

La Mera Mera: The Jealous Girls and the Old Woman Under the Lake

Once there was a girl, a girl exactly like you.....but not you, rather a girl who lives far away in time. But, tonight she's flying through the stars. Tonight, she's coming to see us. And once, there was a forest....not exactly like this forest, one far away in time, and it too, is flying through the earth and stars to come be with us tonight.

You see, once there were two old women, exactly like me and my sister, but not us rather, these two old women, they live far away in time and they are flying through the air tonight to be here with us.

Once upon a time it was night, just like tonight, but not this night.....it's a night from far away, it's flying through the sky, through the stars to be with us tonight. And down the road a ways if we were to walk into the forest, as all these arrive here, we'd see a young woman girl who is wearing the most interesting and beautiful necklace given to her by her beloved grandmother. A necklace made by her grandmother's own hands, a legacy necklace.

On the girl's marvelous necklace were beads and figures carved with good and auspicious omens that commemorate the triumphs and challenges of life that the girl would meet or had met along the way. It was such a beautiful necklace, so finely made that it had magical rings in it, strange little shapes with tiny flames, shapes like eyes and squares and crosses, these stood for the crossroads of life and protections there, little sprigs of certain herbs to remind her of that which healed, and that which drew that which destroyed...little tiny strings, tied in certain ways in order to recall certain ideas and ideals. Then there were small stones with prayers and signs carved into them. All in all, it was as her grandmother had said when she bestowed the necklace upon the girl, that it was a beautiful necklace for you to grow into.

But, you know, there were other girls in the village, and they were jealous.....so jealous....not only of the young girl's necklace, but for other reasons as well. The young girl was different, her gifts were not the same. She had a kind of perception, a way of loving others who were injured or hurt, she had a way of following what others said or responding quietly, she seemed to have a certain need for aloneness and togetherness as well, but not at the same time, and she seemed to know the one from the other, so she was considered different.

The other girls had their own talents also, but for some reason they allowed themselves to be lured into envy by some dark barbed force that whispered, "You're not enough, you're not enough....look, she has a better necklace than you, she has a better legacy!"

So, one day the jealous girls sauntered by, but they weren't wearing their necklaces. And with a sense of pride and satisfaction, they revealed to the girl that they had thrown their necklaces into the lake.

They said, "In order to make our village safe." And the girl thought, "Oh....our village is threatened?" and they said, "Oh yes! The monster lives at the bottom of the lake, it must be perpetuated and that's why we threw our necklaces into the lake." And the girl thought, "Well, I must throw my necklace in the lake immediately!" And she took off her necklace and wound it around in the air and she threw it as hard as she could into the middle of the lake where it dropped down and down and down into dark, dark waters. The girls started laughing "...Ahhhhh, haa, haa, haa, ha, ha.....She threw her necklace into the lake!!!

She said "Why are you laughing?" And the girls bent down into the sand and began to dig in the sand where they had buried their necklaces. They said, "Ha, ha....you are so stupid! We can't believe you believed us!" And they put on their legacy necklaces and turned their backs on her.

Well, her grandmother had touched every part of that necklace, her grandmother who had all the beauty and love of life in her hands, her grandmother who had given birth, her grandmother who had met challenges, some almost unspeakable in life and had yet withstood, her grandmother had infused that necklace with everything to hand down to the girl and now it was gone.

Sigh.

She didn't know what to do. "I've ruined everything, I've thrown away everything, there's no way to recover anything." How could she ever return to her village? She felt so heartbroken, ashamed, helpless....so she sleepwalked like a person who no longer was alive into the forest and she walked until she was hopelessly frightened..... lost....odd noises in the forest, cracking of sticks meaning some things were moving near her in the forest but she could not see them, far off in the distance she thought she saw the blink of firelight, she climbed and she crawled over logs and fallen trees to try and come closer to that flickering light.

And she came upon it, crept closer and closer....the sight she saw was terrifying! There was an old woman with terrible scars on her face, her arms and legs....open wounds all over her body. It was the old woman who was tending that fire.

And the girl tried to tip.....toe.....away.....but the old woman groaned....." WAIT! Do you wonder here?" The girl said, "Well, um....I'm lost."

"No, no.....HOW HAVE YOU FOUND YOUR WAY HERE?"

"Oh, ummmm.....Sorrow.....Sorrow"

“Very goooood.”

And as if in a dream, the girl said, “I believed a great untruth. And I was untrue to what I truly believed. My heart feels broken. “And she told the old woman the whole story about the girls of the village and how they had tricked her.

“Awwwww.....is that all my child? A thing a naive spirit might have done. I have a remedy for what you have done. A complete remedy.”

“Really?”

“Yes, I can help you. But, first you must help me.”

“Oh, I would, just tell me what, how?”

“I will restore your necklace to you, but first you must kiss all my wounds and lick all my scars.

“Aye....Oh!” the girl never expected to be asked such a thing! Oh my goodness, she expected to carry water or weed something for fetch something or wash something for the old woman, but not this!! This???

Well, the old woman laid back, and the girl could see the wounds, some, so deep.....so raw, and the girl felt sudden compassion for the old woman. And the girl knelt down and she put her soft mouth against each of the ragged scars and each of wounds of the old woman’s body. One by one, one after the other. And each time the girl put her mouth to an old scar or wound, the old woman would cry out in a voice that was painful to hear,

“D,Ahhhhh.....!!!!” And then the old woman would say, “Ohhhhhh, that feels sooooo much better. Thank you”

“Ahhhhhhhhh!!!!.....Ohhhhh, that feels so much better.....thank you.”

