



Immortal Blue

By

Raymond Howell

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Immortal Blue

By Raymond Howell

Authors Note

This short story was written for a competition on the theme of immortality. It evolves around a rather unique character, Blue. It was submitted under the name of Suijin Kami, who crops up in the story too.

All I can say about this is, if only it were true, but there again who knows it just might be...

Immortal Blue

Section 1

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**L**iving halfway up a mountain can be lonely. It's worse still when the dwelling is draughty, but other than that, it makes a perfect hideaway. Such a place is also ideal for concealing secrets where in this case it has served an individual, one peculiar in manner and habits, very well for an extraordinarily long time. Although Blue, the occupier, if he ever had a human friend to converse with might blow exasperatedly, "But it's a bugger of a job getting seawater up here."

Especially since the sea over many centuries has shrivelled in disgust from the polluted shores and now lies a mile away. It was not always so. Once it lapped the mountain's knees and a bucket lowered from a window or in later centuries a cleverly laid system of pipes and pump was all that was needed to keep the supply coming. But these days periodically the pipes need extending and with all the toing and froing and digging and reburying, it is becoming difficult to conceal his presence. The idea that humans might catch him is not one that Blue wishes to dwell upon for long, lest it pushes him to decide on the inconceivable. It's time to move elsewhere.

Not only would that be catastrophic and dangerous, but also wearily irksome and that unhealthy state must not be allowed to flourish in this secret domain where peaceful equilibrium is the key and rule to maintaining a long comfortable life. Such ways have served Blue well for longer than humans have existed and he has no wish to change, but in a world ruled by humans, change does not always involve free choice. That worries him just as much as the state of the seas and his pipework do.

Fortunately, the pipework with the odd weeping leak and drip, which are to be expected from such ancient convolutions, still function well. His problem stems not from the leaky hallowed ancient but from that detested and frightening modern. With an abundance of pollution and plastic filling and killing the seas and regularly blocking the inlet and worse still, the outlets which must be cleared, he is finding it impossible to maintain an expansive underground swimming pool, a collection of small lakes and numerous tanks - some carved from the very rock, others created from metal and glass, hand moulded from ores and sands, where his sea friends stay while they recover from the ravages imposed upon the oceans by humanity.

In relatively recent years, with fresh unpolluted seawater so crucial to their needs the horrid human word 'survival' has clamped itself tightly like a barnacle onto Blue's philosophy, as evidenced by the number of new tanks installed over the past few centuries, which depending on mood are all sadly or happily occupied. With more friends begging to stay it is all becoming difficult, impossible even in some cases to accommodate and manage them all. Including injured sharks. Where to put such unruly friends without scaring their neighbours? And as for carting them up the beach! A bucket won't do for them! Then there are so few tunnels remaining in the mountain able to act as sea pools.

## Section 2

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He never once imagined he would have these problems when he first came to dwell in the mountain, or during the many long peaceful years following until human industrialisation began sickening the soil, the vegetation, creatures and seas. I need help... he decided firmly one day when visions of a destructive future struck him with the force of a tempest-tossed sea. Where a dangerous mood swelled, threatening to expose his secret existence. As strong and ancient as he is, Blue has a weakness - his compulsions. Those feelings encouraged Blue to evolve differently from other amoebae swimming in the first waters, including future humans. As it has done ever since.

What drove his evolutionary shifts he has no idea, he merely accepts that strong will played a part. Or simply instinct. A driving urge like his summer breaks as he calls his trips away. They, unlike human holidays, are not calendar-driven events, although they have a rhythm, one he follows compulsively. When such moments visit he heads straight for the beach, initially through the tunnels, but due to the sea crawling away from the land the last part he walks now in the world of humans, usually at night under a shrouded moon. Arriving at the beach and like a turtle he digs a hole in the sand, buries his beloved tunic and sandals and then dives into the welcoming sea and swims far away and stays out for days, weeks and even months. During those long wonderful sojourns, he visits the poles or the warmer waters of Africa. But not so much these days. Once, it was a simple case of transferring his guests into what he calls his underground swimming pool and leaving them to it. But he cares now for so many that the long trips, like the

whales he visits, have become rare. What's to be done, he screams often, where his whale-like mournful cry reaches through oceans and seas to mix with the echoes of the collapsing glaciers that are felt by so many creatures, other than those responsible for the calamitous damage, the humans.

