



THE FAIR SEA MAIDENS

adapted by
Dan Standing

from a work by
L. Frank Baum



THE FAIR SEA MAIDENS

BY DAN STANDING

BASED ON

THE SEA FAIRIES

BY L. FRANK BAUM

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The characters portrayed within are over the age of 18. They are not intended to represent the same individuals originally created, but instead should be seen as new adult characters experiencing a similar adventure.

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PREFACE

I had long wanted to take a public domain novel and turn it into a transformation epic. But finding the perfect one was difficult. Few had a plot with room or swiftness that would allow what I wanted to do.

One thing which I knew would make my mission easier would be finding a book that already had magical elements in it, and when thinking “public domain” and “magic” of course L. Frank Baum’s *Oz* books came to mind. I was familiar with the early *Oz* books, but hadn’t looked at them seriously for a number of reasons, the primary one was that I didn’t want to write an “erotic *Oz*” book – that seemed fraught with pitfalls.

While poking around for public domain books with fantastical creatures in them I saw a reference for something called *The Sea Fairies*. Pursuing the lead I was delighted to find that not only was this a book already packed with transformations and material easily mined for more – but it was a little known L. Frank Baum book! In fact, it was intended to replace his *Oz* series when he grew tired of it. That didn’t work out, though, and he eventually rolled the characters of *The Sea Fairies* into later *Oz* novels.

I had found my perfect project.

Do not mistake this for an erotic take on Baum’s original characters, however. There is no Haute, or Cal, or Aqualamia, or Goza in *The Sea Fairies* – while these characters experience much of Baum’s original plot these are intended to be seen as completely different actors in this course of events.

In fact, while I attempted to retain as much of Baum's original dialogue and events as possible, popping in new characters that are now twenty to forty years older/younger than their predecessors meant some of the more childish aspects and dialogue of the original book had to be excised. Baum's story had a lot of non sequiturs and references that went nowhere, so I removed some and refocused others.

And of course, when your protagonists are now of mature and willing ages and minds, there is also quite of bit of intimacy detailed. Whenever I could find a moment where a transformation or mature scene could play out in a logical fashion I tried to take the opportunity.

What I am most excited about is how this book will allow me to break into other stories by Baum. I was very fortunate that I found ways to plant seeds for future adaptations within this story, and I hope you will also look forward to more adventures with these characters.

I know I will.

Thanks for reading,

Dan Standing

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CHAPTER 1 - HAUTE AND CORPORAL CAL

“Nobody,” said Corporal Cal solemnly, “...ever saw a mermaid an' lived to tell the tale.”

“Why not?” asked Haute, looking across to her handsome companion. She gave him a small smile, the kind she always made when needling him. The young woman uncrossed her long legs and recrossed them, her skirt shifting and her flower-print hosiery sliding across her pale skin the way she always did when trying to distract the sailor.

They were seated on a bench built around a giant acacia tree that grew just at the edge of the bluff. Below them rolled the blue waves of the great Pacific. A little way behind them was the house, a neat frame cottage painted white and surrounded by huge eucalyptus and pepper trees. Still farther behind that—a quarter of a mile distant but built upon a bend of the coast—was the village, overlooking a pretty bay.

Corporal Cal and Haute came often to this tree to sit and watch the ocean below them. The adventurous man was an ideal specimen hued from spending his early years on the sea, broad shouldered, muscles toned from use and not training, and dark complexion from a mix of genes and sun.

He was only lacking on thing, and that was literal. He had one “meat leg” and one “hickory leg,” and he often said the wooden one was the best of them – that he would talk about in mixed company, at least.

Once Corporal Cal had sailed the “Anemone,” a trading schooner that plied along the coast. During those days Chuck

Leggs, who was Haute's father, had been the Corporal's superior. But ever since Corporal Cal's accident, when he lost his leg, Chuck Leggs had sent Cal to live comfortably ashore in the Leggs family vacation house.

The irony of the family name and Cal's condition had not been lost.

This was about the time Haute returned from college, and the young woman became very fond of the young man, and the young man became very fond of the young woman.

Her real name was Fayre, but when she grew big enough to dress herself she took so much care and preference for the most fashionable outfits every day that her mother nicknamed her "Haute," and so she was thereafter mostly called.

It was a descriptor Corporal Cal could see no objection to.

Haute and Cal soon learned of their mutual love of many things, including that of the sea. They had become firm friends, lusty lovers, and constant companions.

"Why hasn't anybody seen a mermaid and lived?" asked Haute again, leaning forward to allow the unbuttoned portion of her blouse to billow out. The curve of her apple-sized breasts were very much on display, a succulent distraction from her half-smile.

"'Cause mermaids is fairies, an' ain't meant to be seen by us mortal folk," replied Corporal Cal, pretending he hadn't seen what was being presented to him.

Haute laughed. She was fascinated by Cal's superstitions. He was otherwise an intelligent and experienced man, but he held to certain sailor's tall tales and Haute greatly enjoyed playing with them, pushing them to stretched logical ends.

"But if anyone happens to see 'em, what then, Corporal?" Haute pressed, getting a little flushed as she enjoyed Cal's façade of disinterest.

"Then," he answered, slowly wagging his head, eyes cast out to the ocean to keep Haute out of his peripheral vision, "...the mermaids give 'em a smile an' a wink, an' they dive into the water an' gets drowned."

"S'pose they knew how to swim, Corporal Cal?" Haute's hand was on Cal's fleshy knee, exposed thanks to the mid-thigh blue shorts the man was wearing.

"That don't make any diff'rence, Haute. The mermaids live deep down, an' the poor mortals never come up again..." Corporal Cal finally turned and took in Haute's vision, "Despite how much they may want to stay down there."

The young woman immediately sat up, stealing back the view Corporal Cal had finally acknowledged. He playfully rolled his eyes at her game. Haute was thoughtful for a moment. "But why do folks dive in the water when the mermaids smile an' wink?" she asked.

"Mermaids," he said gravely, "...is the most beautiful creatures in the world..."

Corporal Cal could not ignore the eyebrow that went up sharply above his companion's eye.

“...or in the water, at least...” The eyebrow lowered, “You know what they're like, Haute, 'cause you've got much of it. They's got a lovely lady's form down to the waist, perfect breasts round and at attention begging for hands and lips upon them, a thin little waist begging for an arm around it. An' then the other half of 'em's a fish, with green an' purple an' pink scales all down it.”

“Have they got arms, Corporal Cal?”

Cal was caught off guard as Haute slid up next to him, she had a way of being quiet and quick when she was in a certain mood. Her question was accompanied by one of her own arms slipping around the back of his shoulders and a finger running down the side of his upper arm.

“Course, Haute; arms like any other lady, long and lithe and perfectly formed from all the swimmin'. An' pretty faces that smile an' look mighty sweet an' fetchin' with pouty lips an' doe eyes an' smooth agile tongues. Their hair is long an' soft an' silky, an' floats all around 'em in the water. When they comes up atop the waves, they wring the water out'n their hair an' it pours down their ample chests and drips from their breeze-harden'd nipples. They sing songs that go right to gettin' the blood pumpin' to everything but your thinkin' bits. If anybody is unlucky enough to be 'round jes' then, the beauty o' them mermaids an' their sweet songs charm 'em like magic; so's they plunge into the waves to get to the mermaids. But the mermaids haven't any hearts, Haute, no more'n a fish has; so they laughs when the poor people drown an' don't care a fig. That's why I says, an' I says it true, that nobody never saw a mermaid an' lived to tell the tale.”

“Nobody?” asked Haute. The word actually came out a little heavy and breathy. She’d been trying to hide it behind a little teasing jealousy, but Cal’s descriptions of fair female forms was getting the young woman as warm in the britches as enjoying Corporal Cal’s physique did.

An open preference of partners Cal knew about and had been happily exploiting.

“Nobody at all.”

“Then how do you know, Corporal Cal?” asked the young woman, looking into his face with big, round eyes. She’d brought her other arm up to his chest and was playing with the buttons of his shirt – not undoing them, but letting her fingers slip in and out of the open spaces to tease his chest.

Corporal Cal coughed. “Look, Haute; ain't that a brig out there?” he inquired, pointing to a sail far out in the sea.

“How does anybody know about mermaids if those who have seen them never lived to tell about them?” she asked again, using the hand on the other side of him to force his head back her direction. He was clearly flushed red.

“Know what about 'em, Haute?”

“About their green and pink scales and pretty songs and wet...hair.” Haute bit her lip and fluttered eyelids, as if she was somehow ignorant of Cal’s stalling, and what reasons he could have for it.

“They don't know, I guess. But mermaids jes' natcherly has to be like that, or they wouldn't be mermaids.” A little bead of sweat was on Corporal Cal’s forehead. Haute found

his awkwardness delicious. Her toying hand started to move further down his chest, the other slipping into his short brown hair.

Haute thought over his answer, deciding how best to make her next move. "Somebody MUST have lived, Corporal Cal," she declared positively.

"P'raps they have, Haute, p'raps they have," he answered amusingly. "I'm tellin' you as it was told to me, but I never stopped to inquire into the matter so close before. Seems like folks wouldn't know so much about mermaids if they hadn't seen 'em; an' yet accordin' to all accounts the victim is bound to get drowned."

"P'raps," suggested Haute softly, repeating Cal's odd pronunciation, "...someone found a photograph of one of 'em."

"That might o' been, Haute, that might o' been," answered Corporal Cal, latching onto the rope thrown out to him.

A nice man was Corporal Cal, and Haute knew he tried to resist over-explaining to her everything she already fully understood - although that did not keep his natural exuberant chattiness from revealing itself when he was excited.

Her fingers had been playing with a blue sailor shirt with white anchors worked on the corners of the broad, square collar, and his blue shorts were very wide at the bottom. He had previously always wore one trouser leg over his wooden limb, and Haute recalled how it would flutter in the wind like a flag because it was so wide and the wooden leg so slender.

Once Corporal Cal realized that the look of the artificial appendage wasn't going to put off Haute's appetites he had returned to wearing his preferred shorts. Haute preferred how they showed off what she could see of his legs, and how they hugged the more northern parts of him she could not see at the moment.

His rough kersey coat was a pea-jacket and came down to his waistline. In the big pockets of his jacket he kept a wonderful jackknife, and many bits of string, and matches and keys and lots of other things. Whenever Corporal Cal thrust a hand into one of his pockets, Haute watched him with breathless interest, for she never knew what he was going to pull out.

At the moment the jacket was hung on a nearby tree limb.

The young sailor's face had a fringe of short whisker around the edge of his face, running from ear to ear and underneath his chin. Haute always shuddered whenever they brushed over her own paler skin. His eyes were light blue and kind in expression. His nose was big and broad, and his teeth were imperfect in a handsome roguish way.

Haute had always been fascinated by the sea. She knew all about the Flying Dutchman, and Davy Jones' Locker, and Corporal Kidd, and how to harpoon a whale or dodge an iceberg or lasso a seal. Corporal Cal had been everywhere in the world, almost, on his many voyages. He had been wrecked on desert islands like Robinson Crusoe and been attacked by cannibals, and had a host of other exciting adventures.

The young woman was incredibly fond of Corporal Cal and had a great deal of confidence in his worldly experience, and a great admiration for his dexterous hands, honed and slightly rough from working with rigging and ropes and the occasional whittle with that marvelous jackknife of his.

In the village were many men and women of Haute and Cal's own age, but Haute never had as much fun with them as she had wandering by the sea or swimming through the blankets accompanied by the wooden-legged young man. Dressed and undressed they loved listening to each other's fascinating stories, Haute's college years almost as dangerous - and certainly as explorative - as Cal's time on the sea.

"How do the mermaids live?" she asked. The hot coals of passion had shifted slightly to warm comfort, and she rested her head on Corporal Cal's shoulder. "Are they in caves, or just in the water like fishes, or how?"

"Can't say, Haute," he replied, leaning his head atop hers and feeling his whiskers getting caught in her hair. "I've asked divers about that, but none of 'em ever run acrost a mermaid's nest yet, as I've heard of."

"Their homes must be very pretty."

"Mebbe so, Haute, but damp. They are sure to be damp, you know."

Haute thought about the state of her underthings and the heat kicked up again.

"I'd like to see a mermaid, Corporal Cal," she said, earnestly. Their supernatural beauty was kicking around in

her mind and she drew the rest of her body closer to Cal, the cups of her bra pushing into Cal's arm.

"What, an' git drowned?" he exclaimed with a laugh.

"No, and live to tell the tale. If they're beautiful, and laughing, and sweet, there can't be much harm in seeing them...maybe more... I'm sure," Haute sighed, visions of sea water dripping down lithe swimmer's upper bodies fluttering through her head.

"Mermaids is mermaids," remarked Corporal Cal in his most solemn voice. "It wouldn't do us any good to mix up with 'em, Haute."

"And who says I want us getting mixed up with them?" the young woman laughed, running her hand up Cal's leg.

"There are some things right here I'd liked to get mixed up in," Cal smiled, leaning in and giving Haute an eagerly returned kiss. He wrapped an arm around her and let a hand caress her side, one finger tracing the line of her bra through the blouse.

"I think it's time for supper," Haute smiled, bouncing up, taking Cal's hand, and leading him back to the house. The cottage was small, barely more than two bedrooms, bath, and eat-in kitchen. It was difficult to be anything less than intimate in it. Supper was warm, filling, and simple.

Haute was eager for something else in the same way.

CHAPTER 2 - THE MERMAIDS

The next morning Haute stirred in the bed as the sun cast through a crack in the curtains. She felt the stiff wood of Corporal Cal pushing into her thigh and she smiled. She sat up, hair and sheets cascading down her fetching form. She raised herself from the bed and stretched her nudity, running her hands through her hair to fluff it out.

She reflected back on the night before, a night much like the many before it. Cal slowly peeling Haute's hosiery down her legs, kissing up her thighs and stomach as she freed her breasts and he lowered her underthings. He'd then grab her around the ass with his strong arms, the breath taken from her in the best way as he spun her around onto the bed.

She'd watch as Corporal Cal undressed for her, body bouncing to a tune in his head as his clothes came off and a slip of rubber went on. She'd laugh and giggle while her hands teased her tips and folds, eyes wide and glistening while she waited for him to see to what else was wide and glistening. He crawl up from the end of the bed, kissing toes, calves, thighs, and most certainly everything in between.

Haute was fond of the smooth sheets she'd brought with her from college, and she'd dug her nails into them plenty of times as Cal's tongue tasted her honey. It wouldn't be long before her body was wordlessly begging for him to do more, and Haute would grab him by the ears and drag him up to her mouth, the taste of herself on his lips a delight.

Last night talk of such fine female forms had stoked Haute's fires a little more intensely than she'd expected, and

she was quick to wrap her legs around Cal, her thighs pulling him and his wonderful meat rod towards and into her. Haute had experienced many people in college, and although Cal was not the largest man she'd had he made good use of his hands to make sure her slit and its bean were properly attended.

She grabbed her breasts, offering them to the sailor who bent as best he could to suck on them. She could feel his leg curled around behind her, calf and ankle cradling her ass and pushing her onto his as far as she could go, their bodies nearly fusing as one sweaty sexy mass.

After a minute or two Haute could feel Cal's undulations intensify, he was getting close and his fingers made their best effort to bring Haute with him. It wasn't always certain how things would time between them, but Haute had visions of bouncing mermaids swishing through her mind and this night they came almost simultaneously.

Bringing her mind back to the morning Haute came around to the other side of the bed, collecting Cal's artificial leg as she passed it. She awoke him by running her hand along the sheet still draped over his muscles. He slipped out an arm and embraced her around her rear, pulling himself forward to kiss her navel. He continued his kisses upwards, brushing the underside of her breasts with his nose, the baseball-like bits of softness hanging from her chest with a gentle slope. His whiskers tickled her areola and nips and sent of wonderful shudder through her.

Haute laughed and playfully pushed him back. If she let this continue they'd never have a proper breakfast. She left his leg leaning against the bed, winked, and bounced off

towards the shower. Corporal Cal's eyes bounced along with every sexy jiggle.

After Cal and Haute had wiped the breakfast dishes and put them away in the cupboard the pair started out toward the bluff. The air was soft and warm and the sun turned the edges of the waves into sparkling diamonds. Across the bay the last of the fisher boats was speeding away out to sea, for well the fishermen knew this was an ideal day to catch rock bass, barracuda and yellowtail.

The lovers stood on the bluff, Cal's arms around Haute, and watched all this with interest. Here was their world.

