***LOVE BY THE SHORE***

***by NECKO L. FANNING***

There once was an old man by the shore.

But no ordinary man was he.

Surely, this be an old tale to bore?

And now you think me crazy?

But this man with hair on face so white,

Was born with a gift, power, a sight.

The hearts of lovers he could see;

Their truth and final destiny.

So that all came from far and wide,

To have the old man peek inside;

To tell them whether their love was true.

Truth be told he spoke what they knew.

That betrayal lurked in their future,

Wounds made deep that none can suture,

And soon it did pass that none came,

For all his words were dark and always the same.

Years passed for the old man by the shore,

And slowly his sadness grew more and more.

For the old man had meant no ill,

And told the truth by lover’s will.

One day a couple, young and fair,

Came to his cottage on a dare.

One boy had eyes as blue as the sea,

The other’s smile was kind and lovely.

Trembling in fear they asked the man with soft voices,

“Tell us, Sir, has love been made by our good choices?”

Well the sad man could see a tragic love.

Faithful though they were, trouble came from above.

For the powers of Want and Lust were at work,

They waited in the future, they did lurk.

But what could the man really say?

For dark news would send them away.

And leave the man of the sea alone again,

To wonder when death would finally begin.

But tell a lie could he not,

For happiness cannot be bought.

So he did scheme a simple plan,

To get the boys to visit the man.

“Come now and I’ll tell you the truth, good and bad,

but a promise you make before it is had,

“Once a day until I die,

visit me here, do not lie!”

The boys smiled true, and blue eyes flashed,

They enjoyed the old man, unabashed.

So they agreed, a pact was made,

And he told them their love would not fade.

But Lust of others and Want of life,

Bring only so much dark hurt and strife.

Tears fell from cheeks as hearts did break,

One boy begged it to be a curse he could take.

But the man of the sight and of the sea,

Could only say what he saw truthfully.

Yet, the other boy was strong and good,

And said the future would not move where he stood.

So they remained each other’s “mine”,

…Or at least they did for a time.

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Years did pass and forever they kept true,

The promise they made before the sea so blue.

The man by the shore watched them grow,

Watched their love bloom then lose its glow.

No longer in love they still did come,

To visit the man as they had done.

The boy with the smile became the man with the frown,

And blue-eyed boy married a man that put him down.

Yet they did come to tell the man of their woes,

Some days’ laughter, others only “hellos”

It came to pass that the boys’ love died,

As the man had said when he looked inside.

But the old man had come to love the two,

And wanted their love to bloom anew.

So he took the boys and gave them a draught,

Into sleep they fell and he woke them naught.

Then came the demons, Want and Lust,

Two who had destroyed the boys trust.

The man stood tall and began to speak,

No longer an old man sick and weak.

“You two devils have broken their vow,

to love each other past, future, and now!

You made his smile whither away,

And you made the other’s blue eyes turn gray.

“And with Want of fame and of notice and pride,

With Lust of others to fill a void inside,

You tore them apart with mean words and lies,

And you made them destroy all bonds and ties.

“And I was twice as bad as you,

Because I cowered by my sea so blue.

And did nothing to save the love between lovers,

That which was pure and greater than others.

“But no more will you haunt them I say,

Be gone, be gone, I send you away!”

Well the devils’ did cackle and laugh

And were unscorched by the man’s wrath.

“Send us away, not by you.

Quiet man of sea so blue!”

But the old man would not be enraged,

And demanded loud the demons be caged!

“What would you give if we agree,

to now leave your boys of the sea?

Yes, old man tell us we say,

What would you give to send us away?”

Without pause or doubt,

The man declared in a shout,

“Take my life, my very breath,

be it payment for your theft!”

The demon’s cackled with dark glee,

“We agree, say we, we agree!”

The old man then quickly awoke

The lovers for whom he had spoke.

“Together you stay in love and in peace,

Anger, pain, and betrayal must now cease.”

They saw the fire in the man begin to fade,

As his breath was taken by the pact he had made.

Then weep they did for an old man who taught love,

A man who had fought the very powers above.

The man died then without flash and bang,

Merely closed his eyes as silent angels sang.

And passed from the arms of those he cared,

Those that loved him for all they dared.

And the two men then took a door,

To set the man to sea forevermore.

Then with kisses and forgiveness on whispered lips,

They drank the cup of passion with fevered sips.

Done were the days of hurts and lies,

Love blossomed again in smiles and eyes.

Gray eyes turned blue once more,

The old man’s life had touched them to the core.

Pulled into day and out of night.

Frowns turned to smiles with dazzling light.

Every day they say their thanks to the sea,

And miss the man who was like father to thee,

By where they stand together on the shore,

While they love forever and cry nevermore.

And thus the story of love by the sea is told,

The lesson apparent to the brave and the bold:

Love with passion, trust, and honor where found,

Let not Want or Lust rule the battleground.