

Seaside Glass

By G. E-P.

Brilliant blue. Seething with anger. Disappointment.

The floatzel would never forget that stare. His own father, glaring at him like an enemy that had wronged him. Boring down onto the immature otter's psyche. He could practically feel the tension in the air thicken, as his father's fists clenched shut, as if to prepare to strike him down for his impudence. The floatzel hung his head, tears starting to well up in the corners of his eyes, staring for a moment at the discarded wooden bowl that lay at his father's feet, cooked rice, fish and seaweed strewn across the hardwood floor, before glancing up to the rest of the family.

His mother, knew, of course. How could she not? She heard her youngest son talk about making a name for himself, idly planning out a set of 'actions and heroic deeds' he would need to do in order to clear his name of the shame he's brought to his family. And now, her worst fears come to fruition, her gentle green eyes filled with worry as she flitted between himself and her mate. He could see his brothers, near the fireplace, holding wooden bowls of dried seaweed and fish. Their faces were uncaring. Cold. Unconcerned. Behind an opened barrel of salt, he spied his only sister peek out from behind an opened barrel of salt near the back of the small single-room house. Her bright green eyes, inherited from her mother, shone through the dark, flame-tinted room as she peeked onwards at her older brother. What was she thinking? He could not make out an expression, but her behaviour leaned towards fear. Of course, the poor sensitive soul didn't like that it is happening.

"Leave," his father said finally, exhaling. The command hung heavy in the air, but the floatzel knew there was no challenging that. The patriarch had spoken.

The youthful mustelid shook his head, eyes clamped shut as his breath became deeper and more pronounced. His nose flared, the heart of the floatzel beating through his chest in a way that made it feel like it was going to burst. The sound of his father being so firm in his order, it resonated off of the insides of the boy's ears and rang loudly within his head. To him, it was deafening.

The quiet whispers from the collection of older sons by the fire gave way to the green-eyed mother turning and abandoning her mate at the mouth of the home, tapping across the hardwood floor to make her way to the youngest of the children. Even in a moment as stressed as this, her motherly instincts kick in to calm down and protect the Buizel by the salt. The young girl began to whimper, and then cry. Her babbling was incomprehensible to anyone except her mom, a few of the brothers by the fire looking onwards at their originator.

The father, however, did not take his eyes off the still adolescent otter at the door. The low roar of the fire blazing in its hearth was the only thing comparable to the deep anger that the father felt towards his youngest son. His deep blue eyes, as deep as the sea they live by, drilling nothing but fear into the young adult before him. The young otter could not bear to look at his dad in this state, lowering his head and keeping his eyes as tightly closed as possible.

That did not stop the anger in his own chest to spill out. The young male huffed and turned on the spot, stepping out into the grassy yard in front of their humble abode with a strap-tied blanket hanging from his shoulder. The sound of gravel stones and sand under his feet as he walked past the stone-and-lumber front wall was accompanied with the soft hush of the sea waves crashing against the ancient sea walls that protected the village's port, and the howling wind that swept down between his fingers and arms. His eyes blinked open, brain poisoned with anger. He felt wronged.

Passing the corner of the house, he let out a yell as kicked over a heavy barrel of salted salmon, their preserved bodies flopping onto the grassy ground nearby. No fish would be wasted, no, but at least it let him get some anger out. He leaned over and grabbed one of his brother's boat hooks, a long piece of wood with a metal hook and pike at the end for manoeuvring their fishing craft and the nets they use. A tool for everyday work, in his mind also acted as a weapon. Was he aware that his behaviour, if seen with a weapon like this, could scare the other villagers? If he was, he did not care.

No words escaped the young, angry sea weasel as he made his way down to the village's main street and walked towards its wooden gate. His posture was tall and self-righteous, feet stamping into the stone and sand path. He knew he was in the right. He knew his father was in the wrong. He gritted his teeth. The other villagers, silent in their observation, did not dare interrupt him. They knew what was happening. They knew he had to leave.

Their eyes were ever so judgemental. They looked on through the shudders of their homes, from the storage shack they used to store salt, from the ramparts of the wooden village walls, and from a ship or two docked nearby. The chief of the village had the luxury to look down upon the exile from behind glass-paned windows on the second floor of his private home, located in front of the village's small central square. The chief could only scoff at such a sight. Most folk who watched were glad the youngin' was leaving. Good riddance, they would think.

The youthful adult of an otter could hear an eruption of emotion bleeding out of the warm house he called home. His mother, she wailed her now exiled son's name: "Bly! Bly! Ooooh, please no! No!" It devolved into a deep and anguished sob, as her mate presumably held her back from running after her child. Soon enough, the home was out of earshot.

Within a few minutes he was approaching the village's meager wooden gate. It was opened up for him already, with a serious-looking fellow holding it. They did not exchange comments. The exiled otter walked right on through, and it was closed behind him, the iron clasp and bar that held the heavy plank gate sounding out through the rushing wind and the white noise of the sea waves. The ruffling of pine trees nearby greeted him to the outside world. There he stood in their shade. The serious individual at the gate peeked at him through the gaps of the wooden planks, waiting for him to go away.