"It isn't a bit rough this morning. Let's have a boat ride, Corporal Cal," said the young woman.

"Suits me to a T," declared the sailor. So they found the winding path that led down the face of the cliff to the narrow beach below and cautiously began the descent. Haute never minded the steep path or the loose rocks at all, for even though she was wearing two-inch heels the lift was wide and steady. But Corporal Cal's wooden leg was not so useful on a downgrade as on a level, and he had to be careful not to slip and take a tumble. Haute smiled and was happy to grip tightly his hand as they worked along the path together.

By and by they reached the sands and walked to a spot just beneath the big acacia tree that grew on the bluff. Halfway to the top of the cliff hung suspended a little shed-like structure that sheltered Haute's rowboat, for it was necessary to pull the boat out of reach of the waves which beat in fury against the rocks at high tide. About as high up as

Corporal Cal could reach was an iron ring securely fastened to the cliff, and to this ring was tied a rope.

The eager young man unfastened the knot and began paying out the rope, and the rowboat came out of its shed and glided slowly downward to the beach. It hung on a pair of davits and was lowered just as a boat is lowered from a ship's side. When it reached the sands, the sailor unhooked the ropes and pushed the boat to the water's edge. It was a pretty little craft, light and strong, and both knew how to sail it or row it, as either might desire.

Today they decided to row, and it was Corporal Cal's turn, so the young woman climbed into the bow and her companion stuck his wooden leg into the water's edge "so he wouldn't get his foot wet" and pushed off the little boat as he climbed aboard. Then he seized the oars and began gently paddling.

"Whither away, Commodore Haute?" he asked gaily.

"I don't care, Corporal. It's just fun enough to be on the water," she answered, trailing one hand overboard. She was reclined with her body stretched out, the fabric resting in such a way that the sun revealed her form so perfectly it was almost as if she was without a thread, a vision Cal had no objection to. So he rowed around by the North Promontory, where the great caves were, and much as they were enjoying the ride, they soon began to feel the heat of that same sun as it rose ever higher.

"Where might you like to find a little respite?" Cal inquired.

“Well, there's Dead Man's Cave, where they found those remains,” mused Haute as they passed a dark, yawning mouth in the cliff. “And there's Bumble Cave, not sure if the bumblebee nests in the top of it would be a better choice. And here's Smuggler's Cave, not a day a feel like dealing with the things hidden in there.”

She knew all the ins and outs of the caves well, and so did Corporal Cal. Many of them opened just at the water's edge, and it was possible to row their boat far into their dusky depths.

“And here's Echo Cave,” she continued, dreamily, as they slowly moved along the coast, “...and Giant's Cave, and—oh, Corporal Cal! Do you s'pose there were ever any giants in that cave?” Haute gave a teasing smile.

“Pears like there must o' been, Haute, or they wouldn't o' named it that name,” he replied, pausing a moment to share their innocent game, leaving the oars to drag in the water.

“We've never been into that cave, Corporal,” she remarked, looking at the small hole in the cliff—an archway through which the water flowed. “Let's go in now.”

“What for, Haute?”

“To see if there's a giant there.” Haute but her lip, glancing down Cal's shorts for a moment before returning her gaze to his.

“Hm. Aren't you 'fraid?”

“No, are you? I just don't b'lieve it's big enough for a giant to get into.”

“You’d be surprised what big things can work themselves into,” remarked Corporal Cal, “But I hear it's the biggest cave on the coast, but low down. It's full o' water, an' the water's deep down to the very bottom o' the ocean; but the rock roof's liable to bump your head at high tide.”

“It's low tide now,” returned Haute. “And how could any giant live in there if the roof is so low down?”

“Why, he couldn't, mate. I reckon they must have called it Giant's Cave 'cause it's so big, an' not 'cause any giant man lived there.”

“Let's go in,” said the young woman pressed, running her finger around the collar of her blouse, “I'd like to explore it.”

“All right,” replied the sailor. “It'll be cooler in there than out here in the sun. We won't go very far, for when the tide turns we mightn't get out again.” He picked up the oars and rowed slowly toward the cave. The black archway that marked its entrance seemed hardly big enough to admit the boat at first, but as they drew nearer, the opening became bigger. The sea was very calm here, for the headland shielded it from the breeze.

“Look out fer your head, Haute!” cautioned Corporal Cal as the boat glided slowly into the rocky arch. But it was the sailor who had to duck. Only for a moment, though. Just beyond the opening the cave was higher, and as the boat floated into the dim interior they found themselves on quite an extensive branch of the sea. For a time neither of them spoke and only the soft lapping of the water against the sides of the boat was heard. A beautiful sight met the eyes of the

two adventurers and held them silent with wonder and delight.

It was not dark in this vast cave, yet the light seemed to come from underneath the water, which all around them glowed with an exquisite sapphire color. Where the little waves crept up the sides of the rocks they shone like brilliant jewels, and every drop of spray seemed a gem fit to deck a queen. Haute leaned her chin on her hands and her elbows on her lap and gazed at this charming sight with real enjoyment. Corporal Cal drew in the oars and let the boat drift where it would while he also sat silently admiring the scene.

Slowly the little craft crept farther and farther into the dim interior of the vast cavern, while its two passengers feasted their eyes on the beauties constantly revealed. Both loved the ocean in all its various moods. To them it was a constant companion and a genial comrade. If it stormed and raved, they laughed with glee; if it rolled great breakers against the shore, they clapped their hands joyfully; if it lay slumbering at their feet, they petted and caressed it, but always they loved it.

Here was the ocean yet. It had crept under the dome of overhanging rock to reveal itself crowned with sapphires and dressed in azure gown, revealing in this guise new and unexpected charms.

“Good morning, Fayre,” said a sweet voice.

Haute gave a start and looked around her in wonder. Just beside her in the water were little eddies—circles within

circles—such as are caused when anything sinks below the surface.

“Did—did you hear that, Corporal Cal?” she whispered solemnly. Her voice had dropped from its airy playfulness Cal knew so well into a deeper, more serious tone. Their time together had been so carefree that the change in Haute’s voice in the face of actual uncertainty was as jarring as hearing the voice of unknown source.

Corporal Cal did not answer. He was staring with eyes that fairly bulged out at a place behind Haute’s back, and he shook a little, as if trembling from cold. Haute turned half around, and then she stared, too.

Rising from the blue water was a fair face around which floated a mass of long, blonde hair. It was an alluring, womanly face with eyes of the same deep blue as the water and full red lips whose come-hither smile displayed two rows of pearly teeth. The cheek bones were sharp and rosy, the brows gracefully penciled, while the chin was rounded and had a pretty dimple in it.

“The most beautiful in all the world...” murmured Corporal Cal in a voice of horror, “...an’ no one has ever lived to - to tell the tale!”

There was a peal of merry laughter at this, laughter that rippled and echoed throughout the cavern. Just at Haute’s side appeared a new face even fairer than the other, with a wealth of brown hair wreathing the lovely features. And the eyes smiled kindly into those of the young woman.

“Are you a - a mermaid?” asked Haute curiously, her mind uncertain of what else to do in the circumstances. She was a

bit afraid, but since she and her companion were unharmed – and could have been easily taken by surprised at any moment – Haute’s fear and disbelief were melting away. The visages riding from the water seemed both gentle and friendly.

“Yes, dear,” was the soft answer.

“We are all mermaids!” chimed a laughing chorus, and here and there, all about the boat, appeared pretty faces lying just upon the surface of the water.

“And you are part fish?” asked Haute, becoming greatly pleased by this wonderful and seemingly impossible sight. The tone of her voice was shifting back into one of merriment and amazement.

“No, we are all mermaid,” replied the one with the brown hair. “The fishes are partly like us, because they live in the sea and must move about. And you are partly like us, Fayre dear, but have awkward stiff legs so you may walk on the land. But the mermaids lived before fishes and before mankind, so both have borrowed something from us.”

“Then you must be fairies if you’ve lived always,” remarked Haute, nodding as she worked her brain to find any sense in this revelation.

“We are, dear. We are the water fairies,” answered the one with the blonde hair, coming nearer and rising till her slender white throat showed plainly. Haute could not make out much below the shadowed ripples.

“We - we’re goners, Haute!” sighed Corporal Cal with a white, woebegone face.

“I guess not, Corporal,” she answered calmly. “These pretty mermaids aren't going to hurt us, I'm sure.”

“No indeed,” said the first one who had spoken. “If we were wicked enough to wish to harm you, our magic could reach you as easily upon the land as in this cave. But we love those who wish to believe in us dearly and want only to please them and make their lives more happy.”

“I believe that!” cried Haute earnestly.

Corporal Cal groaned.

“Well, why believe they mean us harm any more than that they don't mean us harm?” Haute turned and asked her companion, “So far we've more evidence to support the former than the latter.”

“Guess why we have appeared to you,” said another mermaid before Cal could respond, coming to the side of the boat.

“Why?” asked the young woman, turning to the new face.

“That is a question, not a guess,” giggled the reply.

“I'm afraid I've only those!”

“So many of those...” muttered Cal, his eyes dart about to the many pair surrounding the boat.

“We heard you say yesterday you would like to see a mermaid, and so we decided to grant your wish.”

“That was real nice of you,” said Haute gratefully.

“Also, we heard all the foolish things Corporal Cal said about us,” remarked the brown-haired one smilingly, “...and we wanted to prove to him that they were wrong.”

“I on'y said what I've heard,” protested Corporal Cal. “Never havin' seen a mermaid afore, I couldn't be accurate, an' I never expected to see one an' live to tell the tale.” He blinked as he realized just what he was protesting to, his brain still working out this new truth.

Again the cave rang with merry laughter, and as it died away, Haute said, “May I see your scales, please? And are they green and purple and pink like Corporal Cal said?” They seemed undecided what to say to this and swam a little way off, where the beautiful heads formed a group that was delightful to see. Perhaps they talked together, for the brown-haired mermaid soon came back to the side of the boat and asked, “Would you like to visit our kingdom and see all the wonders that exist below the sea?”

“I'd like to,” replied Haute promptly, the thought of exploring an entirely new world giving her the most delicious shivers, before some sense of reality set in, “...but I couldn't. I'd get drowned.”

“That you would!” cried out Corporal Cal.

“Oh no,” said the mermaid. “We would make you both like one of ourselves, and then you could live within the water as easily as we do.”

“Make me...you can transform me into a mermaid?” Haute asked, her question breathy and full of amazement. Then a more serious thought struck her, “But would I be for

always? I'm not sure if I would want to forever leave the land."

"You need not stay with us a moment longer than you please," returned the mermaid, smiling as if amused at the remark. "Whenever you are ready to return home, we promise to bring you to this place again and restore to you the same forms you are now wearing."

"For the most part..." another mermaid laughed.

"Pardon?" asked Haute, an eyebrow raised.

"Well, you could end up an inch shorter," the giggly mermaid elaborated.

"Or an inch taller," the first added. Haute thought on this a moment and decided it was worth the risk.

"Would I have a fish's tail?" she asked earnestly.

"You would have a mermaid's tail," was the reply.

"What color would my scales be—pink, or purple?"

"You may choose the color yourself."

"Look ahere, Haute!" said Corporal Cal in excitement. "You ain't thinkin' o' doin' such a fool thing, are you?"

"Course I am," declared the determined woman. "We don't get such inv'tations every day, Corporal, and if I don't go now I may never have another chance to see such an incredible world!"

“I don't care how they live, myself,” said Corporal Cal. “I jes' want 'em to let ME live.”

“There's no danger,” insisted Haute.

“I don' know 'bout that. That's what all the other folks said when they dove after the mermaids an' got drowned.”

“Who?” Haute insisted, giving Cal the look he knew meant she'd had enough of his baseless stubbornness.

“I don't know who, but I've heard tell—” Corporal Cal's stammer was interrupted.

“You've heard that no one ever saw a mermaid and lived,” said Haute.

“To tell the tale,” he added, nodding. “An' if we dives down like they says, we won't live ourselves.”

All the mermaids laughed at this, and the brown-haired one said, “Well, if you are afraid, don't come. You may row your boat out of this cave and never see us again, if you like. We merely thought it would please lovely Fayre, and were willing to show her the sights of our beautiful home.”

“I'd like to see 'em, all right,” said Haute, her eyes glistening with eagerness.

“So would I,” admitted Corporal Cal, “...if we would live to tell the tale.”

“Don't you believe us?” asked the mermaid, fixing her lovely eyes on those of the sailor and smiling prettily. “Are you afraid to trust us to bring you safely back?”

“N-n-no,” said Corporal Cal, “...tain't that. I just...don't want to lose Haute.”

“Then you'll have to come with me,” said Haute decidedly, “...for I'm going to accept this inv'tation. If you don't care to come, Corporal Cal, you go home and think about me amidst all the mermaids.”

“Well I can't miss that!” exclaimed Corporal Cal, his quickly spoken words betraying a bit of what he was envisioning. “I guess I'd ruther take my chance down below. But promise no trickery 'cause I said those things 'bout you. I want a body just like Haute's, good for swimmin' and what-not!”

“Oh, we can certainly give you one like hers,” smiled the mermaid, “We'd prefer it!”

“All right, I'm ready, Miss Mermaid,” said Haute. “What shall I do? Jump in, clothes and all?”

“Give me your hand, dear,” answered the mermaid, lifting a lovely white arm from the water. Haute took the slender hand and found it warm and soft and not a bit “fishy.” As she rose up the arm Haute and Cal could catch glance of a significantly sized orb, just as white as the arm, bob above the surface.

“My name is Clitia,” continued the mermaid, “...and I am a princess in our deep-sea kingdom.”

Haute had no time to react to the name as she stepped right out of the boat into the water.

It happened so quickly Corporal Cal caught a flash of pink flesh and then a gleam of pink scales as his beautiful companion went overboard, and the next moment there was Haute's face in the water among those of the mermaids. She was laughing with glee as she looked up into Corporal Cal's face and called, "Come on in, Corporal! It didn't hurt a bit!"

CHAPTER 3 - THE DEPTHS OF THE DEEP BLUE SEA

It had happened so quickly that it was only thanks to her present situation – swimming steadily in the water – that Haute believed that she'd experienced any of it.

As she had stepped from the boat Haute had felt slightly lighter as all of her clothing vanished into the air. She was nude for only a moment before she felt her toes intertwine. All ten of them pulled together with a delicious tightness before Haute felt the bones start to stretch out from her.

From her ankles upwards her legs continued their fusion of flesh, the changes very warm and pleasurable. For every inch of skin that merged with its counterpart Haute gasped and wanted nothing more than to feel the next inch do the same.

She hadn't considered what the sensation would be like when the alterations reached her hips, and what was held within them. The zipper of skin flew up Haute's thighs and as it reached her labia she moaned at a very delicious pressure. Instead being sealed over Haute's slit was being pushed out, rising up from her thighs like a flower atop yeasted bread. Her puffy labia rested atop the smooth surface of thighs, her hooded button somehow both nestled into her new configuration and wonderfully exposed.

In the rear her butt cheeks fused together only halfway up, leaving a sensitive slot that could still access her other orifice with some creative effort.

As Haute's stretching toes reached the surface of the water a second change began. Her feet spread like a fan as a thin web grew between them to complete the new fins. From her ankles up pretty iridescent pink scales were growing out and covering the pink flesh, gleaming like jewels as they spread upwards.

Haute noted a pleasant tightness as the scales spread, as if she was wearing leggings a size too small. The shimmer continued along over her thighs and took her mons and lower lips. Haute groaned at the fresh tightness over her slit – it felt as if someone was pressing a hand against her in just the most teasing way.

And it didn't stop teasing.

From the rear, the way the scales crossed over her ass, it looked as if she had pulled the hem of a sequined pencil skirt down to expose the most tantalize amount of her rear, bulging a tad where scales and skin met.

As her knees began to enter the water within this endless instant Haute felt another sensation. This one was across her chest. She could feel a very pleasurable warmth fill her breasts, as if the blood flow had increased. She recalled something Cal had said when she'd asked him to describe the sensation of an erection – a very satisfying feeling of tightness and growth simultaneously, that felt wonderful to have and made everything feel better but maintained a constant urge for something more.

Haute felt her breasts getting heavier. In fact they were expanding, flesh and blood blossoming before her, the circumference of her bosom flowing out over her chest. In

mid-fall she could not fully judge their weight, but the pull of momentum indicated it was significant. Her skin was fighting it while also giving in to the growth. She exhaled with the tightness, and felt the underline of her breasts continue to inch down and over her ribs. It hadn't taken long for baseballs to become softballs, and softballs to become grapefruits. As the water overtook them Haute could feel her nipples growing out in a similar fashion and sensation.

