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### The Crossing

Before the war, Elias and Katerina were inseparable. They were both children of the borderlands, a place where the river hadn't yet torn through the earth and where temples displayed the symbols of the gods in harmony. As they came of age, their affection grew from innocent childhood friendship to the tender beginnings of love. They met in an orchard at dusk, beneath the branches of an ancient fig tree, where they carved each other's names into the bark and spoke of futures beyond war.

But peace, like spring, never lingers long. A dispute over a sacred stone which was said to be a gift from Demeter, Greek Goddess of The Harvest, laid in the earth to ensure the valley's lasting fertility, split their land in two. Each side believed the gods favored them and claimed the stone as their rightful inheritance, so both turned to Olympus for guidance. Zeus, always the judge in such quarrels, listened as both leaders bickered before his throne. Their selfishness disgusted him. He rose, lifted his arm, and with a cry that split the sky, sent a bolt of lightning down to the valley. The earth cracked open and roared. From the wound gushed a wild, furious river, boiling and deep, its current swift enough to sweep away a temple. The armies fell back in awe. The war paused, but the wound in the land, and in the hearts of Elias and Katerina remained.

No one dared cross the river. The priests declared it sacred. A punishment. A barrier placed by Zeus himself. But Elias could not accept it. His love for Katerina was too strong to let the mighty river hold him back. Every night, he stared at the flashing water and thought of the fig tree, the orchard, and Katerina's deep ocean eyes. One night, he cried out to Hermes, God of Travelers, and offered the only gift he had left, his voice, a song he had written for Katerina beneath their tree. Moved by the purity of his longing, Hermes appeared to him in disguise as an old fisherman and taught him how to read the water's secret rhythm.

At dawn, Elias made the crossing. The river fought him with everything it had. Through the cold spray, jagged rocks, biting currents, he pressed on, guided by the song in his heart. When he reached the opposite bank, the earth did not shake, and no god struck him down. Instead, a soft breeze stirred the fig tree's branches. Katerina stood beneath it, waiting, her hands over her heart. She too had prayed to Hera, patron of love and loyalty and had refused every suitor her people offered her. She had waited because she knew in her heart that Elias would come for her.

When the lovers embraced, the gods turned their faces. Even Zeus, perched high on Olympus, watched in silence. He would not interfere again. To this day, on stormy nights when the lightning cracks the sky, the river seems to whisper a melody, a tune passed down from a young man brave enough to cross it for love.