

Quest for Truth

by Jodi Triplett

A lonely howl broke the silence, followed immediately by another, and yet another. Shivering, the old woman latched the door and the shutters against the noise. She sat down once more at her loom and began to weave. So intent on her work was she, that she didn't even hear someone entering.

"And what do you weave tonight?" asked a deep voice.

"The waves of the ocean have caught the moonbeams and taken them far away; I must get them back," answered the old woman.

"So you weave a net?" he asked.

"Come and see," she replied. The loom revealed a silken net, strung in the water which bobbed it gently up and down. Inside the net lay a gossamer butterfly, drinking nectar from a pale rose. "To lure the water, for it loves pretty things," she explained.

"In which case you had better watch out, or it will come for you!" laughed Eli. It is only a strange picture on a loom, he thought to himself, born of this old woman's mind.

"A loom on which I created the world and can

change it," she replied, unperturbed.

"Creator of the world!" scoffed Eli. As he went back along the forest trail, he muttered to himself, "Why, everyone knows she is just a crazy old woman who thinks she created the world." Comforted, he went on.

Another howl sounded, very close to where Eli was walking. Suddenly, a dozen gray shadows were about him. Flickering yellow eyes regarded him calmly.

"Hello," said Eli gravely.

A voice deep with age and wisdom replied, "Why did you go there?"

"I don't know why exactly," he said, "but she thinks she created the world."

A sound which was surprisingly like laughter passed through the pack of wolves. "Why," said the voice, "that is impossible since it was I and my pack who made the world."

"Then why did you make humans?" asked Eli, mystified.

"A mistake," was the sad reply. The wolves were gone as quickly as they had come, and Eli proceeded on.

A gentle river flowed quietly past him, visiting the sea. Eli asked the river if she had seen any moonbeams. "Here," the melodic, slurred voice of the river said. A patch of light made the river dance. "But the ocean has stolen all the rest away!" Eli did not know what to do, and began to walk on, but the river called him back.

"Wait!" she pleaded. "I know what you are thinking," she said. "I know I was foolish to create the ocean, who is selfish, but I know I made a mistake."

“Then why can’t you simply take it away, if you created the world as you imply?” asked Eli.

“I cannot, for it is against life itself. But the flowing of my tears makes the ocean salty, so you know that I grieve for my mistakes.”

Puzzled, Eli walked on and the river did not try to stop him. “Everyone says they created the world; I wonder who really did?” he mused.

“Why of course everyone knows *I* did,” said a gravelly voice.

“Who said that?” demanded Eli.

“I did,” replied the voice, directly underfoot. The path on which he was walking was the speaker. “I direct the lives of all my creations by making a place for them to see where they are going,” continued the path.

“What happens if someone strays from the path?” questioned Eli.

“I am always here for them to come back to,” was the reply.

“I don’t believe you,” Eli said. “Everyone keeps telling me this.”

Angry, the path disappeared. Eli said he was sorry and asked if the path would please come back. The path came back immediately and led him on without comment down a dew-soaked hill. Grass grew lushly on either side of him and distant hills overhung the scene. A fine mist hung low over the hills, adding an ethereal quality.

“I can show you all the beauties of the world,” the path said, and Eli agreed, looking about him.

A sudden image in Eli’s mind of the silken net made him ask if the path knew of any moonbeams.

“The sea took them, stole them from me!” The path disappeared, and no coaxing on Eli’s part could get it back.

Eli walked on, and soon his feet were soaked. The distant sound of water led him on, and soon salty spray clung delicately to his face. The slight mist turned into a heavy fog which obscured his vision. The sandy beach upon which he trod wound around the hills, patiently enduring the steady abuse of pounding ocean waves. A large wave broke spitefully over his knees and Eli angrily informed the ocean that everything he had heard about it was true. The ocean stilled suddenly, making everything quiet.

“And just what have you heard?” demanded its gruff voice.

“That you are selfish, and turned against your creators, going even so far as to steal the beautiful moonbeams,” replied Eli.

“Humph. That’s not true at all! The rivers all come to me—I don’t force them here—and I always give some of myself to the clouds so the rivers may stay flowing. As for turning against my creators, how could I when I created everything?”

“Well—” began Eli.

“And moonbeams,” the ocean swept on, ignoring his rather lame beginning. “The moonbeams play across me all the time; I have not stolen them. They come and go.”

Suddenly, the ocean began to churn violently. Eli backed up, alarmed.

“No!” cried the ocean. “No, you cannot take them!”

Eli turned and saw the old woman. In her hands

lay a silken net, parted just enough to reveal a butterfly and a single rose.

“No,” repeated the ocean in an anguished voice. Unperturbed, the old woman cast her net and waited. Huge waves broke over the beach in an effort to shake off the net, but the net bobbed indifferently in the water. The fog thinned as a faint outline of the sun appeared in the distant hills. Moonbeams fluttered gently across the ocean, ready to leave, and then saw the net. The beams gently reached for the butterfly and were caught. Pale morning light streamed across the water and the moonbeams were gone. The old woman calmly handed Eli the net and told him to set them free far away from the ocean, or it would take them again. She left, and Eli was left alone except for the quiet weeping of the grieving ocean.

Eli went on, but the crying of the ocean could be heard long after he could no longer see it. The sun was still low in the sky, laboring to bring warmth. He paused against an outcropping of the rock to rest.

“Why, I haven’t seen the like of this in ages!” exclaimed a hoarse voice.

“Magic,” agreed another.

“I’m sorry,” the first voice said seeing Eli. “I am Jorfin, creator of the world.”

“And I am Filina, who has to put up with this tiring old fool.”

Eli looked more closely and found that the two who had spoken were the massive outcroppings of rock upon which he sat, and a slender fir tree.

“Magic?” Eli began.

“Never mind now, go on and it will become clear

in time." Eli resignedly walked on.

He was tired, and weeds held him back from his way. Eli suddenly remembered the path and called for it. "Of course I am here," the path spoke up, and Eli walked on contentedly. "As I was saying before, I will show you all the places of beauty."

That afternoon was one that Eli would not soon forget. The path led him through clear, meandering brooks and tall, ancient forests. Snowcapped mountains and lonely ridges were silhouetted in the distance. Ponds held plump frogs that sang of summer. Eagles screamed of the fierce joy of the kill, and foxes spoke of sly tricks and cleverness. Grass swayed gently under the silent shadows of the setting sun, and trees whispered of ancient, untold years. The wonder of the forest told a beautiful, yet forbidding story. "I can lead you nowhere else," said the path, and was gone.

Eli proceeded, alone but for the silken net which he clutched tightly to his chest, and came upon a small clearing. Leaning against a tree, he suddenly realized how tired he was. Remembering the moonbeams, he opened the net. In the gathering dusk, the moonbeams streaked beautifully into the sky.

Beneath the bright beams, Eli suddenly saw clearly. Far off, in the heavens, he could hear laughter as the creator of the world examined Eli's journey and found it humorous.

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