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A Siren's Cry

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ANGIE BISSONNETTE

A Siren's Cry

I don't know how long it's been since Noah dumped my body into the Atlantic Ocean. I never heard his speedboat flying across the waves. I didn't see the stars that guided him on his covert mission. I didn't feel his hands when he lifted me up and hoisted my body overboard, and I didn't hear his sigh of relief as I vanished from view. But I do know everything changed once I hit the water. I've seen the sun rise and set, felt my fingers prune, my skin wither and pale, my wrinkles become more defined. The waves beat my body against the rocks, slowly scraping away my skin and draining the blood that had settled in my feet, legs, and hands until there was nothing left. The ocean threw me against coral reefs and seashells leaving imprints and scars all along my body. Until I completely belonged to the sea.

But once my old body had been discarded, I became something new. A great tail consumed the lower half of my body. Obsidian and blood-red scales enveloped it, spare the solely-black bottom fin. My fingers webbed together; my skin grew translucent, an echo of the moonlight. My eyes became dark grey, and my teeth sharpened to points. My pitch-black hair was in constant motion, dancing along with the current. The biggest change was my voice. I heard the shift in my mind before I ever opened my mouth. A warm melody coursed through my empty veins, providing a new lifeforce I could cling to. A tingle in my fingertips, an exhale of breath, the ease of floating and the force of crashing waves all in one song, one melody that poured out of my lungs.

So, I sang, over and over again to surround myself in its warm embrace. But while I sang, I couldn't help but think of Noah, of our two-bedroom apartment in Manhattan and the warmth of waking up in his arms. The goldfish he gave me on my birthday and the tightness in his shoulders when I laughed too loud. But most of all I remember that last night. The slight panic in his hazel eyes when I pulled out the stranger's earring I found in our bed. The moment of silence right before he called me crazy. His screams were so indignant that I wondered if he was telling the truth even while I gripped the proof he was lying. Every night I thought of Noah and every night I sang my song.

One evening I heard the low humming of his boat vibrating through the current. His scent of sandalwood and mint mixed with the crisp air, and I knew he had come back to me. That the song had brought him, that I had brought him. I began to sing as I waited for him to come closer. Noah stopped the boat once he reached me, silencing the engine. My song accompanied by the rhythm of the waves filled the air.

"Swim with me," I said softly, as I began to move away from his boat.

His eyes were locked on mine, and I watched him jump into the sea.

Following my voice deeper into the open water. He swam slowly, burdened by the weight of his clothes. The silence following the music was jarring and confusion began to spread on his face.

"What's wrong? Aren't you happy to see me?" I asked.

"What? What's going on—who are you?" Noah said.

"Don't you remember me? Don't you recognize me?" I said softly, a thin layer of sweetness barely covering the venom in my voice. He stared at me.

"A-AAlina?" His eyes widened in horror.

As we spoke, I began urging the waves into a whisper of a whirlpool. The water began to rise and swirl around his feet keeping him in place.

"What? What's happening, Alina? What are you doing?"

"Don't be so sensitive. Aren't you happy to see me? After everything you could at least say hello."

"What is this? What are you doing? Stop! Somebody help me!" His voice sounded raw as the water forced its way into his mouth. He spat it back out only to have it pour back in a moment later. His legs kicked frantically to keep his head above water while his arms flailed wildly as panic overcame him. The waves grew stronger and pulled him further and further from his boat. A dull smile spread across my face while the spark of a memory consumed me. His smooth hands on my throat, the leather on his watch shoved against my cheek as he squeezed tighter, crushing the breath from my lungs. His knees dug into my sides as I squirmed. My voice betrayed me as I begged him to stop.

"Stop! I'm sorry, please Noah!" I begged.

"Are you calling me a liar? You think I'm an idiot? Just a lying idiot, is that what you think I am?" Noah screamed.

"No! You're right, I'm sorry. It's my fault. I know you'd never hurt me. I know you would never cheat. It's my earring. I must have forgotten, I'm sorry!"

"Why are you making me do this? You're crazy! I deserve better! I deserve better than this, better than you! After everything how could you do this to me!"

I wasted my final breath on an apology to him. That was a lifetime ago. Now water surrounds his throat by my command, and I circle him with a small flick of my fins while his arms and legs lash out like a trapped animal.

"You're so dramatic, I forgot how emotional you get," I said coolly, as I repeated the words he always said to me.

"Alina, I don't deserve this, I'm a good man. I loved you! I love you! Stop it! Make it stop!"

"You're acting crazy, can you calm down?" I said with a smirk. I liked the warmth of his words on my tongue as I stole his lies and poured them into the air,

twisting them with his panic. It felt good to be on the other side of it.

"You wouldn't hurt me—you can't hurt me! You love me! Alina... Alina! I'm sorry! Okay? I'm sorry! It was an accident; I didn't mean to!" Noah screamed.

The louder he became, the less I listened. The less I said, the more he screamed. I loved it. I swam closer until my lips were an inch away from his and I could taste his fear. It was sharp and bitter, but I wanted more. I opened my mouth and began to sing again; I felt his body exhale and go limp. I felt his heart slow. His muscles relax. He felt safe, he felt loved... a smile crept onto my face as I lunged forward. My webbed fingers gripped his arms, finally plunging him deep into the water. The shock in his eyes was beautiful as he desperately tried to hold his breath. He was squirming under my hold, but I was stronger now and grasped him tighter. I wanted him to look in my eyes and see the air he had stolen from my lungs, I wanted to watch him as I stole it back, to feel his panic as he realized he was going to die, that he was going to die because of what he did to me. My face was inches from his as I watched him begin to run out of breath, his body shaking as water began to seep into his mouth and down his throat.

But I didn't want him to just lose consciousness, to fall asleep, to feel the warmth and disappear into the blanket of the sea. No, for the first time in his life he was going to do something for me. We were going to do what I wanted. He was my gift to the ocean as I had been his, and the ocean demanded blood—or maybe I did. I yanked one of his arms into my mouth. I took a deep bite until I could taste the iron mixing with the salt water. I dragged Noah back up to the surface for one last gasp of air—there was no reason to make this quick.

I watched his blood float around the cool crisp water, moving along with the waves calling to different sea creatures, letting them know there's food to be had. When they finish his bones, he will sink onto the seabed to be separated and scattered on the ocean floor for little creatures to take what they want. To be consumed, used and eradicated until he disappears completely.

I used to be afraid, wanting to belong, desperate for a family, to find my place in the world. I was desperate enough to pretend that a nice apartment, a 25-cent goldfish and Noah were my home, but now I have found my real home. The memory of him tasted like chalk in my mouth. Dry and foreign and yet the memory of the taste remained. The tides embraced me in the dark, a harsh cold that protected me, that brought me new life, a second chance at a new voice. As Noah disappeared into the darkness that voice began to grow louder, this time with a hunger. The sound that had replaced my beating heart throbbed loudly inside me, drumming out a rhythm, creating a new melody in my gut. The pounding of that call, the taste of salt and iron lingering on my lips consumed me.

As the sun began to rise it winked at me, specks of light shining on the ocean's surface, like an old friend who carries my secrets from a past life. With morning came another boat. I felt the humming of its engine before I saw it and smelled the sweat and sunscreen of the two men aboard. The warm caress of my song began to wrap its way around me, tempting me forward. Noah wasn't the end; he was just a taste, and I was starving. My eyes locked on the boat.

I opened my mouth and began to sing.

Angie

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