Corporal Cal had missed much of what had happened to Haute, and stood up in the boat as if undecided what to do. Never a sailor man was more bewildered than this fellow by the strangeness of the adventure he had volunteered for. At first he could hardly believe it was all true and that he was not dreaming; but there was Haute in the water, laughing with the mermaids and floating comfortably about, and he couldn't leave his dear companion to make the trip to the depths of the ocean alone.

“Take my hand, please, Corporal Cal,” said Princess Clitia, reaching her dainty arm toward him; and suddenly the doubtful man took courage and clasped the soft fingers in his own. He had to lean over the boat to do this, and then there came a strange lightness to his legs and he had a great longing to be in the water. So he gave a flop and flopped in beside Haute, where he found himself comfortable enough, but at the same time completely unfamiliar with himself.

Just as he had – inadvertently – asked.

Cal's transformation had been, expectedly, different than Haute's. There were some similarities, such as the vanishing of his clothes. One difference was the formation of his tail. Instead of two legs merging together everything from the

waist down was swallowed up by his expanding thigh, as a single leg formed the mer-portion of his lower body. His wooden leg was one of the items absorbed into his altering form.

Cal's torso was also changing. His broad shoulders were shallowing, his thick arms were losing their bulges, and his face was losing its whiskers. In the moment Cal was unaware of these changes, but he was aware of one particular alteration – the growth of two very round and feminine breasts on his chest.

“Law sakes!” he gasped, splashing around in his new mermaid form, “What’s been done to me? What’s with all this wiggle?”

“You're wigglin' all right now,” observed Haute, laughing.

“You ocean wenches tricked me!” Corporal Cal shouted, taking his slim hands and grasping the orbs bobbing before him, “What have you done to me!” He repeated his question as an angry statement this time.

“They’ve only done what you asked,” Haute joined a chorus of laughing mermaids. “You said you wanted a body just like mine, and you have one!”

“Indeed!” Princess Clitia spoke up, “We were only following your request!”

Cal wanted to protest, but Haute interrupted. From the tone of her voice – mixing mirth and mulishness as only she could – he knew to accept his situation as his own doing.

“That's a fine tail you've got, Corporal, an' its green scales is jus' beautiful.”

“Are they green, eh?” he asked, not having anything else to say or do, twisting around to try to see them.

“Green as em'ralds, Corporal. How do they feel?”

“Feel, Haute, feel?” Cal had to push back his residual anger at his female form. He forced himself to try and find something positive to say, “Well, why, this tail beats that ol' wooden leg all holler! I kin do stunts now that I couldn't o' done in a thousand years with ol' peg.”

“And don't fear its loss,” advised the Princess. “We found a creative place to store it for you. And no mermaid ever catches cold or suffers pain in the water.”

“Is Corporal Cal a mermaid now?” asked Haute, her eyes darting to Cal as he gave a scowl.

“Why, he's a merman still, where it will count,” laughed the pretty princess. “I'm sure he'll discover how so soon enough.”

The sailor was now trying his newly discovered power of swimming, and became astonished at the feats he could accomplish. He could dart this way and that with wonderful speed, and turn and dive, and caper about in the water far better than he had ever been able to do on land—even before he got the wooden leg. And a curious thing about this present experience was that the water did not cling to him and wet him as it had always done before. He found no drag caused by the enormous balls of flesh attached to him, instead the magical lick of water over them was quite

arousing. As he dived down and came up again, the drops flashed from his head and brunette locks, which were still short but now fell around his thin face in a very attractive bob. He never needed to wipe his face or eyes at all, instantly becoming perfectly dry the moment he broke the surface.

Cal ran a hand up and down his hourglass form, feeling where the skin of his torso met the scales of his hips. His fingers moved towards the center of his tail and he found a place where the scales split, a thin tight line running vertically where his human crotch would have been. He could feel something just barely pushing at them from within, and he let his mind wonder to the attractive female forms circling him. He felt the familiar rush of an erection forming, and his fingers could feel a stiff knob pushing outwards from within him.

In only a moment Corporal Cal had a very impressive woody growing out of his scaly tail – literally. He now understood what Clitia had meant – his wooden leg had been merged with his penis. Cal had never been disappointed by his size, but as he ducked below the surface he saw that he was now nearly three inches in diameter, and was growing out nearly eight inches. It was a fine oak in the look of its grain, but polished glass-smooth with ridges he knew would feel very good going in anywhere – they'd certainly felt wonderfully on the way out.

Aware that he was quite publicly exposed Cal concentrated on thoughts of baseball and sea work and felt his new rod slip back inside of him.

Haute, too, was having queer experiences and enjoying them. When she ducked under water, she saw plainly

everything about her as easily and distinctly as she had ever seen anything above water. And by looking over her shoulder she could watch the motion of her new tail, all covered with pretty iridescent pink scales, which gleamed like jewels. She was nude save for a bracelet and earrings she'd put on that morning.

She observed the line across her ass where skin became scales, and then felt the transition around her hips towards her front – as Haute could not see past her bobbing breasts to directly observe anything below them. Her fingers followed the dip of the scales well south of her naval, and they began to curve back up towards her other hip just above her mons. The scales had grown in just at the point where Haute would normally have to begin shaving her lower parts – an activity she was glad she would not have to concern herself with while under the water.

She also noted that each swing of her tail flexed muscles that squeezed her tightly held flower, stoking a fire that no ocean water could put out. Any swimming was going to get Haute quite wet, even if she were not in the water.

She now noticed that the mermaids were nude, too, save for the most exquisite of jewelry. The sea fairies wore strings of splendid pearls twined around their throats, with gold strands holding it all together. The sparkle of their scales was far superior to that of the pearls, which may have been why none of the decorations dipped below their waists, where the human form ended and the fish part began. They did not dress their beautiful hair at all, but let it float around them in clouds.

Nothing covered the shapely white breasts of her new friends. Haute observed that she – and amusingly Cal – were on the lower end of the size scale. The mermaids' chest bobbed and swung in the water, as if their chests – which would have nearly crippled a woman on land – were of no consequence under the water. Nipples of varying colors capped them, all stiff and pointing outwards as if indicating whose mouth they wanted to be suckled by. Haute wasn't moving her tail at the moment, but her bedazzled crevice was getting quite aflame, being unaccustomed to so much delectable naked female beauty so readily on display.

Haute turned to her own expanded chest. She presumed she'd grown to better match the natural assets of the mermaid form she had asked to assume, as she had always been satisfied with her dimensions and had not desired to be curvier. Nipples nearly the size of her thumbs floated before her, wiggling at the edge of her beautiful flesh, and Haute wanted to bring up her hands and-

“Now, my dear, if you are ready, we will begin our journey, for it is a long way to our palaces.”

“All right,” answered Haute, her mind snapping back to what was going on around her. She turned towards the princes and took the hand extended to her with a trustful smile, tinged with a red blush. She could not keep her eyes from glancing down Clitia's sexy sinuous form, her lines exploding around two breasts the size of soccer balls.

“Will you allow me to guide you, Corporal Cal?” asked the blonde mermaid, extending her hand to the feminized sailor.

“Of course, ma'am,” he said, taking her fingers rather bashfully. He tried quite hard to not stare at the bowling balls that had floated forward and nearly struck the softballs on his own chest – he was afraid his attention would be betrayed by something else hard.

“My name is Moira,” she continued, either oblivious to his averting eyes or teasingly ignoring his plight, “...and I am cousin to Princess Clitia. We must all keep together, you know, and I will hold your hand to prevent your missing the way.”

While she spoke they began to descend through the water. Corporal Cal was trailing her slightly, and was momentarily transfixed by Moira’s undulating ass, the human curves and crack hugged by the scales. He felt a pressure rising in his nethers and looked away – only to realize there weren’t many places he could look that didn’t have something fine and feminine wiggling through the water.

To Cal’s relief it grew quite dark for a time because the cave shut out the light. But presently Haute, who was eagerly looking around her, began to notice the water lighten and saw they were coming into brighter parts of the sea.

“We have left the cave now,” said Clitia, “...and may swim straight home.”

“I s'pose there are no winding roads in the ocean,” remarked the newly minted mermaid, swimming swiftly beside her new friend.

“Oh yes indeed. At the bottom, the way is far from being straight or level,” replied Clitia. “But we are in mid-water now, where nothing will hinder our journey, unless—”

She seemed to hesitate, so Haute asked, “Unless what?”

“Unless we meet with disagreeable creatures,” said the Princess. “The mid-water is not as safe as the very bottom, and that is the reason we are holding your hands.”

“What good would that do?” asked Haute.

“You must remember that we are fairies,” said Princess Clitia. “For that reason, nothing in the ocean can injure us, but you two are mortals and therefore not entirely safe at all times unless we protect you.”

Haute was thoughtful for a few moments and looked around her a little anxiously. Now and then a dark form would shoot across their pathway or pass them at some distance, but none was near enough for her to see plainly what it might be. Suddenly they swam right into a big school of fishes, all yellowtails and of very large size. There must have been hundreds of them lying lazily in the water, and when they saw the mermaids they merely wriggled to one side and opened a path for the sea fairies to pass through.

“How polite of them,” mentioned Haute.

“Indeed,” laughed the Princess. “Although fishes are stupid creatures mostly, and this family is quite fragile.”

“How about sharks?” asked Corporal Cal, who was swimming gracefully beside them, his hand clutched in that of pretty Moira.

“Sharks may indeed be dangerous to you,” replied Clitia, “...so I advise you to keep them at a safe distance. They never dare attempt to bite a mermaid, and it may be they will think

you belong to our band; but it is well to avoid them if possible.”

“Don't get careless, Corporal,” added Haute.

“I surely won't, mate,” he replied. “You see, I didn't use to be 'fraid o' sharks 'cause if they came near I'd stick my wooden leg at 'em. But now, if they happens to fancy these green scales, it's all up with ol' Cal.”

“Never fear,” said Moira, “I'll take care of you on our journey, and in our palaces you will find no sharks at all.”

“Can't they get in?” he asked anxiously.

“No. The palaces of the mermaids are inhabited only by themselves.”

“Is there anything else to be afraid of in the sea?” asked Haute after they had swum quite a while in silence.

“One or two things, my dear,” answered Princess Clitia. “Of course, we mermaids have great powers, being fairies; yet among the sea people is one race as powerful as we are, and that is the devilish.”

“I know,” said Haute. “I've seen 'em.”

“You have seen the smaller ones, I suppose, which sometimes rise to the surface or go near the shore, and are often caught by fishermen,” said Clitia, “...but they are only second cousins of the terrible deep-sea devilfish to which I refer.”

“Those little ones are bad enough, though,” declared Corporal Cal. “If you know any worse ones, I don't want a interduction to 'em.”

“The monster devilfish inhabit caves in the rugged, mountainous regions of the ocean,” resumed the Princess, “...and they are evil spirits, practically tangled up in their own tendrils, who delight in injuring all who meet them. None lives near our palaces, so there is little danger of your meeting any while you are our guests.”

“I hope we won't,” said Haute.

“None for me,” added Corporal Cal. “Devils of any sort ought to be give a wide berth, an' devilfish is worsen ner sea serpents.”

“Oh, do you know the sea serpents?” asked Moira as if surprised.

“Not much I don't,” answered the sailor, “...but I've heard tell of folks as has seen 'em.”

“Did they ever live to tell the tale?” smiled Haute.

“Sometimes,” he replied, returning a mocking smile. “They're jes' awful creatures, mate.”

“How easy it is to be mistaken,” said Princess Clitia softly. “We know the sea serpents very well, and we like them.”

“You do?!” exclaimed Haute.

“Yes, dear. There are only three of them in all the world, and not only are they harmless, but quite bashful and shy.

They are kind-hearted, too, and do many kind deeds and are generally beloved.”

“Where do they live?” asked the young woman. Her sentence came out a little slower, a little breathy. They’d been swimming long enough that Haute was really feeling the warmth of stretching and squeezing her tightly held womanhood.

“The oldest one, who is king of this ocean, lives quite near us,” said Clitia. “His name is Petrius.”

“How old is he?” inquired Corporal Cal curiously.

“No one knows. He was here before the ocean came, and he stayed here because he learned to like the water better than the land as a habitation. Perhaps King Petrius is ten thousand years old, perhaps twenty thousand. We often lose track of the centuries down here in the sea.”

“Sounds like he must have been very lonely for a very long time,” mused Haute, saying anything to keep her mind focused on anything other than the sensations of her tail.

“Oh not at all,” responded Moira with a laugh. “He has two brothers, Marblous and Diamous. They each have an ocean of their own, you know; and once every hundred years they come here to visit their brother Petrius. So we’ve seen all three many times.”

“Why, how old are mermaids, then?” asked Haute, looking around at the beautiful creatures wonderingly.

“We are like all ladies of uncertain age,” rejoined the Princess with a smile. “We don’t care to tell.”

“Except to say that our hearts and desires are ever young,” added Moira merrily.

Haute was thoughtful. It made her feel solemn to be in the company of such age. The band of mermaids seemed to all appearances young and fresh and not a bit as if they'd been soaked in water for hundreds of years. Haute began again to take notice of the sea maidens following after her. More than a dozen were in the group; all were lovely in appearance with pearl decorations draped over thin necks and lithe arms and extraordinary breasts, such as those of Moira and the Princess.

These attendants did not join in the conversation but darted here and there in sportive play, and often Haute heard the tinkling chorus of their laughter. Whatever doubts might have arisen in the young woman's mind through the ignorant tales of her sailor friend, she now found the mermaids to be light-hearted, joyous and gay, and from the first moment she had not been in the least afraid of her new companions.

If anything she could feel herself becoming more and more desirous of her fellow swimmers. Her belly was starting to warm nearly to the point of boiling and Haute was grateful for Cal's interruption of her thoughts.

“How much farther do we have to go?”

“Are you getting tired?” Moira inquired of Corporal Cal.

“No,” said he, “...but I'm sorter anxious to see what your palaces look like. Inside the water ain't as interestin' as the top of it. It's fine swimmin', I'll agree, an' I like it, but there ain't nuthin' special to see that I can make out.”

In actuality he was just eager to know when he may have a moment of privacy. He could tell that Haute was flushed and in need of as much relief as he was, and the parade of beautiful flesh around them was making it difficult for Cal to maintain his nethers in a decent state – although he knew it was on him to maintain his gentleman’s visage. But a chance to relieve his desires with an eager partner would be most helpful to his focus on other things.

“That is true, sir,” replied the Princess. “We have purposely led you through the mid-water hoping you would see nothing to alarm you until you get more accustomed to our ocean life. Moreover, we are able to travel more swiftly here. How far do you think we have already come, Corporal?”

“Oh, 'bout two mile,” he answered.

“Well, we are now hundreds of miles from the cave where we started,” she told him.

“You don't mean it!” he exclaimed in wonder.

“Then there's magic in it,” announced Haute soberly.

“True, my dear. To avoid tiring you and to save time, we have used a little of our fairy power,” said Clitia. “The result is that we are nearing our home. Let us go downward a bit, now, for you must know that the mermaid palaces are at the very bottom of the ocean, and in its deepest part.”

The word deep echoed in both Haute and Cal’s minds, trading needy glances to each other before returning their attentions to their travels. They could not imagine how

aflame their tails would be had they actually swam all those miles to the ocean bottom.

CHAPTER 4 - THE PALACE OF QUEEN AQULAMIA

Haute was surprised to find it was not at all dark or gloomy as they descended farther into the deep sea. Things were not quite so clear to her eyes as they had been in the bright sunshine above the ocean's surface, but every object was distinct nevertheless, as if she saw through a pane of green-tainted glass. The water was very clear except for this green shading, and – despite the significant enhancements bouncing before her – the young woman had never before felt so light and buoyant as she did now. It was no effort at all to dart through the water, which seemed to support her on all sides.

This was especially true around her breasts. Although the repeated clenching of her labia was without doubt the major source of her current horniness – aside from the significant amount of female loveliness on display around her – Haute also recognized some of her arousal was coming from the supernatural passage of water around her breasts...although she would never forget the sensation of their growth. Each moment of flow was like the softest sheets of silk running over them, and her nipples had little swirls of current passing around them that felt like a phantom finger gently teasing around the stiffened tips.