Following his new urge to seek help, he promised his friends, "I'll return soon", although the words felt empty, for how could he know? With worry and fear confusing his fingers he shed his long-loose tunic with its familiar whale-like odour to don the uncomfortable garb of the moderns which do not sit well on his peculiarly shaped frame, but they are needed if he is to blend in.

To prevent damaging the fragile human clothes in the rough tunnels Blue slipped out the rarely used cunningly concealed front entrance. After locking up and hiding the key under a rock he set off down the mountain into the gentler rolling lands that once swarmed with sea life. "So many friends gone," he murmured while following the narrow road. Although not towards civilisation, but unerringly out to his beloved sea. Well, if something bad happens this might be the last time I ever set eyes on you, my joyous sea, he mused with a heavy sense of foreboding.

Section 3

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**A**s far away as the mountain stands from the sea he was still able to savour the water's rich salty tang while following the underlying smell of its foaming breath which to his sorrow was no longer beautifully fresh but bore the tainted tangs of humanity's touch. But this was the sea and when he arrived what else could he say to it other than, "Did you miss me?"

Of course, it had! The sibylline sea misses all its creatures. In happy crashing waves it rushed forward to kiss his splayed feet and riddle the sand before shrinking away in dribbles and bubbly giggles to build up the energy to hug him in another warm sibyllic greet. He so loved this moment when the sea spewed out its news while encouraging play. "But not today sea," he murmured regretfully, "I can't. I have other places to be."

Yearning to swim free and far he turned sadly away to begin his quest. But where to look for another who might be willing to join me?

Living isolated from humanity he still knew enough to recognise that in their eyes he was a freak, an odd fit, but not a different species. He'd surely be imprisoned somewhere secret if they ever realised that! But if freaks do exist, that would be the humans, he is disposed on down days to grumble. I was here long before them and I'll be here long after. Doesn't the ailing sea foretell their demise? Isn't the air choking with it? And the soil bitterly willing it to happen. But how can I warn humanity without risking my freedom and life and what could this freak in their eyes say anyway that will make them want to listen? All I can do is keep helping my friends when they

ask, he reasoned frustratedly while strolling the plastic-choked shore. “But I so need help,” he sighed mournfully, where the conniving breeze whisked the sad plea away to lay it respectfully upon the sibyl sea where it was swallowed hungrily.

Less than twenty steps on saw Blue stooping to examine the sea’s offering of pretty shells. As he turned each one over in his hand he fell to wondering about the lives that had shed them. But then the sea’s urgent waves suddenly broke hard upon the shore. “Blue, she needs your help, help her,” they thrummed in a beat that pulled at Blue’s ancient senses... Reverently placing the shells down he dove expertly into the waves and with the current feeding his acute senses the drowning human was soon found. Taking her into his strong but short arms Blue headed easily back to shore and effortlessly heaved her onto the sand. As the human landed she wriggled slightly like a caught fish and that charmed Blue no end. “Wow, I’m melding with a human” he scoffed disbelievingly.

“Enough of that, get on and compress her lungs,” the sibylline waves suddenly encouraged. Rolling the human over and without thought about privacy or anatomy Blue compressed where he guessed human lungs lay. The enjoyable sensation of touching another’s flesh never struck him, but it did his fingers which tingled as he worked until she spluttered and coughed and spewed out water.

