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The Lightkeeper's Canvas

A Short Story

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For the keepers of lights

The Lightkeeper's Canvas

I came into her hold one sunny August, void of life, tightly packed into a dark closet, ignorant of the world that awaited me. For centuries, it felt like I had not witnessed the artist's gaze, when at last she held me again on a grey November evening. Now I sit at her uncle's lighthouse, facing a glass boundary between me and the vast Atlantic. Air thick with the aroma of salt, oil, and the faintest hint of turpentine; the sky replied to the ominous scent with its pale pewter attitude.

The lady whom I have come to know as Ms. Grace regarded me with a sadness that cannot be described even with the most labyrinthine of words. "November," she murmured, "has such a habit of forgetting itself. Perhaps, I might remind it what beauty remains." With that, her brush met with the coarseness of my surface. Her calloused hands, helping me balance my will.

Her strokes were deliberate, as though she feared she may have disturbed my slumber. The first hue she mixed was not blue nor grey but a sombre shade resembling the sombre shade between dream and memory; you never know where one begins or when one ends.

The days passed in a solemn grace. Waves preyed upon the light in the mornings; evenings brought with them a cost of cloud that claimed the land like its own—it was not wrong.

Ms. Grace rarely noticed the passing hours. She painted as though time was not an inconvenience, just an indication of her being. Moments of silence became familiar; it would be rather peculiar if Ms. Clara talked amongst herself for my entertainment. Then she spoke softly as if listening to my insensate thoughts, “The sea is rather cruel, isn’t it?” Answering her own question, she continued, “Yes, in fact, it is quite evil, for taking and giving at its own pleasure. Who am I to blame? We keep going back with no regret.”

From my home by the window, I observed the world she sought to capture. She pursued her passion through the sighs of the wind, the creaking of the floor, and the muffled roars of the Atlantic.

How strange it is to feel colour before feeling one's touch. Each hue that had been layered upon me carried ochres of longing and sorrow. Yet as the days slipped, I found a quiet brightness looming into Ms. Grace’s means. Though November’s chilly demeanour continued to linger, Ms. Grace shook her hands with a perseverance that seemed to coax light out of thin air. “One mustn’t allow their spirits to be dictated by a season,” she said one day.

Her brush moved with such ease that it appeared tenderly assured. She laid upon me the warmest of colours, as though she were sewing the threads of summer back together. Ms. Grace’s newfound optimism returned the beauty missing from the coldest of days, all because she willed it to be so.

“How loyal the ocean is…always returning, no matter how far it ambles.” She proclaimed with merriment. For a second too short, the lighthouse warmed at the sound of her voice.

In those golden hours, an epiphany formed within me: Ms. Grace painted not merely to remember, but to hope.

At last, she set her brush aside. “There,” she murmured, “November remembers itself again.” Upon my surface bloomed a garden of resilience. Once alone and forgotten, I now carried the very hope Ms. Grace had relearned. She gave me colour, and I gave her solace; what an artist’s bond we formed. If only my voice wasn’t bounded by life, I would have said, “You have forgiven November.”

The End