“I don't believe I weigh anything at all,” she said to Corporal Cal, her body language purposefully pushing up her expanded bosom towards him.

“No more do I, Haute,” said he, trying not to let his mind take in the vision before him in too much detail, “But that's

nat'ral, seein' as we're under water so far. What bothers me most is how we manage to breathe, havin' no gills like fishes have.”

“Are you sure we haven't any gills?” she asked, lifting her free hand to feel her throat.

“Sure. Ner the mermaids haven't any, either,” declared Corporal Cal.

“Studied them in detail, have you?” Haute tried to tease, but her breathiness betrayed her own attraction and desires. Women had always been a delightful side dish for Haute's appetites, but seeing a former male lover turned female was turning out to be more of a turn on than she could have ever imagined.

“No more than I know you 'ave,” Cal replied knowingly. He'd always been open to Haute exploring her appetites wherever they took her, even if they didn't take him with her. She'd shared many of her experiences with him, he was an eager listener.

“Then,” said Haute, “...we're breathing by magic.”

The mermaids laughed at this shrewd remark, and the Princess said, “You have guessed correctly, my dear. Go a little slower, now, for the palaces are in sight.”

“Where?” asked Haute eagerly.

“Just before you.”

“In that grove of trees?” inquired the young woman. And really, it seemed to her that they were approaching a

beautiful grove. The bottom of the sea was covered with white sand, in which grew many varieties of sea shrubs with branches like those of trees. Not all of them were green, however, for the branches and leaves were of a variety of gorgeous colors. Some were purple, shading down to a light lavender; and there were reds all the way from a delicate rose-pink to vivid shades of scarlet. Orange, yellow and blue shades were there, too, mingling with the sea-greens in a most charming manner. Altogether, Haute found the brilliant coloring somewhat bewildering.

These sea shrubs, which in size were quite as big and tall as the trees on earth, were set so close together that their branches entwined; but there were several avenues leading into the groves, and at the entrance to each avenue the young woman noticed several large fishes with long spikes growing upon their noses.

“Those are swordfishes,” remarked the Princess as she led the band past one of these avenues.

“Indeed, but are they dang'rous?” asked Haute.

“Not to us,” was the reply. “The swordfishes are among our most valued and faithful servants, guarding the entrances to the gardens which surround our palaces. If any creatures try to enter uninvited, these guards fight them and drive them away. Their swords are sharp and strong, and they are fierce fighters, I assure you.”

“I've known 'em to attack ships, an' stick their swords right through the wood,” said Corporal Cal.

“Those belonged to the wandering tribes of swordfishes,” explained the Princess. “These, who are our servants, are too sensible and intelligent to attack ships.”

The band now headed into a broad passage through the “gardens,” as the mermaids called these gorgeous groves, and the great swordfishes guarding the entrance made way for them to pass, afterward resuming their posts with watchful eyes. As they slowly swam along the avenue, Haute noticed that some of the bushes seemed to have fruits growing upon them, but what these fruits might be neither she nor Corporal Cal could guess.

The way wound here and there for some distance, till finally they came to a more open space all carpeted with sea flowers of exquisite colorings. Although Haute did not notice it at first, these flowers resembled the rare orchids of earth in their fanciful shapes and marvelous hues. The young woman did not examine them very closely, for across the carpet of flowers loomed the magnificent and extensive palaces of the mermaids.

These palaces were built of coral; white, pink and yellow being used, and the colors arranged in graceful designs. The front of the main palace, which now faced them, had circular ends connecting the straight wall, not unlike the architecture Haute and Cal were familiar with; yet there seemed to be no windows to the building, although a series of archways served as doors.

Arriving at one of the central archways, the band of sea maidens separated, Princess Clitia and Moira leading Haute and Corporal Cal into the palace, while the other mermaids swam swiftly away to their own quarters.

“Welcome!” said Clitia in her sweet voice. “Here you are surrounded only by friends and are in perfect safety. Please accept our hospitality as freely as you desire, for we consider you honored guests. I hope you will like our home,” she added a little shyly.

“We are sure to, dear Princess,” Haute hastened to say. The Princess’ sudden bashfulness was unexpected, but Haute found herself very attracted to it.

Then Clitia escorted them through the archway and into a lofty hall. It was not a mere grotto, but had smoothly built walls of pink coral inlaid with white. Haute at first thought there was no roof, for looking upward she could see the water all above them. But the princess, reading her thought, said with a smile, “Yes, there is a roof, or we would be unable to keep all the sea people out of our palace. But the roof is made of glass to admit the light.”

“Glass!” cried the astonished young woman. “Then it must be an awful big pane of glass.”

“It is,” agreed Clitia. “Our roofs are considered quite wonderful, and we owe them to the fairy powers of our queen. Of course, you understand there is no natural way to make glass under water. Although powerful on her own, our queen requires the assistance of her wand to wield such magnificent matter molding magic.”

“Does your queen live here?” asked Corporal Cal

“Yes. She is waiting now, in her throne room, to welcome you. Shall we go in?”

“I’d just as soon,” replied Haute rather warmly. She was actually quite eager to find a private spot with Cal – or any of their new friends, truthfully – but she followed the undulating curves of the princess, who glided through another arch into another small room where several mermaids were reclining upon couches of coral together. They were beautifully decorated in many sparkling jewels. And Haute thought she was seeing hands teasing and touching body parts that did not belong to those same hands. There was nothing overt, as if the entire room was designed only for titillation.

Haute wondered if she was not alone in how her pleasure button was being constantly teased. She was certainly titillated, and wondered how a civilization dealing with such constant sensory input would deal with it.

“Her Majesty is awaiting the strangers, Princess Clitia,” announced one of these reclined mermaids, the sentence almost forced, as if she did not want to break from her current activity but had to out of duty. “You are asked to enter at once.”

“Come, then,” said Clitia, and once more taking Haute’s hand she led the young woman through still another arch, while Moira followed just behind them, escorting Corporal Cal. They now entered an apartment so gorgeous that the young woman fairly gasped with astonishment. The queen’s throne room was indeed the grandest and most beautiful chamber in all the ocean palaces. Its coral walls were thickly inlaid with mother-of-pearl, exquisitely shaded and made into borders and floral decorations. In the corners were cabinets, upon the shelves of which many curious shells were

arranged, all beautifully polished. The floor glittered with gems arranged in patterns of flowers, like a brilliant carpet.

Near the center of the room was a raised platform of mother-of-pearl upon which stood a couch thickly studded with diamonds, rubies, emeralds and pearls. Here reclined Queen Aqulamia, a being so lovely that Haute gazed upon her spellbound and Corporal Cal took off his sailor cap and held it in his hands. She was slightly larger than the other mermaids, both in scale and dimension.

Aqulamia's body overall was very sensually stretched out, her torso a bit taller and her tail a bit longer than any of her aquatic subjects. Her breasts were the largest of all, Haute estimated that they were bigger than the largest watermelon she had ever seen. They stood round and proud atop the royal mermaid's chest, unaffected by gravity. They were capped by two thick nipples, the size of Cal's thumbs – his formerly male thumbs – decorated with little rings and a pearl chain that connected them.

One other difference from the other mermaids was upon Aqulamia's body, this one blossoming from her tail. Haute and Cal had noted that every mermaid they'd seen so far sported a similar understated slit upon their tails, a sensual spot noticeable only with concentration. This was not the case for Aqulamia's lower lips, which bloomed out from her tail with colorful and sensual folds, as if a mix of flower and anemone. The lovely exaggerated lips led to a slightly open pinkness that beckoned for touch, tongue, or toy. The queen's clit was the size of a marble – a shooter to be specific – and appeared and disappeared like a pale ankle from the slit of a long dress.

All about the room were grouped other mother-of-pearl couches, not raised like that of the Queen, and upon each of these reclined a pretty mermaid. They could not sit down as humans do, Haute readily understood, because of their tails; but they rested very gracefully upon the couches with their trailing jewelry arranged around their graceful curves.

When Clitia and Moira escorted the strangers down the length of the great room toward the royal throne, they met with pleasant looks and smiles on every side, for the sea maidens were too polite to indulge in curious stares. They paused just before the throne, and the Queen raised her head upon one elbow to observe them. "Welcome, Fayre," she said, "...and welcome, Corporal Cal. I trust you are pleased with your glimpse of the life beneath the surface of our sea."

There was a moment while the pair collected themselves.

"I am," answered Haute, looking admiringly at the beautiful face of the Queen.

"It's all mighty cur'ous an' strange-like," said the sailor slowly. "I'd no idee you mermaids were like this, at all!"

"Allow me to explain that it was to correct your wrong ideas about us that led me to invite you to visit us," replied the Queen. "We usually pay little heed to the earth people, for we are content in our own dominions; but, of course, we know all that goes on upon your earth. So when Princess Clitia chanced to overhear your absurd statements concerning us, we were greatly amused and decided to let you see with your own eyes just what we are like."

“I'm glad you did,” answered Corporal Cal, dropping his eyes as he remembered his former description of the mermaids – it was a good way in which to control his wooden leg.

“Now that you are here,” continued the Queen in a cordial, friendly tone, “...you may as well remain with us a few days and see the wonderful sights of our ocean.”

“I'm much obliged to you, ma'am,” said Haute, “...and I'd like to stay ever so much, but there's a job interview and other opportunities I worry I'll miss if I don't get home in time.”

“I'll arrange all that,” said Aqulamia with a smile.

“Oh?” asked the Haute, “You can make it so that those are not a concern?”

“Removing worries is something mermaids can indeed do,” the Queen responded, raising her hand up and making a small circle in the water with it.

“Then I certainly wish you would,” Haute continued, her mind becoming more cloudy as the Queen spoke, the movement jiggling her chest in the most wondrous of ways. “One of my sorority sisters worked hard to make arrangements for me.”

“It is easy. I will relieve you of such concerns and enchant the young woman to happily see through anything you request of her in the future.”

“I'm not sure that...” Haute's last moment of realization over what the Queen was offering, as well as Cal's concern,

faded away as the Queen waved her raised hand slowly to and fro. Haute's lingering desires to return in any timely fashion to the surface were no longer important. She did indeed still want to return, but the urgency was gone.

Other more immediate interests began to creep up into Haute and Cal's minds. Haute fought to keep her mind focused, or else risk jumping upon whatever supple flesh was closest to her.

"Fanny, she...she may get in trouble herself...if I am not there..." Haute sighed out, more air than words.

"Well, let us check on her and see what we can do to exchange unpleasantness for pleasure," the Queen mused, her eyes wandering up towards the surface world, "Just at present she is seated in a tub, engaged in bathing."

"You are able to know that?" Haute asked. Memories of her own time in a bath with her fellow student, when both were exploring themselves as much as each other, flickered through Haute's mind.

"You may see for yourselves," declared the Queen, and waved her hand again. At once they saw before them the bathroom in Haute's old sorority house, with Francine "Fanny" Tapper reclined in the old claw-legged tub. Even though a fair film of suds covered the surface of the water, and a good portion of the young woman's skin, Cal averted his eyes.

In truth the young sailor could have described every inch of the bathing beauty if asked, so detailed had been Haute's tales of their time together. Straight brunette hair often kept in teasing pigtails but that when down hung just past two

small breasts that were more teat than tit. A taught swimmers body which had softened in just the right places since high school. A fair face and a pout that could melt the heart and harden other things. And a perfect round rear, of peach curves and heart shape. It was the pride of the young woman, often encased in tight pants or short skirts and very much-so the reason that her nickname had gone from “Franny” to “Fanny” in one lusty night.

But Corporal Cal was averse to voyeurism or any unpermitted lusty attention and put his gaze to one of the lovely mermaids who was only too happy to have his eyes upon her and return her own smiling gaze.

Haute would have also looked away if not for her need to understand the Queen’s intentions. She was about to ask what Aqulamia’s intentions were when Haute noticed a shift. Fanny was running the soap down her arms, her nipples just breaking the surface. Haute cocked her head as she watched the flesh underneath the little tips begin to push upwards. Like a surfacing submarine Fanny’s nipples rose from the suds, round flesh following quickly after.

“You’re...”

“Although she has great pride over parts of her form, I sensed a worry about others. You humans are so invested in your breasts,” the Queen mused. Haute could not turn away, her eyes wide as Fanny’s bust went from a pair of baseballs up to softballs...where they stopped.

“Do you think she will be satisfied with that?” asked Aqulamia.

“I-”

It was just this moment that Fanny's elbow brushed a nipple – one which was floating out farther than it should be. The bathing woman looked down and her eyes went as wide as Haute's as she noticed what had happened to her. She pushed herself up in the water, soap suds splashing everywhere. Haute had recalled Fanny talking about wanting a larger bust, but the large oranges that rose out of the water with her were larger than had been wished. It would be incredibly difficult for the young woman to hide them or satisfactorily explain their new size.

Haute watched Fanny grabbed the jiggling flesh and, although Haute could not hear it, she could tell that Aqulamia must have increased the sensitivity of Fanny's chest – the moan and eye roll could not be overlooked.

“What do you think? Will that make up for any difficulty she experiences from your absence?”

Haute was not certain how to proceed, the Queen seemed friendly enough so far but she did not want to risk upsetting someone with such power so freely cast.

“Well, Fanny had once told me she wished they were double in-”

“Oh my, you humans are obsessed, aren't you?” the Queen laughed, waving her hand, “Very well. And all of this is indeed quite passive; I think there should be a more direct way for you to assist in her pleasure.”

Not yet knowing what she had just done, and desiring to know more before saying more, Haute looked to Fanny. The nude woman had sunk further down back into the tub, her hands massaging her new flesh in what was clearly a

satisfactory manner by any persuasion. Haute looked for any new changes it wasn't until Fanny pushed herself up from the water again that developments became clear. Haute spotted said 'developments' on the ribs beneath Fanny's expanded breasts.

Amidst the popping suds Haute could see two bumps forming and growing dark compared to the rest of the skin. Soon they were the color of hazel nuts, the same as Fanny's nipples. Within moments a new bosom as large and round as Fanny's upper set had grown in beneath her originals. Although she hadn't yet noticed Haute could tell that their size and position would make it nearly impossible to keep anyone else from noticing.

"Grab your chest as if you were seeking pleasure," the Queen spoke up. She had to repeat the request again before the agape Haute really heard her. Haute did so, bringing her fingers around her bulbous chest and squeezing her nipples slightly in the process.

Fanny bolted up in the tub, her eyes wide from surprise. She appeared to suddenly be aware of something beneath her chest, and with some bending and shifting she let out a silent expletive as she got sight of her new endowments.

Haute squeezed her own breasts once again, kneading her flesh, and watched as Fanny rolled her eyes and bit her lip.

"Do her new breasts feel what I do to mine?" Haute asked. Having such direct influence over her former lover was getting Haute hotter than from what she was doing to her own breasts.

“Indeed!” exclaimed the Queen with another smile, “Are you satisfied?”

“I...” Holding back had not done her any good, so Haute forced her concerns to the surface. “I’m afraid I would resist touching myself without knowing if I was going to interrupt Fanny doing something important.”

“My, you humans are difficult,” the Queen laughed, “Very well. We’ll leave the young woman with our gifts but you’ll forget all about them so you have no reservations.”

“Wait, I...”

With another wave of Aqulamia’s hand the vision of the four-breasted Fanny vanished and Haute and Cal were left blinking.

“What happened?” Cal asked, turning and looking back towards Haute and the Queen. He found it odd how the attending mermaids were giggling, but he could not recall why they would have reason. Haute realized she was grasping her breasts and lowered her hands behind her back.

“I was just saying that whenever you see anything you do not understand and wish to ask questions, I will be very glad to answer them,” said the Queen.

“One thing that bothers me,” said Haute, every image of Fanny’s newly minted quad of tits gone from her mind, although the heat before her hips was still burning just as bright, “...is why we don't feel wet, being in the ocean with water all around us.”

“That is because no water really touches you,” explained the Queen. “Your bodies have been made just like those of the mermaids in order that you may fully enjoy your visit to us. One of our peculiar qualities is that water is never permitted to quite touch our bodies, or our decorations. Although we can sense the flow of current, always there remains a very small space, hardly a hair's breadth, between us and the water, which is the reason we are always warm and dry.”

“I see,” said Haute. “That's why you don't get soggy or withered.” Suddenly Haute realized that with no water touching her skin that meant any of her own fluids trickling from her soaked slit would not be washed away. She flushed at the thought of a visibly moist glisten so obvious along the scales rimming and squeezing the lips affront her tail.

