The Lighthouse's Tale

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Summary

I have wanted to write a story based on this song for SO long. As sad as it is, it is one of my favorite songs by Nickel Creek.

So, in this story, it's set at a lighthouse just outside a small town in Maine. (I don't outright SAY Storybrooke, but hey, one can only imagine, right?) Killian Jones is fresh out of the Royal Navy and looking to start over, but also, to keep as close to the sea as possible. That's how he meets Emma...

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.

I am a lighthouse worn by the weather and the waves
I keep my lamp lit to warn the sailors on their way
I'll tell a story, paint you a picture from my past
I was so happy but joy in this life seldom lasts

No one had occupied the old lighthouse for years. It had fallen into such a state of disrepair, that it was a wonder anyone gave it a second glance. When it caught the eye of a young sailor, fresh out of the Royal Navy due to injury, the agent selling it wondered if he could handle the life of a keeper, and restore the building to its former glory.

“I’m no stranger to hard work,” the sailor stated with a smile, "I assure you, the loss of my hand hasn't slowed me down one bit.”
“Then I think you'll be right at home here,” she offered a shy smile in return. The man was handsome, and his rich accent only added to his charm. “If you'd like, I can get the paperwork started right away.”

“Wonderful,” he nodded.

“Congratulations, Mister Jones,” she held her hand out, which he shook, “I'm certain she's as good as yours. I'll give you a call early next week with the rest of the details.”

Of course there wouldn't be a problem. With good credit and a sizeable down payment, the agent was right, the lighthouse was as good as his. “Miss Swan?” He asked as she started heading for her car. She turned to face him again, “I do hope I'll be seeing you around from time to time.” When she blushed, he smirked at her. Neither said another word as they parted ways.

_I had a keeper, he helped me warn the ships at sea_  
_We had grown closer 'til his joy meant everything to me_

Once he moved in, the sailor wasted no time in fixing up the old lighthouse. In the weeks that went by, he occupied himself with maintenance and keeping an eye out for the Swan girl. When a month passed, he began to think she might not ever show. Disappointed, he decided it was for the best, and set about burying himself in repairs and lighthouse duties.

“You've really turned this place around,” she said one day, startling him and causing him to drop his paint brush into the sand. “Sorry.”

“Quite alright, Miss Swan,” he grinned and turned towards her, “it's a pleasure to see you again.” Just as she had the first time they met, she blushed. “Please,” she smiled, “call me Emma.”

“Only if you'll stop referring to me as Mister Jones,” he winked, “Killian.”

“I remember,” her cheeks were completely flushed, and her smile shy and unsure. Like she didn't really know what she was doing there. “You never did tell me what brought you to Maine.”

“And what makes you think I'm not a native?” He teased, raising an eyebrow.

“Maybe those stories you told me about your time in the Royal Navy?” She laughed, “and your accent is a dead giveaway.”

“I've got an accent?” He pretended to be shocked, “bloody hell. Here I was thinking I was blending in quite nicely.” She giggled and it was music to his ears. “It just so happens, I have coffee brewing upstairs. Care for a drink and a tour?”

_And the waves crashing around me_  
_The sand slips out to sea_  
_And the winds that blow remind me_  
_Of what has been and what can never be_

Every Friday after that first tour, she showed up. He couldn't help but wonder if she was really interested in the work he'd done, or if she was just looking for an excuse to see him. He couldn't deny he was attracted to her, but the more he got to know her, the more he realized it was so much more than a physical thing. At times, he thought the feeling was mutual, but other times, she was more cautious and closed off. They had developed quite the friendship over the past few weeks,
and he wasn't sure he wanted to risk losing that by making a move and scaring her off.

One afternoon, he thought he'd test the waters, “keep watch with me tonight,” he suggested. She was hesitant, he could see it in her eyes, “you've come to see me every week,” he reasoned, “spent the days helping me with repairs, and hours conversing over coffee in my home.”

She knew what he was getting at, “it isn't like that,” she said, “I trust you.”

“Then trust me, love,” he said softly, “when I tell you, that you haven't truly lived until you've experienced all this lighthouse has to offer. When I say 'keep watch', that's exactly what I mean.”

He half expected her not to return that evening, but she did, as promised, overnight bag slung over her shoulder. Grinning from ear to ear, he invited her in, doing nothing to hide his joy. She seemed a little on edge, so he did his best to put her at ease, bringing her up to the balcony near the top of the tower to show her the view. “The sun is mostly set,” he said, “there's a lookout one floor down, but I find the view up here unbeatable. I've already set up for the evening.”

“Being so close to the light doesn't bother you?” She asked. It was quite bright, and she couldn't imagine trying to watch much of anything from up there.

