

Tears of Pearls

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This little story was inspired by one word. Numerous times on Murder, She Wrote, we've seen Jessica wearing pearls, and Angela wears them quite frequently in real life as well. In this tale, Jessica tells Seth the story of her own love affair with pearls, and how it all started with another story from her grandmother.

Note: *grá mo chroí* is Gaelic for "love of my heart."

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"You love your pearls, don't you?"

Jessica smiled at her reflection as Seth's hands draped the string of antique pearls around her neck. "I do. I've always had a certain fondness for them, ever since my grandmother caught me trying on hers when I was a little girl."

Seth nodded and clasped the necklace in place. "These pearls, by chance?"

"Yes." Jessica gently touched the milky, opalescent beads that now lay against her skin. "I was eight years old at the time, and absolutely fascinated with anything shiny and sparkly. It happened when I was visiting my grandmother for the summer..."

Little feet tiptoed into the bedroom, pausing at the door to ensure that no one was around to witness her covert act. Just like her favorite sleuth, Nancy Drew, Jessica Macgill was on a mission: a search for hidden treasure. It was around here somewhere. Aha! There was the treasure chest. Jessica zeroed in on the mahogany jewelry box on a vanity table and, slowly and carefully, lifted its lid. There, nestled among gold and silver chains, was the treasure she so desperately sought.

Jessica gasped in delight as she took out a strand of pearls. The color of fresh cream and glowing with an amber hue in the sunlight pouring through the window, they were a treasure worth finding indeed. Her eight-year-old mind, filled to the brim with images of buried treasure and mermaids finding these sacred jewels in oysters, positively spun. If this necklace had indeed been created by the hands of a mermaid princess, then stolen by pirates and buried for hundreds of years... well, it was no wonder her grandmother liked wearing them so much!

Jessica tore her eyes away from her treasure to examine her reflection in the vanity mirror. All big blue eyes and blonde curls, she had been told many times what a pretty little girl she was. Would her grandma's pearls make her even prettier? There was only one way to find out. She slipped the long strand over her head and re-evaluated her reflection.

"I think they're a little long for you, my dear."

Jessica jumped a mile, nearly falling off the vanity stool. There, in the bedroom doorway, stood her grandmother. With her arms folded over her chest and her eyes narrowed, she did not look pleased to see Jessica in there - wearing her pearls, no less. Jessica righted herself, embarrassed. "I'm sorry, Grandma," she apologized, taking the necklace off. "I only wanted to see them. They're so pretty."

Grandma Moyna's mouth lifted in a sudden smile. "That they are, Jessie. They're very special to me. Do you know why?"

Jessica's eyes widened. Could her guesses possibly be true? "Were they made by a mermaid princess and stolen by pirates, then dug up hundreds of years later as buried treasure?"

Moyna roared with laughter. "Oh, Jessica, child, you've been reading too much Treasure Island." She sat down on her bed and motioned for Jessica to join her. "I'm sorry to disappoint you, my love, but they weren't made by a mermaid princess or stolen by pirates for buried treasure. Now, don't look so downhearted," she said, tucking a hand under her granddaughter's chin. "I can tell you why those pearls are so special, and it's far better than any pirate story. Would you like to hear it?"

Jessica nodded. "Yes, ma'am."

"All right, good. You see, your grandfather gave those to me on our first wedding anniversary. During our first year, I found out that I was going to have a baby, but then I lost it before it was born." Moyna closed her eyes at the memory, and when she opened them again, Jessica could see tears sparkling in them. "Oh, I cried so much. I didn't think I would ever heal, but thanks to God and your grandpa, I did."

"Months later, when our anniversary came, he surprised me with those pearls. I'd never seen anything more beautiful in my life. He fastened them around my neck and said to me, 'Moyna, love, do you know why I chose pearls for your gift?' I told him no, and in return, he told me the most marvelous story. He said that in an old myth, pearls were created from the tears that Adam and Eve wept when they were banished from the Garden of Eden. Eve's tears became white pearls and Adam's became black pearls. According to the myth, that's why black pearls are so rare. Men are apparently better at controlling their emotions."

Moyna chuckled. "Not according to your grandpa, though. He completely disagreed with that part of the myth. He said, 'I don't believe that for a second. Women weep because they're the stronger ones. You were right to cry for our baby, because you were strong enough to love it and believe that it is alive in the arms of our Lord.' And when I started crying then and there, he took me in his arms and kissed my tears away. 'That's my girl,' he whispered in my ear. 'The strong, beautiful Moyna I love.'" She smiled at Jessica and gave her shoulder a squeeze. "And that's the story, my darling."

Jessica returned her grandmother's smile. "That's beautiful, Grandma. Do the pearls make you feel strong when you wear them?"

"They certainly do. I remember your grandpa and the strength of our love and our family. The same strength that flows through your veins, Jessica." Jessica looked down at the pearls she still held in her hand. "Will I feel strong someday when I'm wearing them?"

Moyna's blue eyes, the mirror image of her granddaughter's, were warm. "You will indeed, grá mo chroí. I promise you that," she murmured, scooping Jessica into her arms and holding her tight.

"My Grandma Moyna was as good as her word," Jessica told Seth once she had finished the story. "After she died, she left me her pearls in her will. I only wear them on very special occasions, when I need that strength the most."

"Is that why you wore them at our wedding?"

"Yes. I knew I loved you, but wearing that necklace was symbolic for me. It was a reminder that it was all right to cry."

Seth remembered it well. She had wept at their wedding, right as they were saying their vows. "Were you happy?"

Jessica took his face in her hands. "Of course I was. Those were tears of joy, believe me. When they came, I was relieved. I knew it meant that I was finally strong enough to admit my feelings for you, to commit myself to you for the rest of my life." She leaned in and kissed him softly on the lips.

"Strong enough to love a stubborn thing like you."

Seth chuckled and wiped away a tear that suddenly streaked down his cheek. "Oh, boy. Now you've got me crying."

Jessica kissed the tear away. "It's all right. That's just a black pearl."

Seth nodded and touched his forehead to hers. "We'd better get going," he murmured. "We're gonna miss our own party."

"One year, Seth. One year and many more to come," she said, allowing him to take her hands and lift her from the vanity stool.

"Many more." A grin touched Seth's lips. "You think we'll have enough strength at this time of life?"

Jessica smiled at him and swatted his shoulder. "We will indeed, *grá mo chroí*," she echoed her grandmother's words, slipping an arm through the crook of her husband's. "I promise you that."