“Exactly,” laughed the Queen, and the other mermaids joined in her merriment.

“I s'pose that's how we can breathe without gills,” remarked Corporal Cal thoughtfully.

“Yes. The air space is constantly replenished from the water, which contains air, and this enables us to breathe as freely as you do upon the earth.”

“But we have fins,” said Haute, looking at the fins that sprouted from the tip of Corporal Cal's tail.

“Yes. They allow us to guide ourselves as we swim, and so are very useful,” replied the Queen.

“They make us more finished,” said Corporal Cal with a chuckle.

“Indeed,” Aqulamia replied. “And I promise no evil result shall follow this visit to us, so please be as happy and contented as possible.”

CHAPTER 5 - THE SEA-SERPENT

Just then Haute happened to look up at the glass roof and saw a startling sight. A big head with a face surrounded by stubby gray whiskers was poised just over them, and the head was connected with a long, curved body that looked much like a sewer pipe.

“Oh, there is King Petrius,” said the Queen, following the young woman's gaze. “Open a door and let him in, Clitia, for I suppose our old friend is anxious to see the earth people.”

“Won't he hurt us?” asked the young woman with a shiver of fear. In truth she was shivering from a desire to find a private moment with Cal, to sate some of the distraction boiling up in her, and Haute was not eager to go through another introduction.

“Who, Petrius? Oh no, my dear! We are very fond of the sea serpent, who is king of this ocean, although he does not commonly exercise his rule upon the mermaids. Old Petrius is a very agreeable fellow, as you will soon discover.”

“Can he talk?” asked Haute.

“Yes indeed.”

“And can we understand what he says?”

“Perfectly,” replied the Queen. “I have given you power, while you remain here, to understand the language of every inhabitant of the sea.”

“That's nice,” said Haute as gratefully as she could sound.

The Princess Clitia swam slowly to one of the walls of the throne room where, at a wave of her hand, a round hole appeared in the coral. The sea serpent at once observed this opening and the head left the roof of glass only to reappear presently at the round hole. Through this he slowly crawled until his head was just beneath the throne of Queen Aqulamia, who said to him:

“Good morning, your Majesty. I hope you are quite well?”

“Quite well, thank your Majesty,” answered Petrius; and then he turned to the strangers. “I suppose these are the earth folks you were expecting?”

“Yes,” returned the Queen. “The woman is named Fayre and the man Corporal Cal.”

While the sea serpent looked at the visitors, they ventured to look at him. He certainly was an unusual creature, yet Haute decided he was not at all frightful. His head was round as a ball, but his ears were sharp-pointed and had tassels at the ends of them. His nose was flat, and his mouth very wide indeed, but his eyes were blue and gentle in expression. The white, stubby hairs that surrounded his face were not thick like a beard, but scattered and scraggly. From the head, the long, brown body of the sea serpent extended to the hole in the coral wall, which was just big enough to admit it; and how much more of the body remained outside the young woman could not tell. On the back of the body were several fins, which made the creature look more like an eel than a serpent. A sheen of oil glistened along the underside of him, although it did not wash off into the water.

The sea serpent turned to the visitors. "Are you well?" he asked.

"Pretty fair," said Corporal Cal. "How's yourself?"

"Oh, I'm very well, thank you," answered Petrius. "I never remember to have had a pain but three times in my life. The last time was when I had a toothache," continued Petrius, "...but I got a lobster to pull the tooth with his claw, so the pain was soon over."

"Did it hurt to pull it?" asked Haute, not certain what to make of the surreal turn of conversation.

"Hurt!" exclaimed the Sea Serpent, groaning at the recollection. "My dear, those creatures have been called lobsters ever since! The second pain I had was caused by a kink in my tail about three hundred feet from the end. There was an old octopus who did not like me, and so he tied a knot in my tail when I wasn't looking."

"What did you do?" asked Corporal Cal, genuinely amused – and the conversation kept him safe from any revealing misthoughts.

"Well, first I transformed the octopus into an octopuride, and then I waited for the tide to turn. When my tail was untied, the pain stopped."

"I—I don't understand that," said Haute, somewhat bewildered.

"Thank you, my dear," replied the Sea Serpent in a grateful voice. "People who are always understood are very common. You are sure to respect those you can't

understand, for you feel that perhaps they know more than you do.”

“About how long do you happen to be?” inquired Corporal Cal.

“When last measured, I was seven thousand four hundred and eighty-two feet, five inches and a quarter. I'm not sure about the quarter, but the rest is probably correct. ”

“Where's the rest of you, then?” asked Haute.

“Safe at home, I hope, and coiled up in my parlor,” answered the Sea Serpent. “When I go out, I usually take along only what is needed. It saves a lot of bother and I can always find my way back in the darkest night by just coiling up the part that has been away.”

“Do you like to be a sea serpent?” inquired the young woman. The mention of transformation intrigued her, especially in regards to what one who could do so would do.

“Yes, for I'm King of my Ocean, and there is no other sea serpent to imagine he is just as good as I am. I have two brothers who live in other oceans, but one is seven inches shorter than I am, and the other several feet shorter. It's curious to talk about feet when we haven't any feet, isn't it?”

“Seems so,” acknowledged Haute. She was floating as still as she could be, and was thankful that the flames licking at her desires felt as if they were finally starting to cool.

“I feel I have much to be proud of,” continued Petrius in a dreamy tone. “My great age, my undisputed sway, and my exceptional length.”

“I don't b'lieve I'd care to live so long,” remarked Corporal Cal thoughtfully.

“So long as seven thousand four hundred and eighty-two feet, five inches and a quarter?” asked the Sea Serpent.

“No, I mean so many years,” replied the sailor.

“But what can one do if one happens to be a sea serpent?” Petrius inquired. “There is nothing in the sea that can hurt me, and I cannot commit suicide because we have no carbolic acid or firearms or gas to turn on. So it isn't a matter of choice, and I'd about as soon be alive as dead. It does not seem quite so monotonous, you know. But I guess I've stayed about long enough, so I'll go home to dinner. Come and see me when you have time.”

“Thank you,” said Haute, and Moira added, “I'll take you over to his majesty's palace when we go out and let you see how he lives.”

“Yes, do,” said Petrius. And then he slowly slid out of the hole, which immediately closed behind him, leaving the coral wall as solid as before.

“Oh!” exclaimed Haute, suppressing as much sarcasm as possible, “King Petrius forgot to tell us what his third pain was about.”

“So he did,” said Corporal Cal. “We must ask him about that when we see him. But I guess the ol' boy's mem'ry is failin', an' he can't be depended on for pertic'lars.”

CHAPTER 6 - EXPLORING THE OCEAN

The queen now requested her guests to recline upon couches that they might rest themselves from their long swim and talk more at their ease. So the young woman and the sailor allowed themselves to float downward until they rested their bodies on two of the couches nearest the throne, which were willingly vacated by the mermaids who occupied them until then.

The visitors soon found themselves answering a great many questions about their life on the earth, for although the Queen had said she kept track of what was going on on the land, there were many details of human life in which all the mermaids seemed greatly interested - especially that activity which Haute and Cal were each eagerly hoping to find time for when – or more likely if – they could find a moment alone.

Haute was certainly thankful to be reclined and still. Even just bobbing in the water had required a bit of muscle clenching, and now she could fully let her muscles relax and release their grip on her scaly slit. The sensation of latex-encased tightness did not ebb, but Haute could manage that. However, reclined as she was, Haute was certain that the dribble of her juices down her tail was all the more obvious – but she dared not try and do anything that would inadvertently draw more attention.

There was also plenty of indirect titillating happening that was keeping Haute quite flustered. Beautiful bared breasts of all shapes and sizes were floating throughout Haute's field of

vision. Just to her side was reclined an incredible pair, attached to the feminized body of her lover. It was everything in her power to not run a hand down Cal's lady lines, feeling the transition of smooth skin to scales. She tried to draw her thoughts back from that, but the swimming of mermaids all around her was causing quite a swish and swash of water. Although the tides may not have been able to directly touch Haute's breasts, they were certainly causing them to swing and jiggle about, the little swirling eddies around her nipples no more absent now than they had been when she was swimming. It was as if a pair of ghosts were constantly nibbling at her teats.

During the conversation several sea-maids came swimming into the room bearing trays of sea apples and other fruit, which they first offered to the Queen, and then passed the refreshments around to the company assembled. Haute and Corporal Cal each took some, and the young woman found the fruits delicious to eat, as they had a richer flavor than any that grew upon land. They were very juicy, and both Haute and Cal could feel little dribbles of nectar slipping into the air space atop their skin and making little paths down to their bosoms.

Queen Aqulamia was much pleased when the sailor asked for more, but Moira warned him dinner would soon be served and he must take care not to spoil his appetite for that meal. "Our dinner is at noon, for we have to cook in the middle of the day when the sun is shining," she said.

"Cook!" cried Haute. "Why, you can't build a fire in the water, can you?"

The fire within her tail certainly didn't count.

“We have no need of fires,” was the reply. “The glass roof of our kitchen is so curved that it concentrates the heat of the sun’s rays, which are then hot enough to cook anything we wish.”

“But how do you get along if the day is cloudy, and the sun doesn’t shine?” inquired the young woman.

“Then we use the hot springs that bubble up in another part of the palace,” Moira answered. “But the sun is the best to cook by.” So it was no surprise to Haute when, about noon, dinner was announced.

All the mermaids, headed by their queen, began to swim from the throne room. Aqulamia turned to beckon her guests to attend with them, but Haute politely put up a hand.

“If we could have just another moment or two to rest? I don’t want to underappreciate your hospitality due to exhaustion,” Haute said sweetly.

“Certainly my dear, there is still prep to do. I will leave Moira at the door to show you the way when you are ready.”

And with that Haute and Cal were finally alone.

Even in their new forms each could read the other’s body language without issue. Both of them scanned the room for a private space – difficult to do with a glass ceiling. Haute saw what appeared to be a covered nook behind the Queens throne, took Cal’s hand, and led him to it.

The moment they were out of direct sight each had their hands on the other’s breasts. Both bit their lips, trying not to call out and attract Moira’s attention.

“You like that?” Haute whispered to Cal, squeezing his nipples between her thumb and forefinger as the others caressed his underboob.

“These are fantastic,” Cal sighed, sliding his fingers over Haute’s chest and pulling them up so he could quickly kiss and lick each nipple, “Do yours always feel this good?”

“These models are...” Haute shuddered, pressing her expanded breast flesh into Cal’s, “...upgraded in many ways.”

“So is something else of mine.”

Haute had been pressing her tail against Cal’s, trying to further stimulate herself. It was difficult, as the scales glided across each other like silk upon silk. Something about Cal in a womanly shape was an incredible turn on for Haute – a familiar lover in a new form, particularly one so sexy. That didn’t mean she hadn’t been quietly disappointed at the thought of the loss of her lover’s meaty rod – especially when she was so in need of its satisfying capabilities – when she felt something push against her.

It felt like a smooth golf ball rubbing against her scales and Haute didn’t need any further instruction. She shifted her tail and let the knob push at her scaly lips. Her juices quickly coated it and Haute gasped as several smooth stiff inches suddenly pushed inside of her.

“Oh...oh...” Haute grunted, her voice going as deep as she was being filled. The sensation of fullness was incredible – smooth but rigid where it mattered, unyielding yet giving when it needed to be. Cal and Haute wrapped their tails around each other as tightly as they could, doing what they

could to force as much of Cal's wooden length as deep as it would go into Haute.

"Good...graces..." moaned Cal, his mermaid ass clenching as he pushed and pulled his rod in and out of Haute. Their breasts were smashed against each other, flesh bouncing and squeezing in every direction as their lips and tongues mashed together. Their skin began to glisten from sweat.

Neither was aware of their audience. Moira had peaked into the room, and when she didn't see them she had swam in to search. Now she was quietly peaking over the throne and had one hand teasing the nipples of her generous breasts, while the other was tracing the lines of her mermaid pussy. She was resisting the desire to plunge her fingers into herself, and instead expertly pushing her body to the very cusp of release before pulling back and letting her body shudder in denial. She pulled a nipple to her mouth and sucked on it while she watched the visitor's hands grab at each other's bulging butts.

Cal pulled his hand away from the curves of Haute's ass and gripped her hair, tugging slightly and pulling her lips from his. He let his mouth find a floating teat and he sucked on it. This was the last bit that Haute needed, and she felt her new mermaid parts begin to flush and spasm. An intense heat rose up into her belly, and she used both hands to pull Cal's ass towards her to get him as deep as she could possibly bear.

At the same time Cal could feel himself reaching climax. He hadn't considered what other differences might come from his wooden situation, but as he and Haute both crested he felt himself release into her. It was a mightier blow than

either had felt before, and Cal somehow knew that this expulsion was nothing like anything he'd spent before – it was thicker, warmer, and...something like sap? As if by instinct he knew it was nothing that would harm Haute – in fact, it would act like a balm, helping heal, tighten, and reinvigorate her before dissolving away.

Haute knew none of this, only that it had felt incredibly good to be filled by it.

They floated in their afterglow, arms and tails tightly entwined as they traded gentle kisses. Cal whispered his knowledge into Haute's ear. She smiled and kissed him, glad to know she had nothing to be concerned about. As they slowly untangled themselves Moira stopped teasing her own body and, more turned on than she had ever been, swam back to her post by the door to pretend as if she'd been there all the time.

After another few moments Haute and Cal emerged, revitalized and more focused. They greeted Moira sweetly and three swam on...but Haute did wonder if she could see a new sparkle upon Moira's tail.

In short time the three swam into another spacious room where a great, long table was laid. The dishes were of polished gold and dainty-cut glass, and the cloth and napkins of fine gossamer. Around the table were ranged rows of couches for the mermaids to recline upon as they ate. Only the nobility and favorites of Queen Aqulamia were invited to partake of this repast Clitia explained after greeting them. She added that tables were set for the other mermaids in different parts of the numerous palaces.

With one hunger sated a new one presented itself in Haute's belly, and she wondered who would serve the meal, but her curiosity was soon satisfied when several large lobsters came sliding into the room backward, bearing in their claws trays loaded with food. Each of these lobsters had a golden band behind its neck to show it was worthy of the mermaids.

These curious waiters were fussy creatures, and Haute found much amusement in watching their odd motions. They were so spry and excitable that at times they ran against one another and upset the platters of food, after which they began to scold and argue as to whose fault it was, until one of the mermaids quietly rebuked them and asked them to be more quiet and more careful.

The queen's guests had no cause to complain of the dinner provided. First the lobsters served bowls of turtle soup, which proved hot and deliciously flavored. Then came salmon steaks fried in fish oil, with a fungus bread that tasted much like field mushrooms. Oysters, clams, soft-shell crabs and various preparations of seafoods followed. The salad was a delicate leaf from some seaweed that Haute thought was much nicer than lettuce. Several courses were served, and the lobsters changed the plates with each course, chattering and scolding as they worked, doing everything backwards in their nervous, fussy way.

Many of the things offered them to eat were unknown to the visitors, and the young woman was suspicious of some of them, but Corporal Cal asked no questions and ate everything offered him, so Haute decided to follow his example. Certain it is they found the meal very satisfying, and evidently there was no danger of their being hungry while

they remained the guests of the mermaids. When the fruits came, Haute thought that must be the last course of the big dinner, but following the fruits were ice creams frozen into the shape of flowers.

“How funny,” said the young woman, “...to be eating ice cream at the bottom of the sea.”

“Why does that surprise you?” inquired the Queen.

“I can't see where you get the ice to freeze it,” Haute replied.

“It is brought to us from the icebergs that float in the northern parts of the ocean,” explained Moira.

“O' course, Haute. You orter thought o' that. I did,” said Corporal Cal, a sly smile on his face.

The young woman was glad there was no more to eat, for she had eaten every morsel she could and her stomach was practically bulging. Her only excuse for being so greedy was that “ev'rything tasted just splendid!” as she told the Queen.

“And now,” said Aqulamia, “I will send you out for a swim with Moira, who will show you some of the curious sights of our sea. You need not go far this afternoon, and when you return, we will have another interesting talk together.” So the brown haired mermaid led Haute and Corporal Cal outside the palace walls, where they found themselves in the pretty flower gardens.

“I'd feel all right, mate, if I could have a smoke,” remarked the old sailor to the young woman, “...but that's a thing as can't be did here in the water.”

“Why not?” asked Moira, who overheard him.

