

Strange Sea

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Magnus liked hearing stories and fairy tales. In a fairy tale, anything could happen.

Magnus lived in the far north, by the sea. He lived there with his mum and dad. And with Áddjá, his granddad. Áddjá told him fairy tales and stories from all over the world. He was a seaman, and had sailed the seven seas. When he went ashore in a foreign land he always listened to the stories that people told in that country. Áddjá had a good memory, so he could tell Magnus all sorts of stories. It was like a treasure chest that was never empty.



Magnus was together with Áddjá in the boathouse every day. Áddjá kept busy with a bit of everything, and Magnus helped out. Áddjá liked to carve animals from wood. Now he was making a whale, and was working on it while they talked together.

Magnus was a good listener. He remembered the stories Áddjá told, and brought them with him into his dreams every night.



Magnus had been talking for several days about all the plastic in the sea.

– Áddjá, people throw away things they don't need. They throw them into the sea, as though the sea were a rubbish bin, Magnus complained. He described what he had seen on the shore: boots, plastic jerry cans, fishing nets. And plastic bags. He sighed loudly.

Áddjá nodded, puffed on his pipe, and thought. It was quiet. Magnus knew there was no point in trying to hurry Áddjá. Thinking takes the time that it takes.



After a while, Áddjá cleared his throat. Then he said,
– Magnus, I’m going to tell you about the sea’s mother.
This is a story I heard in Greenland.

Áddjá settled down comfortably, and began to tell the tale.

– Once upon a time, the sea’s mother got angry at humans. She thought they threw far too much trash into the sea. The rubbish got tangled up in her hair. The sea’s mother lived on the ocean floor, and when she got angry she gathered all the fish, sea birds and whales, and kept them at the bottom of the sea. The humans who lived by the sea had nothing to eat. They began to starve.



Áddjá swallowed a sip of coffee, and continued.

– The humans realised that they had to send a shaman down to the sea’s mother. The shaman needed to comb her thick hair to remove all the rubbish that was stuck there. He had to soothe her so she would let the sea animals, birds and fish go free. When the shaman returned, he told the humans what they had to do so they could go hunting again.

Finally, Áddjá said, – I forgot to tell you that the sea’s mother was originally a young girl. She was together with her family in a boat out at sea, when there was a heavy storm and she fell overboard. When she tried to get back into the boat, they cut off her fingers. She sank to the bottom and became the sea’s mother. And without fingers, you can’t comb your hair, you know.





– That was so cruel! How terrible to cut off her fingers, said Magnus with a trembling voice. He had shivers all down his spine.

– Yes, it's a powerful tale. It tells us something about ourselves. But the next time the sea's mother has her hair full of rubbish, a new shaman will have to travel down to her and comb it out for her, said Áddjá.

Magnus had a lot to think about. He imagined the sea's mother down on the ocean floor. Since there was so much plastic trash on the shore, could her hair be full of rubbish again?



That night, Magnus dreamt that he swam from the shore down towards the bottom of the sea.

He is wearing flippers and is breathing through a snorkel. He sees a fish with a plastic bag over its head. And sea urchins that are caught in fishing nets. It's a dreadful sight. He keeps swimming downwards, through seaweed and kelp. Down to another world.