Concerned, but fearful of how she might react, Blue stayed kneeling by her side, watching nervously as her eyes fluttered open. Only to be struck by how big and round and dark and yes appealing they were, trusting even, just like a seal pup he thought admiringly as they fixed on his. Only to gasp when those eyes focused and gripped his without sign of fear or repulsion, if anything they wore a soft smile that gently spoke of an unconditional acceptance of the unexplainable fantastic.

## Section 4

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Unbeknownst to Blue, the sea had prepared her well.

While sinking into the sea's soft embrace it had come into her and while filling lungs it encouraged visions of ancient tales, where she watched the sea's wondrous children emerge to claim the land where this man-sea-creature who had rescued her was one of them. She was not frightened by his presence, just awed.

With Blue's high vocal range and rarely needing to speak human, it was a struggle to lower his pitch to make it bearable for her as he asked awkwardly, "Are you... OK?" Which was delivered with the shadow of a thought, it's much easier addressing my sea friends. The wiggle of an ear, or both, or the rear end convey so much and they are easily pleased and conversations are soonest over. While humans, when a simple look will do, complicate communications with all manner of unnecessary things. Which is exactly what he thought while awaiting her reply.

It took a moment to come for she preferred looking him slowly up and down - well as far as his knees anyway.

Carefully she noted his slightly pointed head and bulbous forehead. It only protrudes a little, she decided and it nicely streamlines his shape which is similar to a less portly seal and all the while that enigmatic smile played in her eyes. As for those short arms which held me so assuredly... Hmmm... Unusual yes..., but... workable, likeable even, she decided with the

beginning of a smile. Yes, he's cuddly her little involuntary nods of head innocently conveyed when finally she replied. "I'm embarrassed that the sea grabbed me and you had to come to my rescue. It was a bit naughty of the sea, don't you think?"

The word naughty delivered in an amused light tone along with cute embarrassed little flaps of arms and feet told Blue in that briefest of moments far more about her than she would ever know. But then a nosy wave crept up the shore as if to spy and Blue immediately understood that the sea has rescued him, or rather their common cause by delivering a possible helper. If only the sea was able to rise against the tide of human abuse so easily, flittered through his mind, which his heart tried to answer. But Blue, the sea's just as helpless as you when it comes to stopping the rip-tides of humanity's abuse. Especially when its journey starts on land. She cannot smother it all and why should she kill everything for the crimes of one species?

Sadly that's true, he thought regretfully, while clumsily helping the woman stand up. Only to be staggered by how similar in shape and height they were. But then all reason fled as she swayed gently while gathering poise and he was back in the sea admiring the graceful motions of an anemone's tentacles dancing in the sea's swell. Suddenly he understood exactly what he has missed for millions of years and so, without fear or question, he accepted her invitation, "Let's explore the beach." With an acknowledging nod to the sea, he happily allowed the future in.

Section 5

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"I'm Suijin by the way" she said coyly, "names are always useful aren't they?"

Realising she was asking for his, he shyly replied, "I'm Blue." Which brought her beautiful candid smile to the fore and a little quip to her lips as she considered his unusual hue, shape and rolling gait. "You know, I think it suits you rather well."

What could Blue say? Well done, you've come close to understanding why I chose it. But then breaking into his thoughts she explained, "I was out there looking for seahorses. I simply adore them. They're so gentle, prehistoric and wonderful."

Overcome by the joy expressed in such a beautiful voice for one of his friends Blue gladly revealed his heart without first considering his words. "Yes, I agree and I was there when they first emerged..."

But instead of spluttering, "What do you mean you were there," as another might, she simply recalled the magical sea's tale and gave herself up to his joy with a smile. And hadn't her parents named her Suijin in honour of the Japanese Goddess of water in what has turned out to be a prescient moment, while encouraging her to embody the very meaning? So that soft smile was for her parent's foresight as well as to encourage Blue's wisdom to flow, for she knew in her heart that he yearned to fill her with it.

"When I take to the sea" He revealed gladly, "I make sure to visit them.

I also have a number living in large tanks back in my mountain...”