“A pipe has to be lighted, an' a match wouldn't burn,” he replied, “And both done vanished with my coat.”

“Well, regarding the second objection, those items are not far from you. We cannot make nonexistent the existent,” smiled the mermaid, “Reach for what you want as you would on the land and you will find they are closer than you think.”

Cal looked to Haute, who gave a shrug that sent her breasts wavering in the water. Cal looked down at himself, deciding where the desired pockets would be resting on his female form. After a moment he moved his hands as if he were reaching for the desire items. He clenched his fists, and as he brought them out he could already feel the familiar shapes within them. He opened his hands to reveal his pipe, bag of tobacco, and matchbox.

All of which wer perfectly dry.

“Mermaids...” was all Cal could muster.

“Try it,” suggested the mermaid. “I do not mind your smoking at all, if it will give you pleasure.”

“It's a bad habit I've got, an' I can't seem to break myself of it,” said Corporal Cal. He carefully filled his pipe, the tobacco remaining dry at all times. He took out his matchbox and struck a light. The match burned brightly, and soon the sailor was puffing the smoke from his pipe in great contentment. The smoke ascended through the water in the shape of bubbles, and Haute wondered what anyone who happened to be floating upon the surface of the ocean would

think to see smoke coming from the water. It would probably inspire some sort of music-based joke.

“Well, I find I can smoke, all right,” remarked Corporal Cal, letting out a long sigh, “...but it bothers me to understand why.”

“It is because of the air space existing between the water and everything you have about you,” explained Moira. “But now, if you will come this way, I will take you to visit some of our neighbors.”

Haute and Cal exchanged glances, knowing that the explanation hadn't been much of one, but followed politely regardless. Neither minded the view of Moira's undulating rear as they moved along, and Haute once again steeled her mind to the squeezing of her scaly spot.

They passed over the carpet of sea flowers, the gorgeous blossoms swaying on their stems as the motion of the swimmers in the water above them disturbed their repose, and presently the three entered the dense shrubbery surrounding the palace. They had not proceeded far when they came to a clearing among the bushes, and here Moira paused.

Haute and Corporal Cal paused, too, for floating in the clear water was a group of beautiful shapes that the young woman thought looked like molds of wine jelly. They were round as a dinner plate, soft and transparent, but tinted in such lovely hues that no artist's brush has ever been able to imitate them. Some were deep sapphire blue; others rose pink; still others a delicate topaz color. They seemed to have neither heads, eyes nor ears, yet it was easy to see they were

alive and floating in any direction. In shape they resembled inverted flowerpots, with the upper edges fluted, and from the centers floated what seemed to be bouquets of flowers.

“How pretty!” exclaimed Haute, enraptured by the sight.

“Yes, this is a rare variety of jellyfish,” replied Moira. “The creatures are not so delicate as they appear, and live for as long as mermaids – sometimes Queen Aqualamia transforms a mermaid into one as a reward.”

“A reward? Being a jellyfish?” Haute gasped.

“Oh yes. See that one over there?” Moira pointed to jelly with a red band that resembled a lightning bolt, “She was Clamblade, a mighty warrior. Now she lives a life free of responsibilities, nothing more than beauty and pleasure.”

“Pleasure?” Corporal Cal asked, an eyebrow raised.

“Oh yes. You know the sensation of the water moving around your breasts?”

Both nodded, but Haute knew only she had the experience to fully appreciate the underwater sensation compared to how her breasts felt above the waves. On dry land even her smaller breasts knew the constant singularly-directed tug of gravity, the constant pull barely conquered by mundane time in pools or baths. Under the water, with the mermaid’s magic, her expanded chest had known no moment of stillness, every motion – from herself or someone nearby – sending wiggles and jiggles through Haute’s chest, every sensation delicious and dangerously demanding more warmth and attention be sent to her bedazzled breach.

“Well,” continued Moira, her face flushing from thoughts that clearly interested her, “Imagine your entire form encompassed in that sensation. The ocean itself a constant lover, with no choice but to quiver and quake forever more with constant building pleasure. Your entire existence, all that you can ever perceive, pure erotic attention.”

Moira floated in silence a moment, staring out at the floating jellies. Her eyes were big and Haute could clearly see a glisten upon her tail. Haute wasn't certain if an eternity of helpless horniness was paradise or not, but to each their own desires she figured.

After watching the jellyfish a few moments Moira composed herself and they followed the mermaid through the grove. They now came to one of the avenues which led from the sea garden out into the broad ocean, and here two swordfishes were standing guard. “Is all quiet?” Moira asked them.

“Just as usual, your Highness,” replied one of the guards. “Cogrumber was sick this morning and grunted dreadfully, but he's better now and has gone to sleep. King Petrius has been stirring around some, but is now taking his after-dinner nap. I think it will be perfectly safe for you to swim out for a while, if you wish.”

“Who's Cogrumber?” asked Haute as they passed out into deep water.

“He's the sea pig,” replied Moira. “I am glad he's asleep, for now we won't meet him.”

“Don't you like him?” inquired Haute.

“Oh, he complains so bitterly of everything that he bores us,” Moira answered. “Cogrumber is never contented or happy for a single minute.”

“I've seen people like that,” said Corporal Cal with a nod of his head. “An' they has a way of upsettin' the happiest folks they meet.”

“Look out!” suddenly cried the mermaid. “Look out for your fingers! Here are the snapping eels.”

“Who? Where?” asked Haute anxiously.

And now they were in the midst of a cluster of wriggling, darting eels which sported all around them in the water with marvelous activity. “Yes, look out for your fingers and your noses!” said one of the eels, making a dash for Corporal Cal. At first the sailor was tempted to put out a hand and push the creature away, but remembering that his fingers would thus be exposed, he remained quiet, and the eel snapped harmlessly just before his face and then darted away.

“Stop it!” said Moira. “Stop it this minute, or I'll report your impudence to Aqualamia.”

“Oh, who cares?” shouted the Eels. “We're not afraid of the mermaids.”

“She'll remake you into seaweed, as she did once before,” said Moira, “...if you try to hurt the earth people.”

“Are these earth people?” asked one. And then they all stopped their play and regarded Haute and Corporal Cal with their little black eyes.

“I thought one was a man,” said one of them.

“I'm a man!” answered Corporal Cal angrily. “I'm a respectable sailor man, an' I'll have you treat me decent or I'll know why.”

“Sailor!” said another. “That means to float on the water—not IN it. What are you doing down here?”

“I'm jes' a-visitin',” answered Corporal Cal.

“He is the guest of our queen,” said Moira, “...and so is this young woman. If you do not behave nicely to them, you will surely be sorry.”

“Oh, that's all right,” replied one of the biggest eels, wriggling around in a circle and then snapping at a companion, which as quickly snapped out of his way. “We know how to be polite to company as well as the mermaids. We won't hurt them.”

“Come on, fellows, let's go scare old Cogrumble,” cried another; and then in a flash they all darted away and left our friends to themselves. Haute was greatly relieved.

“I don't like eels,” she said.

“They are more mischievous than harmful,” replied Moira, “...but I do not care much for them myself.”

“No,” added Corporal Cal, “...they ain't respectable.”

CHAPTER 7 - THE ARISTOCRATIC CODFISH

The three swam slowly along, quite enjoying the cool depths of the water. Every little while they met with some strange creature—or one that seemed strange to the earth people—for although Haute and Corporal Cal had seen many kinds of fish, after they had been caught and pulled from the water, that was very different from meeting them in their own element, “face to face,” as Haute expressed it. Now that the various fishes were swimming around free and unafraid in their deep-sea home, they were quite different from the gasping, excited creatures struggling at the end of a fish line or flopping from a net.

The slow pace was also very appreciated by Haute. The warm balm that she’d taken from Cal was indeed working on her. As they swam she could feel her slit and insides changing. She’d never been “loose” in any sense of the word, but she’d certainly enjoyed her many experiences and had known she’d stretched a little through age and experience. She’d not realized how much she’d shifted down below over time, but now she was sensing all of that experience washing away as her canal tightened and contracted. It was almost as if internal bits had become virginal once more – but she could tell that the pleasurable parts of her experience had only become enhanced.

That tightness was seeping out to her clit and scaly lips, pulling everything together even more. The slow pace of her tail was getting her glistening again, her breathing long and heavy as she felt that invisible palm on her pussy push a little

harder against her with each flex of the tail. Haute wasn't certain what a quick swim would do to her.

Before long they came upon a group of large fishes lying lazily near the bottom of the sea, a welcome pause and distraction. They were a dark color upon their backs and silver underneath, but not especially pretty to look at. The fishes made no effort to get out of Moira's way and remained motionless except for the gentle motion of their fins and gills.

"Here," said the mermaid, pausing, "...is the most aristocratic family of fish in all the sea."

"What are they?" asked the young woman.

"Codfish," was the reply. "Their only fault is that they are too haughty and foolishly proud of their pedigree."

Overhearing this speech, one codfish said to another in a very dignified tone of voice, "What insolence!"

"Isn't it?" replied the other. "There ought to be a law to prevent these common mermaids from discussing their superiors."

"My sakes!" said Haute, astonished. "How stuck up they are, aren't they?"

For a moment the group of fishes stared at her solemnly. Then one of the remarked in a disdainful manner, "Come, my dear, let us leave these vulgar creatures."

"I'm not as vulgar as you are!" exclaimed Haute, much offended by this speech. "Where I come from, we only eat codfish when there's nothing else in the house to eat."

“How absurd!” observed one of the creatures arrogantly.

“Eat codfish indeed!” said another in a lofty manner.

“Yes, and you're pretty salty, too, I can tell you. At home you're nothing but a pick-up!” laughed Haute.

“Dear me!” exclaimed the first fish who had spoken. “Must we stand this insulting language—and from a person to whom we have never been introduced?”

“I don't need no introduction,” replied the young woman. “I've eaten you, and you always make me thirsty.”

Moira laughed merrily at this, and the codfish said, with much dignity, “Come, fellow aristocrats, let us go.”

“Never mind, we're going ourselves,” announced Moira, and followed by her guests the pretty mermaid swam away.

“I've heard tell of codfish aristocracy,” said Corporal Cal, “...but I never knowed 'zac'ly what it meant afore.”

“They jus' made me mad with all their airs,” observed Haute, “...so I gave 'em a piece of my mind.”

“You surely did, mate,” said the sailor, “...but I ain't sure they understand what they're like when they're salted an' hung up in the pantry. Folks gener'ly gets stuck-up 'cause they don't know theirselves like other folks knows 'em.”

“We are near Crabville now,” declared Moira. “Shall we visit the crabs and see what they are doing?”

“Yes, let's,” replied Haute. She resumed swimming and her flushed blood already needed a break. “The crabs are lots

of fun. I've often caught them among the rocks on the shore and laughed at the way they act.”

“The crabs,” said Moira, “...are second cousins to the lobsters, such as those who served us earlier, although much smaller in size. There are many families or varieties of crabs, and so many of them live in one place near here that we call it Crabville. I think you will enjoy seeing these little creatures in their native haunts.”

They now approached a kelp bed, the straight, thin stems of the kelp running far upward to the surface of the water. Here and there upon the stalks were leaves, but Haute thought the growing kelp looked much like sticks of macaroni, except they were a rich red-brown color. It was beyond the kelp—which they had to push aside as they swam through, so thickly did it grow, and Haute could not keep it from teasingly brushing and flicking her expanded bosom and nipples—that they came to a higher level, a sort of plateau on the ocean's bottom. It was covered with scattered rocks of all sizes, which appeared to have broken off from big shelving rocks they observed nearby. The place they entered seemed like one of the rocky canyons often seen upon the earth.

“Here live the fiddler crabs,” said Moira, “...but we must have taken them by surprise, it is so quiet.”

Even as she spoke, there was a stirring and scrambling among the rocks, and soon scores of light-green crabs were gathered before the visitors. The crabs bore fiddles of all sorts and shapes in their claws, and one big fellow carried a leader's baton. The latter crab climbed upon a flat rock and in an excited voice called out, “Ready, now—ready, good

fiddlers. We'll play Number 19, Hail to the Mermaids. Ready! Take aim! Fire away!"

At this command every crab began scraping at his fiddle as hard as he could, and the sounds were so shrill and unmusical that Haute wondered when they would begin to play a tune. But they never did; it was one regular mix-up of sounds from beginning to end. It was so grating that Haute's heat cooled quite a bit. When the noise finally stopped, the leader turned to his visitors and, waving his baton toward them, asked, "Well, what did you think of that?"

"Not much," said Haute honestly. "What's it all about?"

"I composed it myself!" said the Fiddler Crab. "But it's highly classical, I admit. All really great music is an acquired taste."

"I don't like it," remarked Corporal Cal. "It might do all right to stir up a racket New Year's Eve, but to call that screechin' music—"

Just then the crabs started fiddling again, harder than ever, and as it promised to be a long performance, they left the little creatures scraping away at their fiddles as if for dear life and swam along the rocky canyon until, on turning a corner, they came upon a new and different scene.

There were crabs here, too, many of them, and they were performing the most athletic antics imaginable. Some were building themselves into a pyramid, each standing on edge, with the biggest and strongest ones at the bottom. When the crabs were five or six rows high, they would all tumble over, still clinging to one another and, having reached the ground, they would separate and commence to build the pyramid

over again. Others were chasing one another around in a circle, always moving backward or sidewise, and trying to play "leapfrog" as they went. Still others were swinging on slight branches of seaweed or turning cartwheels or indulging in similar antics.

Moira and the earth people watched the busy little creatures for some time before they were themselves observed, but finally Haute gave a laugh when one crab fell on its back and began frantically waving its legs to get right-side-up again. At the sound of her laughter they all stopped their play and came toward the visitors in a flock, looking up at them with their bright eyes in a most comical way.

"Welcome home!" cried one as she turned a back somersault and knocked another crab over.

"What's the difference between a mermaid and a tadpole?" asked another in a loud voice, and without a pause continued, "Why, one drops its tail and the other holds onto it. Ha, ha! Ho, ho! Hee, hee!"

"These," said Moira, a low rasp in her voice betraying a strong opinion of hers about them, "...are the clown crabs. They are very silly things, as you may already have discovered, but for a short time they are rather amusing. One tires of them very soon."

"They're funny," said Haute, laughing again. "It's almost as good as a circus. I don't think they would make me tired, but then I'm not a mermaid."

The clown crabs had now formed a row in front of them. "Mr. Johnson," asked one, "...why is a mermaid like an automobile?"

“I don't know, Colleen Hatsby,” answered a big crab in the middle of the row. “WHY do you think a mermaid is like an automobile?”

“Because they both get tired,” said Colleen Hatsby. Then all the crabs laughed, and Colleen seemed to laugh louder than the rest.

“How do the crabs in the sea know anything 'bout automobiles?” asked Haute.

“Why, Colleen Hatsby and Diane Welthsome were both captured once by humans and put in an aquarium,” answered the mermaid quite loudly. “But one day they climbed out and escaped, finally making their way back to the sea and home again. So they are quite traveled, you see, and great favorites among the crabs. While they were on land they saw a great many curious things, and so I suppose they saw automobiles.”

“We did, we did!” cried Diane Welthsome, an awkward crab with one big claw and one little one. As she prattled on Moira leaned in close to Haute and Cal.

“In truth these two used to be cruel human women, quite long ago. They would dive and grab crabs and rip off their legs and claws for their own amusement. So Queen Aqlamia cursed them to be crabs themselves for as long as the Queen lives. Since then the pair has gone a little loopy, so I play along to be kind,” explained Moira in a whisper, getting a little gasp from Haute.

“And we saw earth people with legs, awfully funny they were; and animals called horses, with legs; and other creatures with legs; and the people cover themselves with

the oddest things—they even wear feathers and flowers on their heads, and—”

“Oh, we know all about that,” said Haute, playing along. “We live on the earth ourselves.”

“Well, you're lucky to get off from it and into the good water,” said the Crab. “I nearly died on the earth; it was so stupid, dry and airy. But the circus was great. They held the performance right in front of the aquarium where we lived, and Colleen and I learned all the tricks of the tumblers. Hi! Come on, fellow crabs, and show the earth people what you can do!”

At this the crabs began performing their antics again, but they did the same things over and over, so Corporal Cal and Haute soon tired, as Moira said they would, and decided they had seen enough of the crab circus, and the two formerly human women leading it. So they proceeded to swim farther up the rocky canyon, and near its upper end they came to a lot of conch shells lying upon the sandy bottom. A funny-looking crab was sticking his head out from each of these shells.

