

It's Time

by

Robin Fulford



'Tell me again,' he asks.

'It feels right. It's time.'

'What feels right?' He looks away from the sea to her. Is she too young to go, he wonders. But then isn't everyone too young who goes? He watches her silhouette blow to the on-shore wind, dark hair whipping back from her head, him aware of how the cold knifes his age. He pulls his cloak tighter, she stands towards

the cold. One embraces or dies. It is the same with the water, the sun, the dark, the land: make it part of you as it makes you part of it, or you are nothing. With this understanding, he thinks, and with luck, one can then leave. He wonders how lucky she is. He wasn't lucky, he doesn't think. Why should she be? But one never knows. Luck is a marauder of the now. Moment by moment luck charts its own voyage.

She stares at her bent father as he pulls the cloak tighter. She wants to hug him and cry as a child, kiss him, run around him, and have him do the same - such are the anchors of time. She watches with her urge and sees how he totters slightly when the wind pushes him. She doesn't know why she is going, but she will - sometime, somewhere. She is aware of the urge, the voice that pulls her forward to beyond now. It is an urge that sometimes says go, sometimes says come. Am I going because that is what others have done, or because staying here on this island will never be enough; or because he could never go, it is therefore left up to me? How much of this is for me, how much of this is for him?

They watch the dark foam crash on the rocks, the blue orange sky drowning in the west that they look to. Both feel the presence of the other on the rock beach.

The sky overhead leaks stars into the depthless eastern dark, and everything is the centre of the universe for an interminable moment.

She moves up to him and puts her hand around his arm. Even through his clothes she feels how thin he is – she laments in the waiting. She knows that she will never see or touch him again, except in the mind and the memories. Only a very few people ever do return, and they did not get very far. She thinks he must be thinking the same things as she is. They are one, but apart. Through loss will understanding be found, two halves looking for the other and finding in turn themselves.

‘I don’t know what will happen, but I am incomplete otherwise,’ she finally says close to his ear.

‘Sometime that’s as complete as you need be,’ he responds, pauses, and then laughs ironically, the wind snatching it away into the night. She smiles and puts her other hand around the same arm she is already anchored to. They stand together on the edge of everything, she holding him so he doesn’t blow away, him sensing her solid love, her confusion, her convictions, her strong hands, and him knowing that all it is irreversible. He wishes to die now, she pretends she will live forever, both of them right here, right now.

Father and daughter stay like that for a time, until the wind starts to die as it usually does in the incorruptible of the night. Soon she will set sail. The small catamaran is loaded with supplies. He has taught her all he knows about navigation, how to read the sun, the stars, the sea, the wind, the birds, the clouds. He wishes he had taught her more about the soul and its wisdom. But she always seemed to know more about that than I did, he thinks.

She was always the willing learner, as if something in her knew that it would come to this moment one day. What he taught her she took in and in doing so made it part of her, and in turn made it more, more than he could imagine. He knows this, but all he can comprehend right then is the growing abyss in the pit of his stomach, as if the gods have opened a hole in the earth and are sucking everything down and away. He turns to her to break the torture and hugs her. She hugs him back fiercely, the tears being torn off her face by the wind. Finally they separate and she walks down to the cove where her boat is lashed to the mooring of tree roots.

She calls to him as she sets a small sail to take her on a tack that will clear the cove entrance. 'Don't wait for me! Live for me!' And she shoots out into the vast and loving sea, free for the first time in her life.

Her father stands for a long time looking at the patch of dark she has disappeared into. He says to himself as he turns around and hobbles back down the worn path, how can I live for you when all I have done is wait for all this? He tries to sing to the wind and therefore to her, but his throat catches, and he cries instead.

She hears him in her mind, and turns back to look at the disappearing island of home.