Horrified, she shrieked. “You have them in tanks!”

“No, no... it’s not like that...” Blue hurriedly protested, “I don’t rob the sea, they ask for shelter and how can I refuse.”

With that worry nicely pushed aside she exploded excitedly into little jumps and twirls which flicked up puffs of sun-warmed sand as she turned to face Blue to treat him to a quick hug and say, “I’m so sorry....”

Momentarily shocked by her closeness he soon relaxed and smiled when she bubbled enthusiastically, “Can I see them..., can I!”

That was the first of many ‘how can I say no’ moments he was to share with her.

As keen as she was, there was no immediate rush to visit the mountain. They both had more walking, talking and deciding they trusted each other to do first, although neither bothered much with deep internal dialogues. For Blue, it was simply a case of, we may not have originated from the same gene pool, but we did emerge from that first water so we are kin, of sorts. And he just knew he wanted to swim all the oceans with her - if she can keep up that is.

For her part, she instinctively accepted he was kind, earnest, innocent and harmless. Then there were those hints of knowledge that promised to be as vast as the very oceans they both adored. She was encouraged too by a delicious little tingle invoked by a tiny spot in her subconscious as it warmed a particular wonder until it glowed - did my parents foretell this moment? But laying over everything like a soft welcoming duvet was the charming way he suited and flattered her sea-biologist mind and heart.

## Section 6

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Suddenly, like a pair of migrating herrings, they turned and headed up the beach where shortly he was introduced to the passenger seat of her electric car and the intricacies of an uncomfortable seat belt, along with Meat Loaf blasting out of four speakers. After centuries of whale songs, dolphin's chatter and seal's baying it was a shock, but Blue was quickly captured by the thrilling urgency of its beat. By the time the car finally struggled up the long winding 1:8 incline to pull up at the front entrance, he was zinging just like a bat newly released out of hell. Where suddenly, for the first time in a long while he wanted to linger outside to enjoy the spectacle of the setting sun. And I will, he decided.

Retrieving the key he solemnly passed it over while saying. “You have yet to trust me, so, go in on your own and explore for a bit. Then call when you’re ready.” After she disappeared eagerly through the entrance he sat down on a rock to watch the sun’s graceful descent. Only to suddenly mutter and sit alert. “What if she tells someone... And what if she becomes lost in the tunnels?”

Indeed, Suijin was lost. But not in the tunnels, but by the sheer sparseness of the materialistically simple mountain hermitage. But then when she came across a room full of tanks filled with wonderful sea creatures, some of which she has never seen, it all changed to become his incredible magical domain. But shortly afterwards she was to adjust that opinion slightly with the addition of five meaningful words - almost pitch black in places... domain. But that did not put her off him or the mountain.

I simply have to adjust, she thought with a chuckle as she explored the tanks in another cave-like room and discovered her beloved seahorses. Dreamily lost in their delightful ways a little crafty smile crept in as she decided, his ways of course, not mine...

He was just about to go in and call out in case she was lost when Suijin shot from the entrance. In a babbled "You've done all that on your own. It's brilliant." She grabbed his hand and dragged him inside where caught in a sea biologist's overflowing obsession she showed him the tanks while explaining exactly what was living in them and asking oodles of questions about those creatures she did not know.

How could he not smile and feel her whirling joy? Neither did he care to correct the names she used which mostly differed from his. He just assimilated them along with her excitement. All that mattered at that moment was that they had an immutable understanding and love for the same things. With a twinge of angst, he hoped it will last and dreaded the idea that she might turn against him one day. And what then if she does?

There was one other little blot that had to be wiped up... It occurred when she suddenly needed the toilet. "It's probably all this dripping water," she joked.

He smiled once he understood her needs and led her down a short tunnel that opened to reveal a smallish seawater pool. "I sit in it and do...", he said.

