

Mini-Story: Queen of the Sea

By FoxFaceStories

It had been five years since I had last seen my childhood friend. Growing up on the docks of Naval'nir, my only choice in life was to become a sailor. My best friend and fellow rascal had always been Meredith, a fishmonger's daughter who was born with a skin condition that made her skin look scaly and flaky. She needed constant baths to avoid rashes, and so she loved to swim. And she heard voices, from time to time. Strange calls from the water. I thought it was weird, but kind of cool. We got into all sorts of trouble together; I was too young to know that she had been cursed by the gods for the strange fishmonger's past, or that she was ugly. But as we grew, increasingly my parents and others in our community tried to separate us. I stood by my friend, no matter what magics had cursed her with her condition.

Then, when I was the mere age of sixteen, I woke to a commotion. Meredith was being attacked by a mob, and her mother already dead. I ran with her, trying to get her to safety, but as we scrambled across the docks, she became delirious from her wounds, and pleaded with me to let her swim. She claimed that something was calling to her in the water, and that she would be alright. And with that she dove, promising me she would be alright. I knew she wouldn't. The next day, with the eyes of the community upon me, I got on a fishing vessel as a green-legged sailor, and never looked back. I assumed Meredith was dead, and my best friend was gone.

For the five years, I travelled. I became a man, and learned the honest trade of a fisherman's life. But I never became close to anyone. It seemed a betrayal of Meredith somehow. Sometimes I would look upon the waves, and wish she would come back, though I knew it was impossible.

That was, I knew it impossible until the impossible came true. She returned, one gorgeous morning when I was alone on the beach with my thoughts. I didn't recognise her; all of a sudden, a strange and astonishing woman *walked* in from the ocean, moving with joy towards me and glimmering in the sunlight.

Storm and sea, she was beautiful. Her hair was as red as the setting sun's kiss, and it tumbled freely around her shoulders as if untouched by the water it had emerge from. Her face was perfect, with thin red eyebrows – not ginger, but *red* like her hair – and a womanly demureness that hinted at power and wisdom beneath. Her body was lithe, drawn in at the waist yet prominent in the bust, and I could scarce believe the skin on display; her pale arms were uncovered but for two golden braces, and her thighs and legs were fully exposed. Her dress was made of emerald scales, displaying a hint of cleavage and holding tightly to her form. And yet, for all that her clothing gave away of her form, somehow it only enhanced her regal nature.

Her crown was made from a single, immense carved pearl, and she held a golden trident that she lifted with ease. Around her wide hips, as if as a reminder of who she had once been, she wore her old shroud. It was then that I realised who she was. She had never been cursed. Her mother had borne the child of the King of the Sea, and now, as she told me, with his passing she was ruler in true. I could hardly believe the queen of the sea before me had once been my childhood friend, with flaky, scaly skin.

“I have searched so long for you, my friend,” she said. “As you can see, everything about me has changed! Life is so much better now, but without you it is not complete. You always saw me for me, and I never stopped loving you for that. I mean it Dalin. I love you, and I always have.”

She placed her soft hands around my neck and looked up at me. She looked so noble, so utterly royal and angelic, that I hadn't realised she was still shorter than me. Her body pressed closely against mine, and I couldn't help but stiffen further at her presence. She gave me a dazzling smile, as playful as it was genuine.

“My only problem is, a Queen needs a King. What do you say? Will you join me and be my consort?”

As for what happened next? Let's just say my fishing vessel left port one sailor short, and I began my life as King Consort of the Deep. It was a lot to adjust to, but I was joyous to be with my best friend and true love. From that day on, Meredith and I were more than happy to fulfil our royal duty and make plenty of little underwater heirs, each with her vibrant red hair.

The End