And thus, they went on, until it was complete. And the old woman signaled that the girl should sit back and close her eyes.

“Can you swim, my girl?”

“Ahhh, no, I cannot swim.”

“Oh, perfect.”

The old woman had a plan, she said, “Are you certain you can’t swim?” “No, I don’t know how to swim.”

“All the better than!”

The old woman held out her skinny arms toward the girl for what seemed like an invitation for an embrace, an embrace that would hold the girl close to the old woman. But, instead of an embrace, the old woman clutched the girl in her knarled and powerful hands, and without further ado the crone lifted the girl up over her head with astonishing ease and swiftly turned in circles, turned in circles, turned in circles, and then threw the girl far out over the middle of the lake where the girl fell with a huge explosion of water right in the center of the deep, dark lake. And though the girl fought and struggled to remain afloat, in the end, she felt the futility of it all and let herself sink where to her great surprise she found she could breathe under water.

Down and down she drifted.....to the darkest night water, her body slowly turning, and turning and drifting downward, she sank past the small air bubbles of her own breath. She sank past the wild weeds waving, down she sank, her hair ribbons loosening and drifting away....further down, she drifted first one sandal then the other taken away, farther down she drifted her clothes taken from her by the trees under the water. Touching down lightly in the place where it is not night and it is not day. The sandy bottom, soft under her feet, far off in the gloom of the deep water, she saw a glow, and made her way toward it. The water was thick and progress was slow, but with effort, she came to the softly lit grotto made of many different kinds of shells. The girl leaned and peered into the grotto....

And there sat an old woman! AN OLD OLD WOMAN, she was identical to the old woman above the lake, but with two exceptions, the old woman under the water was hail, unscarred, healthy and upon her lovely naked self the old woman wore only one thing.....a dazzling necklace made of 100 carved and shining stones.

“You’re under my protection now.” That’s what the old woman said, “You’re under my protection now.”

She had beautiful lights in her eyes, this old woman. “Monster of the lake will not harm you. Further, I have your necklace. I knew that you thought it would help keep your people safe. Because of your great heart and your willingness to heal my sister, because of those I have kissed your necklace and kissed it and kissed it. I will return it to you now because now it has turned into shining stones, as you can see. Here child, bend forward, I’ll grant it back to you.”

And the old woman rose majestically and stepped forward and she slipped off the dazzling necklace and placed it over the girls bowed head. And as it rested upon the girl’s neck, an uncanny fire from the old woman’s eyes infused each of the stones, one by one, blink....blink...blink.....until they were all lit. Lit from the inside. Fiery. Gorgeous. Beautiful.

And at the very moment the necklace touched the girls chest over her heart, the girl’s body, the very weight of it, began to rise very slowly. As her toes left the sandy bottom of the lake, the old

woman kissed the girl as she rose. She kissed her forehead, she kissed her lips, she kissed her chest, her belly, her thighs, her knees and her toes as the young woman rose and rose up and even more upward toward the surface of the lake. It was a beautiful thing to see for the girl and for the old woman, both.

She rose up through the underwater forest....up and up, she rose up through the many underwater currents, she ascended up through the darkest blue and then finally up through the most golden lit lake water. Rising and rising until she broke the surface at the very center of the lake. And then lovingly, with so many caresses, the gentle waves carried her all the way to shore.

And there the young woman rose up like a Goddess....clothed only in her necklace, the hundred wet stones, shimmering, shining, striking magnificent fire into the rising sun. And she walked slowly toward her village, proudly and without shame, the fire in her eyes.....soft and glowing.

Well, to be expected, all the girls in the village came rushing up to her.

“Where have you been? Ahh, look at the necklace you have! Where did you get that?”

And the young woman said, “I met an old woman in the forest and she was injured and she asked me if I would help to heal her, she asked me if I would kiss her and lick her wounds and her scars, and I did, and she threw me into the middle of the lake where I drifted to the bottom where I found that I could breathe, and there was an old woman under the lake and it is she who gave me the necklace.

And the girls didn't even wait to hear the end of the story and they ran into the forest....looking for the old woman and one by one, each envy maddened girl met the old woman and when she asked every last one of them if they would lick and kiss her wounds and scars, they were disgusted, not one would bend a single knee to help. And so, one by one the old woman asked them, “Do you know how to swim?”

And each of the girls said, “No we don't know how to swim.” And they literally begged her to be thrown into the lake so they could get the treasure. But, when the old woman complied with their wishes, picking up each one her strong arms...whirling and whirling them over her head and throwing them into the lake.....and the girls, yes, they fell into the deep dark....they began to drift downward and downward, but it appears that they could not breathe under the water because of their own lead-filled hearts, rather than doing the work of finding the pure old woman in the underground grotto, instead they became....well.....not so tasty food for the monster, who had always existed, and was always more than happy to lick it's chops and pick it's teeth with the jealous girls littlest fingerbones all night long. And thus, this story of the forest who flew

through the air, of the girl that flew through the air, the lake that flew through the air, the jealous girls that flew through the air, the old women that flew through the air....comes to an end.

And they say that telling this tale is done best from the bottom of the lake. Where we sit right now with the old woman. And at the bottom of the lake, right now, the sands are going to part.....Phhhhhhwwweeeeeeewwww.....and we are born back into our world. And so here we are right now back into our world. Far away there is a lake and far away there is a forest and far away there are two old women and far away there is a girl who carries the legacy necklace....they're all on their way here. We rise to greet them.