Bly went forward, lip bit, eyes dampened and his paw clamped around the strap of his blanket and boat hook. The tree cover kept him hidden from the bright spring sunlight. The sun, the angry floatzel thought to himself, was just here to taunt him. To make him realize that his life ended on the most beautiful of days; a day where life can burst into action once more.

Half an hour later, and the mustelid was sitting against the crumbling concrete retaining wall of the old automobile road tunnel that lead south. He allowed himself to toast in the warm sunlight that taunted him only a few minutes before. The tunnel exited atop a short cliff overlooking the village, and many folks in the town could probably spy him resting at the tunnel's mouth. What was he doing up there, they thought. Why hasn't he left, they pondered. He covered his face with his arms, curling up against the cold wall of the ruined tunnel. The anger that poisoned his heart half an hour ago had melted into a forlorn sadness. To him, the world had turned against him. The whole world. His world.

The sound of the muffled pitter-patter of footsteps could be heard down the crumbling road. Pieces of asphalt and concrete rolled down its slight incline and promptly fell off the short cliff that lead to the small forest between it, and the village's wall. The adolescent floatzel did not care to lift his head and examine who approached. He stared down between his legs, tears dripping off the tip of his nose and onto the cold ground below. He knew someone was near, but did not know who.

The footsteps stopped. After a short, quiet moment, the sound of a soft object fell to the ground by the otter's feet. It was then the sea weasel looked up; to his right, two individuals stood a few feet away. A blue-skinned quagsire, clothed in a woolen jacket and gloves upon his hands, stared down at him. To his side, a croagunk looked on at the otter with dull eyes, most of their body hidden behind a grey woolen cloak. The wind blew through the tunnel, the sound of concrete bits falling off its retaining walls echoing through its length.

"You're not allowed back in town, Bly." The croagunk spoke up, her voice harsh yet feminine. Her froglike demeanour let out a quiet, subdued croak, kept silent in her throat. "It's over."

It took a few seconds for the confirmation to find it's mark. Bly, the floatzel, let his head fall back down between his shoulders, paws covering his visage from the two people nearby. In the short amount of time looking around, the soft-sounding object by his feet seemed to be a neatly folded garment made of wool, a metallic broach pinned underneath the string that kept it tied up.

The quagsire, a sort of stocky, smooth-skinned mammal common around these parts, picked up the conversation. "Stop crying," he ordered. "You have sown the wind, so reap the whirlwind you created." The paddle-tailed bipedal male stared down at the whimpering floatzel, until he became fed up with his pathetic display and glazed his vision over to the garment at their feet. He shot a glance at the croagunk beside him. He exhaled sharply, and frowned. He decided to end his involvement in this exchange and turn around that instant, stuffing his gloved hands into the pockets of his jacket.

The croagunk shook her head at her companion's behaviour. Side-stepping over to the quagsire before he began walking away, the two exchange a few whispered words, ending with the shorter amphibian-like mammal to concede whatever they argued about and back off. The male, at least four feet tall, ventured back down the ruined road.

The frog picked up the garment off of the ground and untied its string to reveal a newly manufactured woolen cloak, grey in colour and thick enough to keep water from soaking through. She knelt down and spread it across the floatzel's back, attempting to comfort him a little in the cool spring wind. The wind made it chilly, but the sun kept both of them warm enough.

"Bly, go south. There's plenty of people that way. I know, this..." She quickly looked back down at the village below them, situated in the ruins of an ancient human town by the sea. Most folks down in the street went back to their usual business, but she could see a few orange-furred individuals standing and staring up at the tunnel's entrance from in front of their home. Her gaze returned to the otter before her. "This isn't right, but don't have a choice. Bly, go south."

Her hands lie upon both of the mustelid's shoulders for a silent minute as the two savoured the bitterness of the situation. The frog's face twisted into a unique look of empathetic sorrow for the young floatzel. Why must we do this, she thought to herself. It's unfair. The chief's face appeared in her mind, only for her scowl to embiggen and her stance to return upright, pushing herself onto her feet and forcing her face to become neutral once more. She hesitated; the idea of leaving him with those words as the last thing he'd hear from anyone he'd known in his childhood was a little more significant than she imagined. She took her time.

"You'll live" The croagunk shook her head, disappointed with how things turned out, and left back down the rubble path.

The sound of crashing waves down below the tunnel's entrance, at the shore of the great big sea he call his livelihood, mixed with the howling, chilling wind. The sound of gulls gliding upon the ocean breeze along with swallows darting between the rocks complimented the maritime scene. It was quite serene. The snow has melted and left the world in a state of quiet renewal. "Rejoice," Bly remembered what the chief said at spring's start, "For the sun has returned."

Bly got up. Silently, he put the cloak on properly over his torso, wrapping the top around his neck and over his shoulders and tying the front together with the metallic pin. The young otter was still wet in his eyes, tears rolling down his cheeks and drying upon the concrete road he stood upon. The sight of a single individual by his family's home caught a lump in his throat. He looked on as they looked back at him. So far away, yet so close...

He turned, grabbed his blanket and boat hook, and ventured into the dark length of the old tunnel. He could not even make it half way before emotions flooded back into his chest.

All he could do was kneel down against the wall, hold his head, and vomit.

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