Extract from *Tales of Curiosity*

On the shelf of time there is an old book, written about the sons of Change.

Change was a Goddess, and one day she gave birth to twin boys.

She had no time to care for them as she needed to work ceaselessly; filled with sadness, she realised that she must give them away. She travelled to a wild country where she knew a kind couple lived.

When she arrived, she watched as they harvested figs from their orchard, the sun's rays filtering through the branches, covering them in dappled light.

She approached a fig tree still heavy with ripe fruit. Her babies were each wrapped in a silky white cloth, and she tied the ends of the cloths to the branches so that the babies, too, hung like figs.

She watched from a distance as the couple discovered her babies, taking them down from the tree and holding them as lovingly as they would hold their own. Unable to stay for long, she departed.

As time passed, she never forgot about her two boys, and whenever she could, she went to catch a secret glimpse of them. Every time she saw them, her heart grew heavier as she missed them terribly and ached for them to know their real mother.

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Oren sat on a rock, his fishing line dangling in the water. He'd been sitting incredibly still for most of the day waiting for a bite.

Feron almost forgot he was there.

The dark blue lake was surrounded by old trees whose branches hung down into the water. Feron collected twigs from the trees and searched for the largest leaf he could find. He meticulously tied the twigs together using reeds to make a miniature raft. In the centre of the boat he attached a mast made from a twig with the leaf as a sail. Once it was completed he let his boat sail across the surface of the lake. It drifted towards Oren's line.

Feron walked over to his brother. "Are you ready to go home?" he asked.

"Just a bit longer," Oren replied.

"Look, there's a few fish coming over." Feron said pointing.

"Are there?" Oren said peering closer into the water, his face nearly touching the surface. For a moment, all Oren could see were their reflections. They appeared identical, but their differences were subtle. Feron's eyes were a brighter shade of green and his dark hair had a few more curls. Nothing in this world is truly the same Oren thought to himself. Just as every snowflake is said to be unique due to the slightly different conditions it encounters on its fall to earth. "Really? I don't see any fish," Oren questioned.

"Just kidding," Feron said, splashing some water into his brother's face. Oren laughed. Leaping up, he tried to push his brother into the water but Feron was too quick.

Oren pulled up his line. The bone fishhook he had carved himself glistened in the sun.

"All right," he said. "Let's go."

As they walked back through the forest, they followed a well-trampled track which led them to their home in a clearing.

Suddenly a woman appeared on the path in front of them.

Feron opened his eyes wide with amazement; Oren froze in fear.

"Who are you?" Feron asked curiously.

The woman answered, with a voice which Feron thought was as lovely as birdsong: "I'm the Goddess Change."

"What do you do?" Feron inquired.

"I keep everything
Changing and moving.
In time passing by:
Flowers bloom and die,
And calm becomes a storm. Nothing can keep its form."

As she spoke, Oren shivered—her voice was so cold that it chilled his bones. "You can't change everything!" he exclaimed.

The woman answered him:
"All you possess and know
Is Changing in my flow
All that exists or grew
Is shaped to something new."

"What about rocks?" Oren asked horrified.

"Rocks change in the wind and rain Mountains crumble to a plain."

"What about the mind?" Feron asked.

"It changes like all else about:
Rain to snow, a seed to a sprout,
Not only will your bodies get old
Through the passing time that will unfold,
Your mind too is shaped from birth,
Constantly changing on this earth.
As you listen, touch and see,
Learn, experience life and be."

After she spoke she gazed at Feron and smiled peacefully. When her attention turned to Oren, her smile faded and her eyes developed a deep look of concern. Then Change disappeared into the forest as quickly as she had come.

"What a hideous woman," Oren said trembling.

"No she wasn't," Feron replied.

"What?" Oren cried, "She's the most horrible thing imaginable! She made my skin crawl!"

"That's not true! She was as beautiful as a sunset!" Feron exclaimed.

"Her eyes burned my skin!"

"No! She made me feel alive!"

"She looked like something from my darkest nightmares!"

"She was the most beautiful woman I have ever seen."

"I hope I will never set eyes on her again as long as I live!"

They looked at each other in disbelief: Oren scowling in disgust for his brother's love of something so monstrous, and Feron frowning at his brother's hatred for something so divine.

As they argued, Change overheard their heated exchange.

That night Oren tossed and turned unable to sleep. He could hear Feron's peaceful breathing in the bed next to his.

"Feron?" he whispered loudly.

“What is it?” Feron responded drowsily.

“I think I’ve seen her a couple of times before,” he said. “But she always vanished so fast I thought it was my imagination.”

“You’re right. So have I,” Feron replied.

“She’s an evil ghost who is haunting us,” Oren said.

Feron shook his head, “I’m sure there’s another explanation,” he replied.
“She is a monster that destroys everything!” Oren hissed.

“No, she doesn’t,” Feron said.

“What do you mean? She will destroy us and everything we have. You heard her.”

“She doesn’t destroy anything, she only shapes them into new forms.”

Oren felt dismayed. Same thing, he thought.

After a while Oren finally drifted off to sleep, but the memory of the woman filled his dreams with terror.
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Read more of Feron and Oren in *Tales of Curiosity* by Sonya McArthur