

The Tide Turns

Mira shifted uncomfortably on the sand. Her teenage body, like her mind, refused to settle. She rolled her towel into a pillow and lay back again, willing herself to relax.

Her thoughts drifted back to the day her mother had told her she had been named after the Sanskrit word for ocean, and she wondered if this was why she had such an affinity with the sea.

She tried to visualise the knot in her stomach untangling itself, but instead it got tighter, twisting around her anger, holding it captive.

With a cry of frustration, she jumped up and sprinted into the sea before the tears caught up with her.

Diving underneath the water, she swam far out. As she came up for breath, she was startled to find herself facing a beautiful young woman.

‘Oh, hello,’ Mira said. ‘I hope I didn’t scare you.’

‘Not at all. I saw you heading my way. You are a very strong swimmer. I often see you on the beach.’

‘My parents taught me to swim; we used to go into the sea every day, but now’

‘Now?’

‘Well, things have changed. My mum died recently, and my dad spends his free time drinking.’ She nodded her head towards the pub on the far side of the sea road. ‘I miss them both. I wait here every day until he is ready to go home. I pray for him, but I don’t think he can stop.’

‘It sounds as if he is carrying great pain.’

‘We both are.’

‘May I make a suggestion? If you are happy to listen?’

‘Yes, of course,’ Mira replied, ‘But first I should apologise. I never talk like this, especially to strangers.’

‘Perhaps this is the time for change. Here are my suggestions. Tell your dad how sad you are, how much you miss him. Tell him that his drinking is taking him further away from you, and you feel as if you have lost both parents. I think he will listen. Then you can both gradually begin to move forward. It will be painful, but sharing your grief may help you find each other again. You can still look back Mira, but only with love for what was. You can look ahead to building a good life for you and your father to share.’

The tightness in Mira’s chest began to loosen. ‘I suddenly feel calm and strong’ she said. ‘I know now how to be honest with my dad, and he will understand. Thank you so much for talking with me.’

Mira spotted her dad walking down to meet her.

‘Goodbye.’ She smiled as she turned and swam away.

‘Remember, no looking back.’

With a new light of hope burning in her heart, Mira turned to wave one last goodbye to her newfound confidante, but the woman had vanished.

A sudden splash broke the water’s surface, and for one astonishing moment Mira glimpsed what appeared to be a giant turquoise-and-green fish tail disappearing into the surf.