The Singing Widow

Once, there was a woman who lived in Salta, in the north of Argentina. She loved her husband very much, but one day the man died and she was alone. She cried and cried, filling rivers with her tears, until she was dry and empty.

Every Sunday, she went and visited her husband's grave. She put flowers on the grave, prayed, sang coplas, and drank wine until she was full. Then she cried again and went home.

Nobody can live this way, floating on a sea of sadness. So one day, the widow cried her last tear, closed her eyes, and never woke up again.

That is, she never woke up in our world. Instead, she went to the land of the dead, and she was very happy. Now she could meet her husband again! She ran through the streets of the land of the dead, climbed hills and mountains, and asked everyone where her husband was. But she could not find him. She looked everywhere, asked everyone, but still, nothing.

Her happiness turned to sadness, and she had no more tears to cry.

Finally, she returned to the land of the living. Most people who die have no reason to go back to the land of the living. But this woman would not feel happy in death until she found her husband again. And so she walked the road from death to life.

But of course, the dead cannot come back to life, so she returned as a ghost. Her skin turned white like the flowers on her husband's grave, and she floated through the air like petals in the wind.

When she came to the grave, she did everything like before. She tried to put flowers on it, but she could not pick them up. She prayed, but nobody heard her. She sang coplas, but her voice was not beautiful. She tried to drink wine, but the wine went through her body.

Most ghosts float from one place to another, carrying sadness and old memories. But the widow was different. She talked to her husband and listened to him, but really, he said nothing.

Finally, other people began to see the ghost. Her flowers stayed on the grave, and the wine stayed in her stomach. The only thing that was strange was her hair, which was silver like the moon.

One day, a man came to her, as she sat by the grave. He had been watching her for a long time, and he had fallen in love with her.

He was not a normal man. His skin was white and his hair was silver just like hers.

'What are you looking for?' he asked the widow.

'I am looking for my husband,' she said, 'but I do not think I will find him. I have looked in the land of the dead and the land of the living, and now I live between the two.'

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The man smiled, and picked up a flower from the grave.

'Such beautiful petals, but if you take them away…'

'The flower won't be beautiful anymore,' said the woman. She took the flower and put it back on the grave.

'Perhaps. If you find your husband and he has lost his petals, will you still want him?'

'I have walked through both lands and I have not lost *my* petals.'

'And that makes you special. But if you look for someone for a long time and you cannot find them, maybe that person does not want you to find them.'

The widow laughed coldly and drank some wine.

'He was my whole world. If I cannot find him, then what should I search for? Should I try to return to the land of the dead? It is an empty place, if he is not there.'

The man offered his hand to her. 'There are those in the land of the living who *do* want to be found. Will you go for a ride with me?'

The man showed her his horse. The animal, too, was white and had long, silver hair. The man said, 'She is lonely, just like us.'

'And who said I was lonely?' said the woman. But she smiled. 'Fine, take me for a ride.'

So they got on his horse and rode away from the grave. The woman soon found that there were other ways to live. Now she had a man and a lovely horse to sing coplas and drink wine with. She could smile, and she could cry when she needed to.

She never found her husband, but she was not lonely. And wasn't that enough?

So be careful, if you ride through the town of Salta. You might see a man and a woman riding a horse, with silver hair and white skin. Don't look them in the eye, or you'll feel the coldness of death!

But you also might feel a fire of love.

THE END

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