“These are the hermit crabs,” said one of the mermaids. “They steal these shells and live in them so no enemies can attack them.”

“Don't they get lonesome?” asked Haute.

“Perhaps so, my dear. But they do not seem to mind being lonesome. They are great cowards, and think if they can but protect their lives there is nothing else to care for. Unlike the jolly crabs we have just left, the hermits are cross and unsociable.”

“Oh, keep quiet and go away!” said one of the hermit crabs in a grumpy voice. “No one wants mermaids around here.” Then every crab withdrew its head into its shell, and the group saw them no more.

“They're not very polite,” observed Haute, following the mermaid as Moira swam upward into the middle water.

“I know now why cross people are called 'crabbed,'” said Corporal Cal. “They've got dispositions jes' like these 'ere hermit crabs.”

Presently they came upon a small flock of mackerel, and noticed that the fishes seemed much excited. When they saw the mermaid, they cried out, “Oh, Moira! What do you think? Our Flippity has just gone to glory!”

“When?” asked the mermaid.

“Just now,” one replied. “We were lying in the water, talking quietly together when a spinning, shining thing came along and our dear Flippity ate it. Then he went shooting up to the top of the water and gave a flop and—went to glory! Isn't it splendid, Moira?”

“Poor Flippity!” sighed the mermaid. “I'm sorry, for he was the prettiest and nicest mackerel in your whole flock.”

“What does it mean?” asked Haute. “How did Flippity go to glory?” They'd been some time from the screeching music, and Haute was feeling her own need for glory building once again. She thought back to the kelp forest, about how easy it would be to grab Cal and slip unseen into-

“Why, he was caught by a hook and pulled out of the water into some boat,” Moira explained. “But these poor stupid creatures do not understand that, and when one of them is jerked out of the water and disappears, they have the idea he has gone to glory, which means to them some unknown but beautiful sea.”

“I've been wondering since we came down here,” said Haute, “...why fishes are foolish enough to bite on hooks.”

“They must know enough to know they're hooks,” added Corporal Cal musingly.

“Oh, they do,” replied Moira. “I've seen fishes gather around a hook and look at it carefully for a long time. They all know it is a hook and that if they bite the bait upon it they will be pulled out of the water. But they are curious to know what will happen to them afterward, and think it means happiness instead of death. So finally one takes the hook and disappears, and the others never know what becomes of him.”

“Why don't you tell 'em the truth?” asked Haute.

“Oh, we do. The mermaids have warned them many times, but it does no good at all. The fish are stupid creatures.”

“But I wish I was Flippity,” said one of the mackerel, staring at Haute with his big, round eyes. “He went to glory before I could eat the hook myself.”

“You're lucky,” answered the young woman. “Flippity will be fried in a pan for someone's dinner. You wouldn't like that, would you?”

“Flippity has gone to glory!” said another, and then they swam away in haste to tell the news to all they met. Moira shrugged, her breasts floating upwards then downwards in a gentle motion, and they resumed their tour.

“I never heard of anything so foolish,” remarked Haute as she swam slowly on through the clear, blue water. She was trying to move her tail as little as possible, which gave less the sensation of a playful palm and more the feel of a lover’s hot breath on her scaly flower.

“Yes, it is very foolish and very sad,” answered Moira. “But if the fish were wise, men could not catch them for food, and many poor people on your earth make their living by fishing.”

“It seems wicked to catch such pretty things,” said the young woman, rethinking many an argument with vegan friends she’d scoffed at in college.

“I do not think so,” Moira replied laughingly, “...for they were born to become food for someone, and men are not the only ones that eat fishes. Many creatures of the sea feed upon them. They even eat one another at times. And if none was ever destroyed, they would soon become so numerous that they would clog the waters of the ocean and leave no room for the rest of us. So after all, perhaps it is just as well they are thoughtless and foolish.”

Presently they came to some round balls that looked much like balloons in shape and were gaily colored. They floated quietly in the water, and Haute inquired what they were.

“Balloonfish,” answered Moira. “They are helpless creatures, but have little spikes all over them so their enemies dare not bite them for fear of getting pricked.”

Haute found the balloonfish quite interesting. They had little dots of eyes and dots for mouths, but she could see no noses, and their fins and tails were very small.

“They catch these fish in the South Sea Islands and make lanterns of 'em,” said Corporal Cal. “They first skin 'em and sew the skin up again to let it dry, and then they put candles inside, and the light shines through the dried skin.”

“How...appetizing,” Moira replied, in a tone Haute had difficulty reading. “But it is time to return to the palace, for we must prepare for dinner, as it will soon begin to grow dark in the water,” continued their conductor.

It was a brief swim back towards the palace, and although they did not revisit each location again their travel did take them through the kelp forest once more – thankfully at a distance quite far from the fiddlers. Their return swim was at a quicker pace than their leisurely tour, and although Haute had hoped to make it to the palace the tight flexing of her puss and the tickle of kelp on her tits forced the young woman to ask for a moment’s pause.

“Moira, if you do not mind, may Cal and I have a moment to...reflect on the beauty we have seen this evening?” Haute could not hold back her blush, nor the extra sparkle atop her tail.

The overheated woman expected the mermaid to deny the request, but after a moment Moira responded,

“Certainly. I will wait for you just a little distance away and will listen for your call when you are ready to continue.”

Haute was so focused on her sating her own glisten that she noticed not Moira’s own spreading over her scales. Instead Haute grabbed Cal’s hand and pulled him through the teasing kelp.

Cal had no need to ask what the stop was about, and smiled when Haute pushed her breasts into his and pulled his mouth to hers. Instantly the needy woman felt Cal’s wooden rod extrude out and push against her tail, and she quickly shifted so that it could squeeze inside of her.

And squeeze it did. Despite how wet Haute was she could feel how much tighter she was around Cal’s phallus. The sensation wasn’t painful, more of a pleasant discomfort – at first. With only a few strokes Haute could feel herself take Cal more easily again and it felt good. Perhaps better than it had felt to have a dick in her for a long time.

Cal certainly wasn’t complaining. He could sense a far greater grip about his staff, feel Haute’s folds slipping over his ridges with all the more intensity, groan as she gripped her nails into his mermaid ass and pulled him into her further and further. Much like before their tits bobbed and bounced against each other and their tongues lashed.

Through the kelp a pretty face was peering. Moira was pushing aside the seaweed just enough so she could see the pair, sweat glistening over her pink skin. She had another glisten below her waist, one she was encouraging with a finger while the kelp brushed and caressed her breasts. Her mermaid mound was practically begging for her to plunge

her hand inside, but Moira kept her digits outside and reveled in the sustained sensation of need.

“Yes...here I come...here I come...” Haute moaned, her tail wrapping tightly around Cal’s, “Don’t...don’t finish inside of me...this time...” she gasped.

“I think...I’m enchanted...to finish when you do,” Cal groaned, sensing the rise to his own cusp.

“Okay, okay, hold on...” Haute sighed. As she had done many times before she let Cal slip from below her, both of them momentarily lamenting the loss of intimacy. Out of habit Haute dropped her head down to Cal’s rod and engulfed it in her mouth, while her own hands took to her clit and canal. Fingers found their way through her folds and filled and massaged her privates in the best ways. Cal’s shaft was thicker and stiffer than she’d experienced before, but Haute was able to take in quite a bit from the tip down.

“Oh...oh Haute...are you sure-”

Cal could feel himself finish before he could finish. Haute had seen to her needs with expert ability, and Cal could not stop himself from emptying into her mouth.

Haute’s orgasm had sent a warm wave up from her tail into her belly and through her body, and her afterglow was struck by Cal’s syrup rushing into her throat. Haute had taken him in her mouth as she had done many times, and lost in the lust of her muscle memory Haute had forgotten the reason why she had pulled him from her tail. She felt his thick warm juices rush down her throat, and as she pulled back from him no small amount was deposited in her mouth. Haute felt compelled to swallow, and unlike previous

experiences she found Cal's seed was now sweet and pleasant to taste.

"That was...different," Haute gasped, not entirely upset.

"I wonder what that will do to yeh there?" Cal asked as they shared an embrace. Moira took the moment to pull her hands from herself and sneak away.

"I'm sure I don't know, although our hosts have done nothing meant to be uncomfortable for us," Haute answered.

"True, lest you be pulling the legs off crabs."

Haute thought back to the circus crabs, and the two former women. She reflected on her transformation into an ocean inhabitant – willingly, and with soft pleasurable enhancements. She now tried to consider how it would have felt to have her skin harden around her, her legs split apart, her eyes bulge out, her fingers merge into claws, and her mass compress into itself.

And to know she'd never turn back.

"Perhaps we should find Moira."

Their guide was not far away and answered them swiftly when they called, and reunited they swam leisurely back to the groves that surrounded the palaces, and as they entered the gardens the sun sank, and deep shadows began to form in the ocean depths.

CHAPTER 8 - A BANQUET UNDER WATER

The palaces of the mermaids were all aglow with lights as they approached them, and Haute was amazed at the sight.

“Where do the lamps come from?” she asked their guide wonderingly.

“They are not lamps, my dear,” replied Moira, much amused at this suggestion. “We use electric lights in our palaces and have done so for thousands of years—long before the earth people knew of electric lights.”

“But where do you get 'em?” inquired Corporal Cal, who was as much astonished as the young woman.

“From a transparent jellyfish which naturally emits a strong and beautiful electric light,” was the answer. “We have many hundreds of them in our palaces, as you will presently see.”

Their way was now lighted by small, phosphorescent creatures scattered about the sea gardens and which Moira informed them were *hyalaea*, or sea glowworms. But their light was dim when compared to that of the electric jellyfish, which they found placed in clusters upon the ceilings of all the rooms of the palaces, rendering them light as day. Haute watched these curious creatures with delight, for delicately colored lights ran around their bodies in every direction in a continuous stream, shedding splendid rays throughout the vast halls.

She wondered if any of them had once been mermaids, transformed by Queen Aquamia, and if so what did it feel like to have such energy surging through you? But the thought slipped her mind before she had the chance to ask.

A group of giggling and pearl-entwined mermaids met the visitors in the hall of the main palace and told Moira the Queen had instructed them to show the guests to their rooms as soon as they arrived. So Haute followed two of them through several passages, after which they swam upward and entered a circular opening. There were no stairs here, because there was no need of them, and the young woman soon found herself in an upper room that was very beautiful indeed.

All the walls were covered with iridescent shells, polished till they resembled mother-of-pearl, and upon the glass ceiling were clusters of the brilliant electric jellyfish, rendering the room bright and cheerful with their radiance. In one corner stood a couch of white coral, with gossamer draperies hanging around it from the four high posts. Upon examining it, the young woman found the couch was covered with soft, amber sponges, which rendered it very comfortable to lie upon.

In a wardrobe she found several beautiful strings of pearls and jewelry, and these Haute was told she might wear while she remained the guest of the mermaids. She also found a table with brushes, combs and other conveniences, all of which were made of polished tortoise-shell.

Really, the room was more dainty and comfortable than one might suppose possible in a palace far beneath the surface of the sea, and Haute was greatly delighted with her

new quarters. The mermaid attendants assisted the young woman to dress herself in a string of pearls that would have been priceless upon the earth – one of many the sea-maids placed upon her. Then the merry maidens brushed and dressed her hair, and tied it with ribbons of cherry-red seaweed.

This entire time Haute found herself surrounded by generous bobbing breasts and dainty gentle hands, caressing and slipping across her scales and skins from all directions. There was no shying away from her nipples; pearls, fingers, breasts, and even the stiff nubs of the mermaids' bosoms flicked and rubbed against Haute's tips as if there was nothing unusual about touching her there.

At the same time she could feel a pleasant warm tingle in her throat, a sensation making its way through her mouth and beginning to nip at her lips. The swim from the kelp forest had warmed her up again, and the feminine charms all around her were renewing Haute's hunger, and not for dinner.

Corporal Cal had been given a similar treatment not far from Haute, but the sailor refused to dress in any pearls or jewelry, reminding the mermaids with him that he wouldn't have worn them as a man on the land and was reticent to do so under the sea.

As their attendants left to prepare for their own dinners Cal found Haute idling playing with her pearls.

"Certainly opulent," Corporal Cal whispered as he looked around himself.

“And your jewelry?” Haute asked, floating over to the coach. She let herself sink down to it, and found the sponges to be very pleasant under her mermaid rear.

“Th’same, beautiful fer a woman, which I am not,” replied Cal, swimming towards the reclined woman. He could see the glisten to her tail, and she could see a bulge beneath his mermaid slit that was barely being contained. He gently settled over her, his breasts hanging down and their nipples just gently brushing as their breasts drifted. Haute could sense his wood blooming towards her, just barely brushing her scales.

“You could fool me. And didn’t we just do this?” Haute giggled, patting one of Cal’s breasts and sending it jiggling into its mate.

“Were you not just surrounded by naked water ladies?” Corporal Cal asked, leaning forward and brushing his cheek against Haute’s as their chests pressed together once more. Haute just let out a “Mmmm,” and flicked her tail down Cal’s, “I know all this paraded beauty must be driving you wild.”

Haute could not argue with that. She could sense her trickle warming up and dripping a little more.

“How’s your throat?”

Haute was caught a little off guard by the question, asked with a tone that was not meant to be suggestive. She appreciated that Cal was actually interested in how her reaction was working out.

“Fine, warm...” Haute mused, “It feels sort of pleasant to talk.”

“Yer lips are a bit plumper.”

Haute ran her tongue around her lips and found that they did feel a bit larger. There was a pleasant tightness to them, but no changes so drastic that it affected her speaking, or so that she had even yet noticed a change.

“I have a thought,” Haute purred. She started to turn over, getting ready to present her partially exposed rear, when a cough interrupted them.

“I’m very very sorry,” Moira spoke up, and as the pair of visitors turned towards her they could clearly see the red blush of her face and the sparkle atop her tail, “I really do not want to interrupt, but the Queen has insisted on your presence.”

In the royal banquet hall were assembled many of the mermaids, headed by the lovely queen, and as soon as their earth guests arrived, Aqulamia ordered the meal to be served. The lobsters again waited upon the table, wearing little white caps and aprons which made them look very funny; but Haute was so in need of concentrating on a different type of hunger after her afternoon's excursion that she did not pay as much attention to the lobsters as she did to her supper, which was very delicious and consisted of many courses.

Haute found an unexpected addition to her enjoyment of the meal. Anytime she swallowed any of the food the sensation of it passing through throat was very satisfying. It had nothing to do with the taste, just the mere act of feeling the pressure move through her. She figured it was an effect of Cal’s syrup on her, and it was in fact quite pleasant. She

also found herself touching her fuller lips now and then to see if they had changed any further – they had not, but the sense of tightness across the skin of her lips was nice to push against now and then.

After the feast ended they all went to the big reception room, where some of the mermaids played upon harps while others sang pretty songs. They danced together, too—a graceful, swimming dance, so queer to the young woman that it interested and amused her greatly. Corporal Cal seemed a bit bashful among so many beautiful mermaids, fearful of an embarrassing display, yet he was pleased when the Queen offered him a place beside her throne, where he could see and hear all the delightful entertainment provided for the royal guests. He did not talk much, being a man of few words except when alone with Haute, but his light-blue eyes were big and round with wonder at the sights he saw – especially those of the palace that he could reasonably avert his eyes to when needed.

When the festivities were done Haute and the sailor man went to bed separately, with the very understood intention of finding each other to deal with their needs later in the night when their hosts were asleep. But both had underestimated just how much they had exerted themselves and fell into a deeper slumber than they had expected.

They slept soundly upon their sponge-covered couches. The young woman never wakened until long after the sun was shining down through the glass roof of her room. Haute resisted opening her eyes. She could feel the sponge against her skin and scales, the sensation of being under water while not in the water. She had no misunderstanding that all of

what she had done had been real, but didn't want to risk it actually being a dream just yet.

The sponge was soft, but it still had a bit of roughness to it. Haute could feel how it had exfoliated her, something that undoubtedly played towards the sensual appearance of the mermaids. But it had also teased and tickled her bigger breasts and nipples and the already glistening slit upon her tail. Haute nibbled her lip as she let her hands sneak to a nipple and the barely contained nub over her pussy. She teased them, her eyes tightening up as she giggled at the extra sensitivity of her breasts – a size and sensation she'd never dreamed she'd enjoy so much. She rolled back and forth atop the sponges for a moment, her ass grinding against them as she felt her fatted bosom jiggling atop her.

