

The Cinema at the Edge of the Sea

By VolyaLive



In the salt-crusted town of Bellhaven, where the fog clung to the cobblestones like a wet wool coat, stood the "Silver Gull." It was a cinema that had seen better days, its faded burgundy curtains heavy with dust and the scent of old popcorn. Nina, a curious twelve-year-old girl with shoulder-length chestnut-brown hair and hazel eyes, spent her afternoons here. While the other children played by the



One rainy Tuesday, while helping tidy up after a matinee, Nina noticed a draft coming from behind the screen. She pulled back a corner of the heavy fabric and discovered a narrow, iron-bound door. It was marked with a weathered brass emblem of a seagull in flight. The door was locked tight, but as Nina pressed her ear against the cold metal, she didn't hear the hum of a projector. Instead, she heard



"That door has stayed shut for eighty years, Nina," a voice creaked. Nina turned to see Mr. Vale, the cinema keeper. He was a silver-haired man with a kind face and a thick grey moustache, his dark brown waistcoat neat despite the dust. "It belongs to a story that was never finished," he explained, his eyes reflecting the soft glow of the lobby. "The poet who wrote it vanished before the final reel could be filmed, leaving the



Mr. Vale led Nina to the projector room and pulled out a rusted film tin. Inside was a single reel of film that shimmered with an unusual, pearlescent light. "This is the Sea of Echoes," he whispered. "It has no ending, and so it consumes itself. Every time we play it, the world inside grows darker." As he threaded the film, the screen didn't show a picture; it began to ripple like the surface of a tide pool, inviting



Mr. Vale stepped back as the light intensified. "Courage, Nina," he encouraged. "A story only lives if someone is brave enough to walk through it." Nina reached out, her fingers brushing the glowing screen. It wasn't cold glass, but warm, salt-scented air. With a deep breath, she stepped forward. The cinema vanished, replaced by a world of shifting greys and blues, where the wind carried the taste of ink and old paper.



Nina landed with a thud on the wooden deck of a small, bobbing sailboat. "Watch the boom!" a voice called out. Standing at the tiller was Lio, a girl about Nina's age with short dark hair and a bright red sailor's jacket. Lio held a brass lantern, but its wick was cold and dark. "You're late," Lio said, her eyes scanning the horizon. "The Fog of Forgotten Words is closing in, and we've lost the path to the lighthouse."



The sea around the boat began to churn, the waves rising like giant, dark hands. Nina realized the water wasn't reacting to the wind—it was reacting to her thoughts. When she felt afraid, the waves grew jagged and sharp. "Don't let the fear take hold!" Lio shouted over the roar of the ocean. "This world is made of imagination. If you believe the storm is endless, it will be. We need a light that comes from



Nina closed her eyes and thought of Bellhaven—of the warm popcorn, Mr. Vale’s stories, and the way the sun looked hitting the harbor. She realized that a story didn't need a perfect ending; it just needed the courage to keep moving. She placed her hands on Lio's brass lantern. A spark of pure gold ignited in the center of her chest and flowed into the glass. The lantern burst into a brilliant, steady flame that cut through



Back in Bellhaven, the townspeople felt a strange shift in the air. Tomas, a retired sailor with a bushy white beard and a navy wool coat, looked up from his porch. He saw a golden light flickering in the windows of the abandoned "Silver Gull." "The girl," he whispered, standing up. He grabbed his old oil lamp. "The story is moving! We have to help them find the way!" He began to signal toward the sea, his



One by one, the people of Bellhaven brought their lamps to the shore, creating a line of fire that mirrored the stars. In the film world, Nina and Lio saw the distant pinpricks of light. The collective effort of the town gave the story the strength it needed. The boat surged forward, guided by the golden lantern and the shoreward glow, until the Great Lighthouse appeared, its beam sweeping across the



Historical Note. The Cinema at the Edge of the Sea is a fictional tribute to the legacy of Anatol Volny (1902–1937), a Belarusian poet, screenwriter, and playwright who was a leading figure in the "Maladnyak" literary movement. Volny was a pioneer of Belarusian cinema, believing that art should be a bold, collective journey of the imagination. Like Nina, Volny sought to light lanterns in the dark, using his words

