

## FUNERAL AT THE SHORE

READ: ROMANS 12:15; 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18


**T**orchlight flickered in the dark, casting shadows on faces, reflecting golden light off the water—beautiful, and wrong. My mother’s body was laid in the funeral boat and covered with flowers. Someone said, “It was her time to go.” The comment stung me, just like all the other well-meaning condolences.


Their voices still prattled on in my head. “She lived a good life. She’ll be watching over us from above. The Creator missed her too much to let her stay here with us.” Something inside me snapped. My ears started ringing. My vision grew blurry. My mouth opened and said, “You know nothing.” It was barely a whisper. No one heard me. My breathing got faster, heavier. I lifted my head to the sky, and out of my open mouth came...something true.


It was not a wail. It was not a cry. It was not a yell. It was uglier. It was fiercer. It was raw. It was real. It burned my throat, but it felt right. *Right*. The only thing that had been right in days. Because everything was so, so wrong.

Some of the people were staring at me. Some looked away. But one face met mine. Soft eyes, gray hair. This woman saw. She knew. Then she opened her mouth and joined my song. Together we shrieked to the night—of the wrongness, of the death that stole my mother. I screamed faster, and my howls became sobs. The woman was beside me now. She held my hand. I didn’t pull away.

I don’t remember the people leaving, but this woman stayed. She wept and moaned with me as the waves rushed and fled over the pebbles. All the heaving in my middle induced my stomach to empty, and the old woman held my hair. Then she rocked me. Slowly, tenderly. She hummed a lullaby and stroked the hair from my clammy face. My breathing started to slow. My exhausted limbs loosened. My tears made spots on her skirt.

“There is One who grieves with us,” she said softly, lifting her face to the stars. “He is the One who holds your mother, and He holds you.” We sat together under the sky’s beauty, and then she sang an old song I had nearly forgotten. “The Great One is with us. He came. He faced death alone. For us, He came. For love, He came. And His return will be death’s undoing.”  *Hannah Howe*

 Can you think of a time you experienced loss? How did others respond? \_\_\_\_\_

 How could you come alongside people who are grieving? \_\_\_\_\_

*Mourn with those who mourn. Romans 12:15b (NIV)*