Footprints in the Sand

ACT 1 –

Henry sat alone on the stony shore. He couldn’t stop staring at the water and cliffsides that surrounded this rocky beach. His old, white hair blew in the sea breeze that grazed his shoulders, and his wrinkled face gazed in gloom and determination towards the gray horizon.

Henry sat in this same spot on this shore almost every day. Just a bit further inland was his village where he resided. Everyone who lived there wondered about him. They thought it odd that he spent so much time by the sea, staring into the same horizon day after day.

“I know this is where it came from.” he thought to himself. “Will it ever return?”

Henry stood up and headed back to his cottage. He paid no attention to all the people turning from him as he walked by their homes. He knew they wouldn’t believe what he had been through, nobody would.

Later that night, Henry wouldn’t get much sleep. He would lie awake at night, remembering what had come from that shore long ago, and how he watched it take away his family when he was only 9 years old. Henry always thought he would be the only one who ever saw it.

In the following weeks, something odd started happening in the village. People of the village, young and old, started disappearing overnight. The village spent countless hours searching for their friends and family, but the only evidence to where they had gone was some footprints in the sand leading from and into the rocky shore where Henry would sit. These footprints were present every morning after a villager had disappeared, but they were always the same size and shape.

Henry knew this was no coincidence. This is exactly what happened when his family had been taken so many years ago. If Henry wanted closure to his past, he would have to face his fear. It was now or never. But how would he take on such a threat?

ACT II

Days passed. Henry skipped stones in a haze for hours a day to get his mind off of things, contemplating whether he should step into the unknown—and if he did, how would he do it? Just then, he had the best throw of the day. This stone skipped 13 times, and then disappeared behind a wave. Henry was almost positive he saw something emerge from the water and grab the stone. Or maybe it was just an optical illusion. He couldn’t be sure.

Henry turned around to see the old fishing boat his uncle left when he moved to the city. It was covered in rust and dried mud. The waves splashed Henry’s ankles as he stared at the vessel. And then he moved. “What do I have to lose?” he thought.

Henry ran to the local butcher’s house, where he was currently staying. He tiptoed through the front door and made his way to the garage. “You doing ok, Henry?” echoed a voice from the other room. Henry stopped in his tracks.

“Yes sir. Just grabbing some old cans for a school project.”

“You be safe out there; I wouldn’t want to lose you.”

“Yes sir. I’ll be back tonight.”

Henry grabbed a fishing pole, tackle box, and a box of granola bars and started running back to the shore. He pushed the boat off of the trailer and dragged it to the shore. He rolled up his pant legs, stepped into the water, and rode off into the bay.

The engine hummed loudly, and the water crashed into the sides of the boat. He had no idea what he was looking for but thought maybe he would find it if he just went out to where the rock disappeared. Henry just kept moving, with one hand on the motor and one hand on the side of the boat. The shore was getting smaller and smaller, and all Henry could see was endless ocean.

THUMP. Henry jumped. Something had just hit the boat.

THUMP. Henry moved slowly and turned off the engine.

Silence. Henry looked around, too afraid to move. In the corner of his eye, he saw the figure of a large beast swim through the water. It was as large as a whale, but with a gigantic shark fin protruding into the air.

Henry yanked on the pulley and started the small motor. He turned the throttle all the way up and sped back to shore, not daring to look back. The choppy water jolted the boat as it approached the shore.

Henry jumped out of the boat as it slid onto the sand. Leaving everything in the boat, Henry sprinted through his small village to his home. He flew through the door and slammed the door to his bedroom.

“Back so soon?”

Henry was too afraid to respond.

“What’s the matter? Did you see a Taniwha or something?” laughed the butcher.

“What’s a Taniwha?” responded Henry.

“Well, when I was a kid, my grandparents told me the legends of the Taniwha. I don’t remember the stories very well, but it was some sort of monster. Sort of like a shark but it could walk on dry land,” said the butcher.

“Has a Taniwha ever been seen in our village?” questioned Henry.

“Ha! Now that’s funny. Yeah, the Easter bunny rides on one every year when he stops by,” responded the butcher, sarcastically.

Henry opened his door. His face was as white as a ghost. He slowly moved toward the front door.

“Are you okay, Henry?”

Henry didn’t respond. He continued toward the door.

“Seriously Henry, what’s going on?”

“I think I just saw a Taniwha,” said Henry, gloomily. He stepped outside and closed the door.