



The Merchant's Curse

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In a cozy but cramped little fishing shack, young Elian watched the waves crash, his heart aching for a better life. His dear mother, Mora, toiled tirelessly, mending nets with weary hands, her love a constant warmth in their modest home. Determined to lift them from poverty, Elian made a bold decision to seek his fortune on a faraway merchant ship.



With a hopeful glint in his eye, Elian embraced his mother tightly on the bustling village pier. He swore he would return, wealthy and grand, to give her the life she deserved, a promise that resonated with the sound of the ocean waves. Mora, tears welling, clutched a small, handmade charm, her heart filled with a mixture of pride and sorrow.



Years melted away like snowflakes in the sun, yet Mora remained steadfast, her gaze fixed upon the endless horizon. Every morning, she would walk to the same spot on the sandy shore, her hair slowly turning silver like the sea foam. She whispered prayers for her son's safety, her hope an unwavering beacon against the vast, empty ocean.



Far across the sparkling seas, Elian's ambition had blossomed into immense success, transforming him into a legendary merchant. He commanded a magnificent fleet of golden-sailed ships, each one laden with exotic treasures from distant lands. His elegant noblewoman wife, adorned in shimmering jewels, stood proudly by his side, a symbol of his elevated status.



One glorious morning, Elian's grand flagship, adorned with shimmering gold, sailed majestically towards a familiar coastline. The villagers gathered, awestruck by the magnificent vessel that dwarfed their humble fishing boats. A sense of anticipation filled the air as the ship gracefully approached the very pier Elian had departed from so long ago.



From her usual spot on the shore, Mora's heart leaped when she saw the grand ship, a flicker of recognition sparking in her aged eyes. She recognized the proud bearing of the captain on deck, a silhouette she had etched into her memory. With a burst of renewed energy, she ran towards the pier, her tattered clothes flapping in the sea breeze, a joyful cry escaping her lips.



As Mora reached the ship, her voice trembling with love, Elian's face hardened, a mask of cold embarrassment replacing his confident smile. In front of his elegant wife and crew, he cruelly denied knowing the ragged woman, claiming he had no mother who looked like a beggar. Mora's outstretched hands froze in mid-air, her heart shattering into a million pieces.



Humiliated and utterly heartbroken, Mora collapsed onto the dusty pier, her strength completely drained. Through her tears, she lifted her gaze to the heavens, her voice a raw whisper of pain and betrayal. She prayed that if this cold-hearted man truly was her son, his heart of stone would turn his entire body into the very same.



No sooner had Mora uttered her desperate plea than the sky darkened dramatically, and a furious storm erupted from nowhere. Lightning cracked across the churning waves, striking Elian's magnificent ship with a deafening roar. As Elian screamed in terror, his limbs began to stiffen, his skin turning cold and hard like ancient rock.



In a horrifying final moment, Elian was completely transformed, a kneeling stone statue forever etched with a look of eternal regret. The storm subsided as quickly as it began, leaving the stone Elian facing the endless sea, a silent, stark reminder of his cruel denial. Mora watched from the quiet shore, her sorrow a deep, unending ocean.