"Oh! I can't do it there" she exclaimed horrified. "Not crouched in the water. I'd feel like I ought to be giving birth, not poohing," she laughed to cover her embarrassment.

"Sorry but that's it," he shrugged.

Despite her protestations he could not help teasing, “I use the pool because some of the creatures like my waste, and anyway, why are you so shy? I thought you humans enjoyed sending your output into the sea... Isn’t it full of it!” But it was his mumbled, “If only I could clear it...” that revealed his heart, where hers responded. How right you are. And how I wish we could... where a little voice of hope piped up to suggest, with Blue’s knowledge and mine we just might find a way...

Section 7

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**T**hat was the exact moment she realised her feelings had blossomed for this strange but lovely and gifted little 'man'. For what else could she call him? His species has no name and he is the only one of his kind, or so he explained while they chatted before the tanks and she in turn had smiled, yes..., you're certainly a one-off.

During one moment as he revealed more of the never-ending domain, Blue used the words, “our home” where to her surprise she liked the idea. Then he took her down a level and into a sunless tunnel lined with tanks of deep sea creatures all harmed by trawlers. It was just extraordinary and fabulous; if she ever wanted to, the knowledge could make her career, but that just seemed wrong... Then slipping down another tunnel rigged with little flickering lights providing just enough of a glow to guide her steps they descended to sea level and into a large underground lake.

“It’s utterly beautiful,” she gasped as she took it all in.

Blue was immediately captivated too.

The differing sheens of emerald light, born from a weak leakage of sunlight slipping in under a lip of rock down in the far corner, beautifully encouraged by more of his little bulbs, whose glow reflected the minerals and phosphorous embedded in the walls, playfully glimmered in the water and magically upon her beautiful pale skin to invoke his silent gasp and an admiring pause before revealing his plans.

“I need this to be a refuge for whale calves if I can get the sea in. It could well hold six. Further on is another lake I’d like to use as a nursery for injured sharks. There are smaller ones beyond that, which I’d love to join together. The sharks like everyone else are crying out for help, but how can I let them roam these smaller ones with the other creatures? It will be chaos and slaughter because the little ones would have nowhere to hide,” he laughed. “And as much as I love sharks they simply cannot be trusted to behave.” But then came a corker of a statement that absolutely left her speechless - for all of a minute.

"Did you know, he asked offhandedly as if he was about to talk about shopping or something. “You humans originated from the shark’s line. I watched your species evolve and I have to say you bear many of their traits” he suggested with a merry laugh, which bounced off the walls before returning in a slightly mocking tone to berate her human ears. But what shocked her further was how she eventually replied. “You’re right,” she agreed. “We are like land sharks, but you’re not,” she offered kindly, “even though I know you originated from the sea.”

“Yes, as did you, but your species has forgotten that, whereas I can recall every stage of my evolution and each major shift” he acknowledged, “and who knows, in time I may evolve further, but unlike humans, I will never forget my humble roots and I’ll continue to respect and care for those forms of life that brought me to this point. If only you humans could do the same.”

That is when she attempted to kiss him. Alarmed, Blue jumped back.

“Oh my dear Blue,” Suijin laughed. “Why don’t you think of me, your lovely Suijin, as one of you kissing-gourami? Now... how, might you greet one of those in the ocean?”

With a coy smile, a quickening heart and puckered lips, he happily demonstrated just how.

## Section 8

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A week passed before she saw proper sunlight other than the rays which fell through slits cleverly carved into the mountain walls for those tanks needing more light than the flickering little bulbs could provide. But just before she left Blue and the mountain she just had to ask, "What powers your lights?"

"Waves... I've hidden the mechanism in a cove," he replied proudly.

"Wow, how clever and modern, Blue," she teased.

"Not really," he tossed back lightly. "Waves are the oldest most reliable and least destructive form of energy this earth produces. I've used it for centuries for the pumps. The beauty is, that as long as we have seas it will never run out. And if used carefully no harm will be caused to the life within or the waters polluted by it. I think of the sea as being immortal" he grinned. "And it will be the last resource to leave this earth. But you humans refuse to consider it properly because I guess, it's not sexy enough!"

