

Opa & The World

“She was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen.” Opa begins, tucking in the sides of his granddaughter’s sheets as he tells her a story and she nestles into her stuffed animal piled bed.

“Who, Omi* ?” the little girl replies...

[*Grandma, Abuela, etc]

“Well yes, but not in this story. Not your Omi. You asked me who my first true love was.... And me and your Omi didn’t meet until years and years after I first set my eyes on...*her*”

“Who’s Her? Tell me, tell me!” the little girl interjects, growing excited and exploding out of the tightly tucked sheets her grandfather had just secured.

“I’m *tryingg* you silly goat. Now listen close...” smiling as he continues...

“Ok so – where was I... Oh yeah, I was 7 years old - just like you actually - and she was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen...She had deep, exotic ocean eyes - with swirls of blues, greens and greys. I’d stare into them for hours and hours, noticing the colors change with her mood.”

“Where did you meet her, Opa! – and what was her name?” the little girl interrupts again, growing impatient.

“I’m getttttting there. Sheesh” Opa reassured.

“I had seen her around before – but the first time I really SAW her, I was sitting in science class next to my best friend Henry Heinrich...”

Our teacher was telling us about how important breathing fresh air was and that it comes from trees that help produce oxygen and that oxygen is one of the many things our bodies need to survive...”

Then one eager, energetic girl in the front of class raised her hand and asked...

“But what keeps the trees alive?”

“Great question” the teacher replied and fumbled around in the classroom for a second searching for the best answer to her question.

And then I’ll never forget what happened next...The teacher reached for a globe beneath his desk and held it up for the entire class to see...

“Do you know what a globe is?” Opa paused to make sure his granddaughter was still following.

“Come on Opa I’m 7, It’s Earth!” she said with rolling eyes.

“Just checking” he winked...

“Now back to the story...

The teacher held up the globe for the entire class to see and gave it one big spin with the point of his finger...

“Mother Earth is the one Mother who keeps all of us alive” he proclaimed, watching it spin in aw

“She was...exquisite. So vibrant and whole. Like an endless circle of energy and life...” Opa continued...

Then the teacher went on to answer the little girl's question “Our Mother Earth is responsible for the love and care of all living things; like trees and other plant life, animals, the ocean — especially us humans, that’s why we have to take such good care of her...”

...“and that’s when I knew”

Opa went on “My heart filled up with warmth and gratitude and I fell absolutely head over feet in love with Mother Earth”

“Wait wait wait, your first love was Earth??? Like the planet, Opa???” the little girl squealed...

“That’s cheating, that’s not a person!”

“Oh of course she is, mein schutz* - Mother Earth is VERY much alive and the minute I fell in love with her I started to discover just how human she was...”

*[sweetheart, darling, my heart]

“What do you mean?” the little girl dug deeper...

“Well we’d go on dates all of the time. Like to the beach or to the park. I’d run head first into her vast oceans and she’d hug over me again and again with her hearty waves...”

“Her hair was a sandy wave of calm that I would comb through when I needed to feel at ease...just like your mom does to you”

“I’d climb up her sturdy limbs and we’d pretend that I was the tallest boy in the world...”

“We’d spin round and round in her gently wild winds for hours until we both got dizzy and fell over on her grounds laughing”

The little girl interrupted again - “I guess I never thought of Earth like that but she sounds like a blast. What happened, did you break up?”

“Oh no, of course not sweetie, actually quite the opposite... I love her more now than I did the first day I set eyes on her...but overtime I started to notice how other people would treat her...and it would make me really sad...”

“I’d watch them throw their trash on her streets, so I’d scurry to pick it up....

I’d choke on all of the smog billowing from the cars and buildings...so I rode my bike anywhere I went”

“I’d turn on the news and see places from all over the world - piled with pollution, filling her oceans with plastic and toxic waste and murdering her animals - her children”

“People setting fire to her branches and wildlife in order to build parking lots and places to buy things that they don’t need...

...but all they really needed was our Mother .. and I couldn’t understand why the world was ripping her apart...

I would do everything I could to shout to the world just how much LOVE we needed to give her...but it wasn’t enough and I grew really tired and really angry. I realized I couldn’t save her on my own...”

“You didn’t give up Opa, did you?” the little girl barked, growing more and more concerned.

“Never mein schutz... I just had to change the way I loved her. So instead of shouting to the whole world... I started by telling anyone that would listen...that’s where I met your Omi”

“We were both combing Earth’s sandy wavy hair at the beach one day and we bonded over how special she is...”

“...then started going on dates together, just like the ones I would go on with Earth...

And as we began to fall in love and start our own family....we made sure Mother Earth was a part of our every decision...in the foods we ate, the way we spent our money, how we managed our time, where we vacationed and the ways we gave back to her for all that she gives to us

'Together we promised to lead by example and hope everyone we came across caught on...

"I love Mother Earth, Opa! I want to protect her too" the little girl proclaimed.

"Well then I guess my plan is working...love her every day and make sure you pass it on" Opa said with a wink

'Sweet dreams mein schutz" closing her bedroom door goodnight.

The second the door shut, the little girl climbed out of her bed and opened her window to admire the Earth's big bright sky...She took a deep breath and SCREAMED from the top of her lungs...

"HEY EVERYBODY DID YOU TELL OUR MOTHER YOU LOVED HER TONIGHT???"

Loud enough to wake the whole neighborhood...

Her door flung back open and Opa just stood there laughing with pride...

"How about we start in the morning?"

– The End –