

The Lost Glassworks

By: Nikith Jannu

The waves had spent decades shaping it, rolling it over on the ocean floor, and bashing it against stone and sand until its sharp edges mellowed out into smooth curves. A shard of deep cobalt blue, once part of something whole, now polished by time.

Samuel Selt was, to put it frankly, a boy wonder. A handsome teenage boy of medium build whose hazel eyes shimmered in the sun like the finest emerald, whose bright blond hair caught the attention of all onlookers, and whose complexion had a rich mahogany tone. He was captain of the debate team, volunteered hundreds of hours to preserve local beaches and sea life, and was a straight A student. He was perfect in every way. But here's the thing about being perfect: sometimes you need a little spice in your life, and oh boy did he get it.

One morning in early April as the showers turned to flowers, Sam walked across the cool beach in front of his beach house for his morning surf. Suddenly, he felt a prick on the back of his right heel. "AHH," he exclaimed, more out of frustration than out of pain. He looked down at his assailant half-buried in the damp morning sand, and upon closer examination, he was shocked. Not because he had never been cut by sea glass before, but because of the letters faintly inscribed into this piece of mystery: "SELT."

Sam's pounding heart didn't stop him from holding up the piece of glass up to the sunlight. The darkness of the blue was concealing a mosaic pattern that was revealed as the light passed through the glass in his hand. The lettering was unmistakable. His mind was consumed with questions. Why was this glass bearing his family name? Was it by coincidence? Or is there a greater story to it?

To try and get to the root of things, Sam visited his grandfather, William Selt, the keeper of all family traditions. Mr. Selt lived in a tiny cottage a couple houses down from Sam's beach house. As Sam walked in, he was met by walls lined with relics of the past, aged books, and the smell of pipe tobacco.

"Grandpa," Sam began, holding out the shard, "I found this on the beach. Do you know what it is?"

Mr. Selt's eyes widened as he took the piece of glass, his fingers tracing over the etched letters.

"Where did you find that?" he asked, his tone full of wonder.

"On the beach this morning. It slashed my heel."

Mr. Selt sighed, his gaze elsewhere than on the discussion.

"Sit down, Sam. I have something I need to tell you."

Sam collapsed into the armchair beside his grandfather, excitement buzzing through him.

Long ago," began Mr. Selt, "our household owned the Selt Glassworks, renowned for making exquisite cobalt blue glass objects. The factory sat stubbornly on the cliff's edge, employing all but a few of the town's inhabitants. Your great-great-grandfather, Thomas Selt, was a master, pouring his heart into each object." He paused, memories glinting in his eyes.

"But tragedy struck. The factory was destroyed one evening by fire. It was never discovered how it started, though there were rumors of something amiss. The factory was lost, and our family heritage was gone."

Sam heard intently, the burden of his heritage on his back.

"Why was glass so unique?" he inquired.

Mr. Selt's face was painted with a warm glow of memory.

"Cobalt blue glass was unique, a family heirloom. Its color was matchless, and collectors hunted for it far and wide. Every piece carried the 'SELT' stamp, a badge of authenticity and excellence."

Sam's thoughts spun like a top.

"Are there any pieces remaining?"

"Who knows? Some say the fire was just a diversion for a robbery, and the pieces have been prized by collectors. But I think that most were claimed by time."

A spark of an idea struck Sam.

"Have you ever tried looking for them? To revive the legacy?"

"It would require a humongous effort; I wouldn't waste my time on it."

Sam stared at the shard, the burden of all those generations weighing on his chest. He knew it—the chances were too slim. It wasn't a coincidence. It was a message. A challenge.

That night, as the sea pounded against the rocks and rain lashed against the windows of the beach house, Sam paced wide awake, the cobalt shard clutched tightly in his hand. He had to find the missing pieces. He had to rebuild what had been broken.

He spent days digging up town records, old maps, and even century-old newspapers. Motifs began to form: rumors of strange blue glass surfacing on distant beaches and of centuries-old vintage vendors trading strange things for enormous sums in incomprehensible names. Each thread branched out into a greater story, one hidden deep within the realm of history.

But this wouldn't be a treasure hunt. There were pirates who would stop at nothing to keep their plunder. Some were supposed to be cursed, some in shipwrecks and ruined castles. Sam understood the dangers. He enjoyed it.

With a leather-bound notebook under his arm, a full duffel bag under his arm, and the shard of glass on a piece of string around his neck, Sam took off before dawn. Destination number one: a retired sailor who lived two towns away, a man said to have a piece of the missing Glassworks.

The gusty wind tugged at his coat as he stepped out onto the isolated train platform. This journey would take him away from his quiet seaside town—and further into the past than he ever imagined.

Somewhere out there, somehow, the rest of his heritage existed.

And Sam Selt was ready to chase it.