“You’ll get used to it,” he promised, “it won't take long to adjust.” He set a blanket out on the ground and offered her a seat. “I'll be back in a moment.” He disappeared for a few minutes and returned with four thermoses, “coffee and soup,” he said, “curbs hunger and it'll help keep you warm.”

“Thank you,” she smiled as she took them from him. It got awkwardly silent before she spoke again, “Can I ask you a question?”

“Always,” he nodded, “no need to ask permission.”

“I never see you around town,” she said, “why not?”

“I go in from time to time,” he said, “but I'm not much of a people person, so aside from errands, I've really no need to be there.”

“Hmmm,” she replied, “I enjoy the solitude too, even if my job requires a certain amount of people skills.”

They sat out there for most of the night, sometimes talking, sometimes just watching the ships appear and disappear over the horizon. Occasionally, he'd get up and rush around, talking on, and listening to the radio, or working with the light. She seemed to enjoy watching him in his element, noticing the longing looks he had when watching the sea.

“Why did you leave it?” She asked, and he was surprised when she moved closer to him, resting her head on his shoulder. He was about to ask what she was talking about, but realized quickly that she meant the Navy. With a laugh, he held up his fake hand, silently reminding her that the Navy had no need for a one handed sailor. “Oh,” she let out a nervous giggle, and flushed with embarrassment, “sorry. I forgot.”

“No apologies necessary, love,” he wrapped an arm around her and tugged her a little closer. When she didn't pull back, he leaned his head over to the side, resting it on top of hers.

As the sun began to rise, he looked down at her, realizing she was fast asleep. Gently, he took her
in his arms, scooping her up as he stood. He brought her down to the next floor and placed her on
the couch. She was bundled in what seemed like a million layers, but he still threw a blanket over
her.

“Killian...” She murmured, seeming to be in a state of sleep, yet still not quite all the way there,
“stay?”

There was plenty he had to do, but when she shifted so he could have room next to her, he
realized there was nothing truly demanding his prompt attention, save for her. When he didn’t
answer right away, he saw her open one eye to check if he was still there. She pulled back the
blanket for him, and he knew there was no place he'd rather be. It was a tight fit, but he couldn't
complain, especially when she snuggled up to him, her long blonde hair falling every which way.
He brushed it out of her face and back behind her ear. After a long night outside, he found it
smelled like the sea, with a hint of whatever shampoo she used, something strawberry, he
assumed.

They slept half the day away, something he hadn't done in a long time. “Sorry,” she mumbled.

“For what?” He asked.

“Keeping you,” she said, “I'm sure you've got better things to do than sleep all day.”

“Not really,” he grinned, “don’t have anything pressing until tonight.”

“You do this every night?” She asked.

“Aye,” he answered, “though I don't have to hang out all night. The light is automated, and an
alarm sounds should something malfunction. I enjoy being up there though. Now that I'm almost
done with repairs, I can spend a bit more time up there, and more time sleeping it off during the
day.”

“Can we...maybe do this again sometime?” She sounded almost hesitant to ask.

“Anytime,” he whispered, kissing the top of her head. She looked up at him, and propped herself
up a bit so she could place a kiss on his cheek.

As promised, he'd done nothing but keep watch all night, but right now, he knew that whatever
feelings he had, she had them too. Pushing his nerves aside, he tangled his fingers in her hair,
pulling her closer for a kiss. It was soft, and sweet, he didn't want to scare her off, but when they
broke, he could tell that he wasn't the only one reluctant to pull away.

And he was to marry a girl who shone with beauty and light
They loved each other, and with me watched the sunsets into nights

Life continued on, and every Friday, she continued to show up, staying through the night and well
into the morning. Eventually, Friday turned into the weekend, and then, she found herself there
every night after work. Even if she wasn't up every night watching the sea, she was with him, just
downstairs.

Neither realized that their routine had developed out of love. He was the first to figure it out, the
first to say it. She shied away upon hearing the words, going back to her place for a few days,
until she returned one night, telling him that during those days, she realized that she loved him too.
He asked her to move in, she was there enough already, and it wasn't long before she quit her job to enjoy the solitude of helping him run the lighthouse.

When he proposed, it came as no surprise, and her response was an obvious yes. A new level of happiness settled into the home as they prepared for their wedding, as if the lighthouse itself was filled with joy.

The wedding would be a small event, just the local pastor and their small group of friends. They planned to have it on the shore near their home. Talk of having children and growing old together began to fill their days as the wedding drew near.

*She'd had to leave us; my keeper, he prayed for a safe return*

“A couple of my friends want to take me out,” she said one night, “like a bachelorette party, I suppose. They've rented one of those old fashioned ships for the weekend.” They were out on the balcony, watching the sea. She sat between his legs, leaning against him, taking full advantage of his warmth.

He pulled her close to him, drawing the blanket they had been sharing tighter around them, “the weather is getting colder, love,” he said, “I would be wary about travel. Especially on one of those old vessels.”

