when her son was unhappy, his mother would give in to his pleadings every time. And so eventually, he would leave the house straight after they ate breakfast, and stay out well past dark. His mother would sit up and wait for him, watching the door with fearful anticipation as his dinner grew cold at the table. Some days, she could not bring herself to eat without him, and her dinner would chill alongside his.

When he finally arrived home, she would leap out of her chair and fling her arms around his neck, clinging on to him as if he would disappear if she let go. And she could never find it in herself to rebuke him, or even utter a cross word to him – her heart was so glad to have him safely back that no room remained for anger or frustration. But he continued to stay out for longer and longer, sometimes not even returning until the wee hours of the morning, when the fire had burned down to mere embers, and his mother had fallen into a restless sleep.

One day, he simply did not return. His mother watched the door all day, starting every time the wind made the door rattle, hoping that he had come and gone whilst she had dozed. For two days she sat, sleepless with worry, watching the door, before she realised. Her son was not coming back.

Grief at her loss overtook her, and she sank to the floor, weeping bitter tears. She cried so long, and so hard, that her tears formed a puddle on the floor, and then began to stream out of her little house, and down the path that led to the village. More and more she cried, and her tears swept over the earth, pooling in crevices and deepening as more salt droplets poured from her eyes.

The new bodies of water rose higher and higher as she wept, overtaking deserts and filling valleys. She cried until she could cry no more, and her tears dried up – leaving her with red eyes and an aching heart. She packed a bag and left the little cottage that was so full of memories of her beloved son. But as soon as she reached the fence that surrounded her garden, she stopped.

In front of her, as far as her tired eyes could see, a great expanse of blue water stretched. And a small boat was drifting near the gate, as if waiting for her. So, she stepped into the boat and paddled away – to look for her son until the waters dried up or her heart ceased beating.

And that is the story of the mother who cried the sea.

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