The World Between the Rain

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The Shape of Rain

There was something wrong with the shape of the rain. It wasn't obvious, but it was there just the same. Marina's dad had always said that she was someone who couldn't help seeing doorways to other worlds where other people saw nothing at all. She'd never quite believed him but now she wasn't so sure. There was an extra space between the raindrops. An intriguing gap that might lead to somewhere else entirely.

Maybe she was seeing things. She hadn't slept all night. She'd tossed and turned in her bed, feeling like her sheets were covered in sand, small pieces of imaginary grit irritating her skin. Eventually she'd gotten up and

had come to sit here, at her window, watching the way the relentless rain distorted the world, trees like jagged creatures in the droplets. And then, in the early, thin hours of morning, she'd noticed those shimmering gaps that looked like doorways to other worlds.

Maybe she was focusing too much on the rain. There were no such things as other worlds anyway. Or maybe there were? Her thoughts were jumping all over the place, like the spaces between the raindrops which were definitely there. She couldn't ignore them. Maybe he was calling to her. Maybe he'd made those mysterious gaps.

The spaces between the raindrops were definitely there. She couldn't ignore them.

Marina's dad, Finn, had always said water was magic. He was the kind of person who would have forced them all out in a heavy rain shower like this one, laughing as he threw his head back to drink the rain, encouraging them to do the same. 'Wine of the gods!' he'd shout to the sky and Marina's mother, Maeve, would shake her head and turn away back into the house.

He loved all water but he especially loved the sea.

His favourite place was out in the bay in the small boat that he and his friend Eoin shared. They weren't professional fishermen, him and Eoin, they just liked

heading out into the wideness of the bay and spending hours chatting and fishing and checking the two or three lobster pots in which, on the rarest of occasions, they caught something. His other favourite activity was looking for a magical island, that he said would only appear to the lost. 'Why would you want to get lost?' Marina asked. 'Because that's where you find yourself,' Finn said, which made no sense to Marina. He always wanted Marina to join him, in case she spotted the hidden way to the island.

You could see the bay from the house. From Marina's window, when it wasn't raining. She'd been trying to avoid that view for the past year, avoid the sight of the sea. But it was hard when it was just there on the other side of the glass. Just there like a large pale mirror.

That sea was her dad's happy place. 'Down below us,' he would say when out on the boat, 'is a whole other world. Down below us teems with life. Down below us are all the dreams and wishes of the world. Sing to them.'

Marina had spent hours out there on that boat with her dad and her sister Seri, singing to the fishes, singing to the dreams, believing that their voices could call magic to the surface.

That was all before.

Before the sea took her dad. She'd managed to carry

Gone.

Disappeared as if they'd slipped right between the raindrops.

Marina leaned forward trying to spot them. But the rain was now suddenly heavier and all she could see was water. Rain, rain, and more rain.

Where had they gone?

'Practising your kissing on the window, you weirdo?' Seri, Marina's sister, was standing in the doorway.

Why did Seri always barge in without asking? She was like a wild animal. Mad as a March hare, that's what people always said about her. They'd never gotten on that well, Marina and her younger sister. Seri was popular, friends with everyone in her class. Marina found it difficult to connect with people. They didn't seem to want to talk about the things she was interested in… or had been before… portals and magic islands, gods and dreams that lived in the sea. None of her classmates cared about these things. Marina couldn't understand Seri's ease with the world, the way she moved through it with a loud laugh or a cry. Seri didn't mind if people knew what she was feeling. For Marina, feelings were overwhelming. She was scared of them and liked to hide them away. It had got worse over the past year and Seri felt like a stranger.

'What are you actually doing?' Seri asked. 'Moping out the window. No wonder people think you're weird.'

Marina looked for something to throw at her sister. She aimed the first thing that came to hand – her precious cuddly fish that she'd got on a trip to the aquarium in Dublin with her dad and named Spector for some inexplicable reason. Seri just caught it with her lightning reflexes and swung it round by its tail making Marina feel slightly queasy.

'Anyway, I don't suppose you've noticed the time yet, have you?' Seri was still in her pyjamas and her curly hair faced in every direction. Dark circles below her eyes. Marina wondered if Seri had been awake all night too. Despite Seri's bravado, Marina felt an undercurrent of worry. She frowned, reached over to her bedside locker and picked up her watch that her mum had bought her but that she never wore.

8.05 am. Twenty minutes later than they were usually called for breakfast by their mother.

A wave of anxiety propelled Marina from the window seat. She stood, toes curling into the rug, thinking the worst.