“It’s a replica,” she said, “no more than a couple years old. The crew is experienced, and we won't be going far. Just a day or so out and back. The weather may be cold, but we both know it's been mild, and all the reports say it'll be that way for a while.” She felt him sigh heavily against her, “you've taught me how to find my way around a boat,” she said, “I know how to handle an emergency.”

“I know, love,” he said softly. “I just worry.”

“If you tell me not to go, I'll ask them to plan something else.” She meant every word and he knew it.

“It isn't my place to order you around,” he said as he placed a quick kiss on her exposed shoulder before he pulled the sweatshirt she'd stolen from him back up over it, not wanting her to get too chilled. “I want you to enjoy yourself. Just be safe.”

“Love you,” she murmured, snuggling as close as she possible could.

*But when the night came, the weather to a raging storm had turned*
*He watched her ship fight, but in vain against the wild and terrible wind*
*And me so helpless, as dashed against the rocks she met her end*

She was to return that night, but the sudden change in weather had him hoping the crew had waited to set sail. As the evening wore on, the waves became choppier, the wind howled and rain began to fall. It was just after sunset that he saw a ship appear on the horizon. As it drew closer, he recognized it as the one she'd gone out on a couple days prior. It struggled against the sea, fighting against the roughness and occasional wave that broke over it.

He was powerless in the lighthouse, only able to pray that she didn't get hurt. The closer the ship got, the worse he felt. It wasn't a large ship by any means, and several times, it looked as if the sea might claim it.
“Emma!” He shouted in vain, knowing full well she couldn't hear him. The ship struggled even more as the weather grew worse, drifting dangerously close to the very rocks they warned everyone about.

The waves were crashing hard against the shore, and even harder against the ship, pushing it right into the rock. It practically crumbled under the brute force, sinking instantly.

He ran down the stairs and to the shore before he realized swimming out there wasn't an option. He would never make it against the current, and even if he did, there would be no way to bring her back. Devastated, he sank into the sand, losing all hope of ever seeing her again.

Then on the next day, my keeper found her washed up on the shore
He kissed her cold face, and that they'd be together soon he swore

Sometime in the night, the weather had cleared. He could feel the fever set in from falling asleep outside, with little to defend him from the elements. Debris had washed up on the shore during the night, and several emergency responders had shown up. At first, they thought he was a survivor, until one recognized him as the lighthouse keeper. He pushed them away, wanting nothing more than to be left alone.

As he walked along the shore back to his home, he saw a glint of something in the water. He moved closer, and saw it was his love.

Without a second thought, he hauled her out of the water and onto the sand. He kissed over her cuts and bruises, obtained from the rocks at sea. “Emma,” he cried, “Emma, love, come back to me.” Common sense told him that she had been gone a long time, her lungs full of water, and her body broken from being thrashed about at sea.

“Goodbye for now, my love,” he whispered softly as he gave her one, last gentle kiss, “we'll be together soon, I promise.”

I saw him crying, watched as he buried her in the sand
Then he climbed my tower, and off the edge of me he ran

It was supposed to be their wedding day, but instead, it was the day he laid her to rest. She deserved a proper burial, and not far from the lighthouse they shared and loved, a cross now stood.

Every night, he spent crying for her. There was little he could do to escape well-meaning friends who had been determined to stay by his side and see him through. The day of her funeral, they'd been worse, refusing to leave him alone at the house.

Their intentions were admirable, but he didn't want pity. He wanted her.

Under the guise of having lighthouse duties to attend to, he made his way to the balcony, Remembering the first time he brought her up there. Fiddling with her ring, that was now hanging from a chain around his neck, he recalled the promise he'd made only days before. They'd be together soon... He meant it then, and he was determined to keep it now. Without her by his side, he had nothing, and no will to go on.

Tears fell from his face, sliding down his cheeks, and onto the rocks below as he looked over the ledge, trying to decide if such a fall was survivable.
Death would hurt but a minute, and a life without her would hurt as long as he lived.

I am a lighthouse worn by the weather and the waves  
And though I'm empty I still warn the sailors on their way

A second cross was placed by the first, and a wave of sadness washed over the now empty home, as if the lighthouse itself mourned the loss of its keeper and his love.

End Notes

Here is the full song if you're interested, also, if links work, a link to the video: (provided by metrolyrics)

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We had grown closer 'til his joy meant everything to me  
And he was to marry a girl who shone with beauty and light  
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And the waves crashing around me  
The sand slips out to sea  
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She'd had to leave us; my keeper, he prayed for a safe return  
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And though I'm empty I still warn the sailors on their way
Please [drop by the archive and comment](http://www.metrolyrics.com/the-lighthouses-tale-lyrics-nickel-creek.html) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!