

All Those Paper Boats

A surrealistic children's story by Ahmad-Reza Ahmadi

Translated from the Persian by Mehdi Torabian

Chapter One

One Friday morning the dwellers of the shore had seen a little boy with eyes as blue as the sea releasing blue, green, yellow, brown, red, purple, white, pink and orange boats he had made from paper onto the sea. That Friday, the wind had been blowing over the sea and the shore since morning. The wind had slowly pulled the boy's paper boats away from the shore. At sunset, the boy had seen the paper boats vanish from sight beyond the horizon. The boy had written his name on all the paper boats.

All the years that passed over the sea, the shore and the people on the shore, no one asked what had become of the paper boats. The dwellers of the shore had forgotten that Friday and the paper boats. The boy dreamt every night of the paper boats, of the Friday when the wind had carried them all away.

Chapter Two

Throughout the years, every Friday, the dwellers of the shore would see an old man with blue eyes beside the sea staring out to sea from sunrise to sunset. The elders of the shore would say:

They had seen the blue-eyed old man every Friday since he was a child sitting beside the sea, eyes pinned on the sea from sunrise to sunset.

No one knew his name and no one had heard his voice. They had always seen him beside the sea on Fridays dressed in black.

Chapter Three

That spring night, the rain had fallen on houses and the sea until morning. That spring night, the dwellers of the shore were kept awake until morning from the sound of wind and rain. Tomorrow would be Friday.

Chapter Four

The dwellers of the shore came to the shore with the dandelions the wind had carried to their homes from the sea. They knew whenever the wind brought

dandelions from the sea to their homes, they should expect the sea to do something. The dwellers of the shore saw beside the sea, the blue-eyed old man dressed for the first time in blue, the color of the sea, immersed in white dandelions with his eyes fixed on the sea.

Chapter Five

The dwellers of the shore saw:

the wind slowly bring to shore a blue boat.

The blue boat was filled with live, young fish.

Chapter Six

The dwellers of the shore saw:

the wind slowly bring to shore a green boat.

The green boat was filled with grains of wheat and young stems of grapes.

Chapter Seven

The dwellers of the shore saw:

the wind slowly bring to shore a white boat.

The white boat was filled with bridal gowns never before worn. The white boat was filled with small and large mirrors.

Chapter Eight

The dwellers of the shore saw:

the wind slowly bring to shore a pink boat.

The pink boat was filled with bunches of roses, fragrant wintersweet, geraniums, shoots of violets and primroses, and with baby clothes and shoes and colorful coils of yarn.

Chapter Nine

The dwellers of the shore saw:

the wind slowly bring to shore a red boat.

The red boat was filled with glowing lanterns and tulip-shaped lamps and candles.

Chapter Ten

The dwellers of the shore saw:

the wind slowly bring to shore an orange boat.

The orange boat was filled with thousands of leaves, white sheets of paper and boxes full of colored pencils.

Chapter Eleven

The dwellers of the shore saw:

the wind slowly bring to shore a brown boat.

The brown boat was filled with musical instruments.

Chapter Twelve

The dwellers of the shore saw:

the wind slowly bring to shore a yellow boat.

The yellow boat was filled with young orange, sweet lemon and bitter orange trees.

Chapter Thirteen

When the New Year was ushered in on the shore, old men hung the glowing lanterns, tulip-shaped lamps and candles on the doors of the houses on the shore.

Chapter Fourteen

When the New Year was ushered in on the shore, men poured the fish into the sea and planted on the shore the wheat grains, grape stems and young sweet orange, sweet lemon and bitter orange trees.

Chapter Fifteen

When the New Year was ushered in on the shore, young girls put on the new, white bridal gowns and looked at themselves in the mirrors.

Chapter Sixteen

When the New Year was ushered in on the shore, mothers dressed their babies in the pink clothes. The babies went to sleep and dreamt of the sea.

Chapter Seventeen

When the New Year was ushered in on the shore, young people played the instruments. Up until then, no one on the side of the sea had ever heard the sounds made by musical instruments.

Chapter Eighteen

When the New Year was ushered in on the shore, women wove rugs and cloth with the colorful coils of yarn and laid out the seven New Year's decorations all beginning with the letter S on the rugs.

Chapter Nineteen

When the New Year was ushered in on the shore, children wrote out their homework on the white sheets of paper and with the colored pencils, they painted the face of the blue-eyed old man and the sea.

Chapter Twenty

On the first morning of the New Year, the seashore was filled with children who had released thousands of colored paper boats onto the sea. They had painted the face of the old man on the boats.

Chapter Twenty One

On the first morning of the New Year, people went to the house of the blue-eyed old man to congratulate him on the New Year. The doors of the house and all the rooms were wide open. On the porch of the house, the seven New Year's decorations all beginning with the letter S were laid out. The old men and children called out to the blue-eyed old man, but they only heard their own voice.

Chapter Twenty two

No one found out where the old man with eyes the color of the sea had gone. But everyone knows the doors to his house and rooms are wide open all the four seasons of the year and that every year when it is time to usher in the New Year, the dwellers of the shore lay out the seven New Year's decorations all beginning with the letter S on his porch.

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