With that thought in mind and Meat Loaf bombarding her ears, she drove back down the mountain.

She was only to be gone for a few days but he looked out for her constantly and was overjoyed when her little car returned pulling a trailer. Gladly, he unloaded her belongings, cooking equipment and human food. "Krill and seaweed and such like, are all well and good" she explained, "but... they are not tofu, now are they!"

Having tasted tofu by accident once, Blue discreetly smiled and continued to unload the trailer. Once most of her stuff was lugged in she presented her happy news. “I’ve rounded up some equipment to improve your wave power set-up - it will stop the lights flicking. I’ll collect it and some solar panels in a few days. Combined they ought to provide enough power to run a few domestic items, along with better lights. I’m human after all,” she laughed, “so I need those things.”

The last to be unloaded was a large locked box which Blue casually hefted. “Careful Blue...!” She suddenly barked. “Be gentle... And it’s best stored out of the water’s reach and somewhere dark, but that shouldn’t be too difficult here should it,” she ribbed.

In her absence, he had rigged up a more suitable toilet which he proudly revealed, “It’s for your little bum my Suijin,” while she happily noted his attempts to make the living area comfortable. What a lovely caring man Blue is, she smiled as he unrolled the large colourful rugs she had brought to cheer the place up with and then without grumbling helped her litter his domain with scatter cushions. With a satisfied, “There, that’s much brighter,” delivered with a soft pat to his back, she suggested crisply, “Now then Blue, let’s get started on the real work.”

Using the skills taught by her construction engineer father and architect come environmentalist mother and assisted by the explosives stored in that box she was soon blasting through the mountain, expanding the lakes as he wanted. Now for the water. “But we’ll need more than your pipes can supply,” she said worried about how they might achieve it, only for luck to pop up and lend a hand.

Section 9

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**A**mongst the rubble, was any number of gems and gold and certain valuable ores, more than enough when sold for them to purchase the whole mountain range down to the west where it paddled in the sea. "And now that they have accepted your money and our names are on the deeds, Mr Blue Whale," she mocked kindly, "and mine, Miss Suijin Kami, it's all legal. So now there's nothing to stop your plans."

"You mean ours, don't you," he said tenderly while pulling her in for a long meaningful hug which started her wondering just what their children might be like.

After the last long tunnel was blasted down to the sea and the rubble cleared to allow the much-needed water to rush in unhindered, she turned to matters of food. "Now, we need to buy a few fields to grow vegetables in," she explained, "and lots of fruit trees for us and saplings for the slopes to help the wildlife and to give us some extra privacy."

Which duly happened.

Working the fields and the new facilities Blue added from time to time they were kept busy. Before she knew it, 330 years had passed without a single grey hair or wrinkle or creak of knee appearing. She was fitter even than the day she first met Blue. And yes their child when she came was a delight, although a relatively brief one and maybe they'll have another, but what's the rush?

Humanity on the other hand had still not learned to care for the oceans. The underground lakes and their thousands of large tanks continue to be used by refugees. It was both saddening and beautiful and busy always as births occurred almost every hour and they needed bringing on and releasing.

The other startling revelation besides the realisation she had attained immortality through Blue, somehow, most likely as a nice consequence of their couplings, ‘the secret must be in his semen’, she once decided, was that she was finally able to keep up with him in the sea.

“And yes Blue,” she happily agrees when asked, “the remaining glaciers are spectacular.” Although privately she prefers their holidays frolicking in the warm waters with the whales around the African coast where she applauds with childish delight whenever Blue rolls on his back to playfully blow plumes for his Suijin. It was a simple act of love for both her and the sea and the fabulous corals which nicely expressed their heart’s wishes. “And may it be a long time before we have to swim off together into the closing light of that sad but inevitable final day.”