Images of mermaids and the lady version of Cal danced through her mind, and Haute realized that she didn't have to imagine these things. She opened her eyes and she was startled to find a number of big, small and middle-sized fishes staring at her through the glass ceiling. She immediately pulled her hands back from herself and sat up, her skin blushing.

“That's one bad thing 'bout this mermaid palace,” she said to herself. “It's too public. Ever'thing in the sea can look at you through the glass as much as it likes. I wouldn't mind fishes looking at me if they hadn't such big eyes, an'— goodness me! There's a monster that's all head! And there goes a fish with a sail on its back, an' here's old Cogrumble, I'm sure, for he's got a head just like a pig.”

She might have watched the fishes on the roof for hours, for it was an easy way to cool herself off, but she

remembered it was late and breakfast must be ready. She didn't want to make the Queen have to send Moira again.

So Haute woke the still slumbering Cal, dressed herself in a long string of pearls, did her hair, and swam down into the palace to find the mermaids politely waiting for their guests to join them. The sea maidens were as fresh and lovely as ever, while each and all proved sweet tempered and merry, even at the breakfast table—and that is where people are cross, if they ever are. During the meal the Queen said, “I shall take you this morning to the most interesting part of the ocean, where the largest and most remarkable sea creatures live. And we must visit King Petrius, too, for the sea serpent would feel hurt and slighted if I did not bring my guests to call upon him.”

“That will be nice,” said Haute eagerly.

But Corporal Cal asked, “Is there any danger, ma'am?”

“I think not,” replied Queen Aqulamia. “I cannot say that you will be exposed to any danger at all, so long as I'm with you. But we are going into the neighborhood of such fierce and even terrible beings which would attack you at once did they suspect you to be earth people. So in order to guard your safety, I intend to draw the Magic Circle around both of you before we start.”

“What is the Magic Circle?” asked Haute.

“A fairy charm that prevents any enemy from touching you. No monster of the sea, however powerful, will be able to reach your body while you are protected by the Magic Circle,” declared the Queen.

“Oh, then I'll not be a bit afraid,” returned the young woman with perfect confidence.

“Am I to have the Magic Circle drawn around me, too?” asked Corporal Cal.

“Of course,” answered Aqulamia. “You will need no other protection than that, yet both Princess Clitia and I will be with you. For today I shall leave Moira to rule our palaces in my place until we return.”

No sooner was breakfast finished than Haute was anxious to start. The young woman was also curious to discover what the powerful Magic Circle might prove to be, but she was a little disappointed in the ceremony. The queen merely grasped her fairy wand in her right hand and made a circle around the young woman's mermaid slit, from left to right. Then she took her wand in her left hand and motioned around Haute's heat in another circle, from right to left. “Now, my dear,” said she, “...you are safe from any creature we are liable to meet.”

She performed the same ceremony for Corporal Cal, who was doubtful about the Magic Circle because he felt the same after it as he had before. But he said nothing of his unbelief, happier that nothing had poked forward during the ceremony, and soon they left the palace and started upon their journey.

CHAPTER 9 - THE PRIDEFUL DEVILFISH

It was a lovely day, and the sea was like azure under the rays of the sun.

Over the flower beds and through the gardens they swam, emerging into the open sea in a direction opposite that taken by the visitors the day before. The party consisted of but four: Queen Aquamia, Princess Clitia, Haute and Corporal Cal.

“People who live upon the land know only those sea creatures which they are able to catch in nets or upon hooks or those which become disabled and are washed ashore,” remarked the Queen as they swam swiftly through the clear water. “And those who sail in ships see only the creatures who chance to come to the surface. But in the deep ocean caverns are amazing beings that no mortal has ever heard of or beheld, and some of these we are to visit. We shall also see some sea shrubs and flowering weeds which are sure to delight you with their beauty.”

The sights really began before they had gone very far from the palace, and a school of butterfly fish, having gorgeous colors spattered over their broad wings, was first to delight the strangers. They swam just as butterflies fly, with a darting, jerky motion, and called a merry “Good morning!” to the mermaids as they passed.

“These butterfly fish are remarkably active,” said the Princess, “...and their quick motions protect them from their enemies. We like to meet them; they are always so cheerful and good-natured.”

“Why, so am I!” cried a sharp voice just beside them, and they all paused to discover what creature had spoken to them.

“Take care,” said Clitia in a low voice. “It’s one of the deep devilfish.”

Both the exclamation and Clitia’s warning had been preceded by a tingle in the tails of Haute and Cal, right where Aqulamia had encircled them with her wand. And the tingling had not ceased, sustaining as Cal and Haute turned towards the source of the voice and Clitia’s concern. Before Haute could ask where the devilfish was it presented itself.

A long, brown arm stretched across their way in front and another just behind them. The devilfish himself came slowly sliding up to them and proved to be well worth looking at. He wore a red coat with brass buttons, and a silk hat was tipped over one ear, all of which were shabby and waterlogged and clearly pilfered from shipwrecks. His eyes were somewhat dull and watery, and he had a moustache of long, hair-like “feelers” that curled stiffly at the ends. When he tried to smile at them, he showed two rows of sharp, white teeth. In spite of his red coat and yellow-embroidered vest, his standing collar and carefully tied cravat, the tendrils of the devilfish were bare, and Haute noticed he used some of his legs for arms, as in one of them was held a slender cane and in another a handkerchief.

“Well, well!” said the Devilfish with a low growl. “Are you all dumb? Or don’t you know enough to be civil when you meet a neighbor?”

“We know how to be civil to our friends,” replied Haute, who did not like the way he spoke, nor that he was wearing material stolen from what were essentially graves.

“Well, are we not friends, then?” asked the Devilfish in an airy tone of voice that did not match how he was eyeing the mermaids.

“I think not,” said the young woman. “Let's go,” continued Haute. “It seems I don't like to 'sociate with devils.”

“Devilfish,” corrected the creature, a tentacle shifting as it circled the sea fairies.

You're jus' as horrid regardless of suffix,” she declared.

“Horrid!” cried the monster in a shocked tone of voice. The tingling in the sensitives of Haute's tail ramped up.

“Not only horrid, but horrible!” persisted the woman. The tingle in her tail ramped again, as the Devilfish's color completely changed to an angry red. It started to shift forward, teeth bared, but Aqulamia floated towards it. Her mere presence was enough for the creature to suddenly change course, rubbery tentacles bouncing and stretching as it did so.

“Now now, behave and lets us pass or I'll turn you into a human like you parade around as, and we'll see how you fair dressed up like that down here,” the Queen proclaimed, waiving a finger through the water. The Devilfish watched it as if it was a loaded gun.

“Yes, indeed,” it growled, “I shall.” It gave a little bow before shurking off backwards from whence it came. The tingling in the tails of Haute and Cal began to fade.

“Come, let's go,” said Haute again. The group left quickly, as the Devilfish had ducked from their sight. After swimming some distance in silence Haute finally muttered, “His legs remind me of serpents.”

“So they do me,” agreed Corporal Cal.

“Believe it or not,” spoke up the Princess, “...we get along with him much better than we do with his cousins, the sea slinks.”

“Oh, sea slinks?” asked Haute.

“Yes, the only creatures of the ocean which we greatly fear,” replied Aqulamia. “I hope we shall meet none today, for we are going near to the dismal caverns where they live.”

“What are the sea slinks like, ma'am?” inquired Corporal Cal a little uneasily.

“Something like the devilfish you just saw, with some of the features of a mermaid, only twisted and much larger and of a bright scarlet color, striped with black,” answered the Queen. “They are very fierce and terrible creatures, perversions of us, and nearly as much dreaded by the inhabitants of the ocean as is Goza, and nearly as powerful as King Petrius himself.”

“Goza! Who is Goza?” questioned the young woman. “I haven't heard of him before now.”

“We do not like to mention Goza's name,” responded the Queen in a low voice. “She is the wicked genius of the sea, and a magician of great power.”

“What's she like?” asked Corporal Cal.

“She is a dreadful creature, part fish, part woman, part beast, and part serpent. Centuries ago they cast her off the earth into the sea, where she has caused much trouble. Once she waged a terrible war against King Petrius, but the sea serpent finally conquered Goza and drove the magician into her castle, where she now stays shut up. For if ever Petrius catches the monster outside of her enchanted castle, he will imprison her in far more restrictive fashion, and Goza knows that very well.”

“Seems like you have your troubles down here just as we do on top the ground,” remarked Corporal Cal.

“But I'm glad old Goza is shut up in her castle,” added Haute. “Is it a sea castle like your own palace?”

“I cannot say, my dear, for the enchantment makes it invisible to all eyes but those of its inhabitants,” replied Aqlamia. “No one sees Goza now, and we scarcely ever hear of her, but all the sea people know she is here someplace and fear her power. Even in the old days, before Petrius conquered her, Goza was the enemy of the mermaids, as she was of all the good and respectable seafolk. But do not worry about the magician, I beg of you, for she has not dared to do an evil deed in many, many years.”

“Oh, I'm not afraid,” asserted Haute.

“I'm glad of that,” said the Queen. “Keep together, friends, and be careful not to separate, for here comes an army of sawfishes.”

Even as Aqulamia spoke, Cal and Haute felt the tingle upon their tails and they saw a swirl and commotion in the water ahead of them, while a sound like a muffled roar fell upon their ears. Then swiftly there dashed upon them a group of great fishes with long saws sticking out in front of their noses, armed with sharp, hooked teeth, all set in a row. They were larger than the swordfishes and seemed more fierce and bold. But the mermaids and Haute and Corporal Cal quietly awaited their attack, and instead of tearing them with their saws as they expected to do, the fishes were unable to touch them at all. They tried every possible way to get at their proposed victims, but the Magic Circle was all powerful and turned aside the ugly saws; so Cal and Haute were not disturbed at all, aside from the increasing buzz to their bits. Seeing this, the sawfishes soon abandoned the attempt and with growls and roars of disappointment swam away and were quickly out of sight. As the danger passed so did the tingling sensation, but Haute and Cal were left with the warmth in their bellies that such a sensation had flared up.

Haute forced a casual laugh and told the Queen that it seemed very nice to be protected by fairy powers. They moved on, and the water grew a darker blue as they descended into its depths, farther and farther away from the rays of the sun. Haute was surprised to find she could see so plainly through the high wall of water above her, but the sun was able to shoot its beams straight down through the transparent sea, and they seemed to penetrate to every nook and crevice of the rocky bottom.

In this deeper part of the ocean some of the fishes had a phosphorescent light of their own, and these could be seen far ahead as if they were lanterns. The explorers met a school of argonauts going up to the surface for a sail, and the young woman watched these strange creatures with much curiosity. The argonauts live in shells in which they are able to hide in case of danger from prowling wolf fishes, but otherwise they crawl out and carry their shells like humps upon their backs. Then they spread their skinny sails above them and sail away under water till they come to the surface, where they float and let the currents of air carry them along the same as the currents of water had done before. Haute thought the argonauts comical little creatures, with their big eyes and sharp noses, and to her they looked like a fleet of tiny ships.

They continued on, each pump of Haute's tail sending her deeper and burning the lust in her mermaid loins hotter.

CHAPTER 10 - THE UNDISCOVERED ISLAND

In following the fleet of argonauts, the four explorers had risen higher in the water and soon found they had wandered to an open space that seemed to Haute like the flat top of a high hill. The sands were covered with a growth of weeds so gorgeously colored that one who had never peered beneath the surface of the sea would scarcely believe they were not the product of a dye shop. Every known hue seemed represented in the delicate, fern-like leaves that swayed softly to and fro as the current moved them. They were not set close together, these branches of magnificent hues, but were scattered sparsely over the sandy bottom of the sea so that while from a distance they seemed thick, a nearer view found them spread out with ample spaces of sand between them.

In these sandy spaces lay the real attractiveness of the place, for here were many of those wonders of the deep that have surprised and interested people in all ages.

First were the starfishes—hundreds of them, it seemed—lying sleepily on the bottom, with their five or six points extended outward. They were of various colors, some rich and brilliant, others of dark brown hues. A few had wound their arms around the weeds or were creeping slowly from one place to another, in the latter case turning their points downward and using them as legs. But most of them were lying motionless, and as Haute looked down upon them she thought they resembled stars in the sky on a bright night, except that the blue of the heavens was here replaced by the

white sand, and the twinkling diamond stars by the colored starfish.

“We are near an island,” said the Queen, “...and that is why so many starfishes are here, as they love to keep close to shore. Also the little seahorses love these weeds, and to me they are more interesting than the starfish.”

Haute now noticed the seahorses for the first time. They were quite small—merely two or three inches high—but had funny little heads that were shaped much like the head of a horse, and bright, intelligent eyes. They had no legs, though, for their bodies ended in tails which they twined around the stems of seaweeds to support themselves and keep the currents from carrying them away.

Haute bent down close to examine one of the little creatures and exclaimed, “It always amused me how the seahorses haven't any fins to swim with.”

“Oh yes we have,” replied the Sea Horse in a tiny but distinct voice. “These things on the side of my head are fins.”

“They look like ears,” said the young woman.

“So they are. Fins and ears at the same time,” answered the little sea animal. “Also, there are small fins on our backs. Of course, we can't swim as the mermaids do, or even as swiftly as fishes; but we manage to get around, thank you.”

“Don't the fishes catch and eat you?” inquired Haute curiously.

“Sometimes,” admitted the Sea Horse, “...and there are many other living things that have a way of destroying us.

But here I am, as you see, over six weeks old, and during that time I have escaped every danger. That isn't so bad, is it?"

"Phoo!" said a Starfish lying near. "I'm over three months old. You're a mere baby, Sea Horse."

"I'm not!" cried the Sea Horse excitedly. "I'm full-grown and may live to be as old as you are!"

"Not if I keep on living," said the Starfish calmly, and Haute knew he was correct in his statement.

The young woman now noticed several sea spiders creeping around and drew back because she did not think them very pretty. They were shaped not unlike the starfishes, but had slender legs and big heads with wicked-looking eyes sticking out of them.

"Oh, I don't like those things!" said Haute, coming closer to her companions.

"You don't, eh?" said a big Sea Spider in a cross voice. "Why do you come around here, then, scaring away my dinner when you're not wanted?"

"It isn't YOUR ocean," replied Haute.

"No, and it isn't yours," snapped the Spider. "But as it's big enough for us both, I'd like you to go away."

"So we will," said Aqulamia gently, and at once she moved toward the surface of the water. Haute and Corporal Cal followed, with Clitia, and the young woman asked, "What island are we near?"

“It has no name,” answered the Queen, “...for it is not inhabited by man, nor has it ever yet been discovered by them. Perhaps you will be the first humans to see this island. But it is a barren, rocky place, and only fit for seals and turtles.”

“Are any of them there now?” Corporal Cal inquired.

“I think so. We will see.”

Haute was astonished to find how near they were to the “top” of the ocean, for they had not ascended through the water very long when suddenly her head popped into the air, and she gave a gasp of surprise to find herself looking at the clear sky for the first time since she had started upon this adventure by rowing into Giant's Cave.

She floated comfortably in the water, with her head and face just out of it, and began to look around her. Corporal Cal was at her side, and so were the two mermaids. The day was fair, and the surface of the sea, which stretched far away as the eye could reach, rippled under a gentle breeze. They had risen almost at the edge of a small, rocky islet, high in the middle, but gradually slanting down to the water. No trees or bushes or grass grew anywhere about; only rocks, gray and bleak, were to be seen.

Haute scarcely noticed this at first, however, for the island seemed covered with groups of forms, some still and some moving, but the mer-sailor had promptly noticed the seals. Many were lying asleep or sunning themselves; others crept awkwardly around, using their strong fins as legs or “paddles” and caring little if they disturbed the slumbers of the others. Once in a while one of those crowded out of

place would give a loud and angry bark, which awakened others and set them to barking likewise.

Baby seals were there in great numbers, and were more active and playful than their elders. It was really wonderful how they could scramble around on the land, and Haute laughed more than once at their antics.

At the edge of the water lay many huge turtles, some as big around as a wagon wheel and others much smaller in size.

“The big ones are very old,” said the Queen, seeing Haute's eyes fixed on the turtles.

“How old?” asked the young woman.

“Hundreds of years, I think. They live to a great age, for nothing can harm them when they withdraw their legs and heads into their thick shells. We use some of the turtles for food, but prefer the younger ones. Men also fish for turtles and eat them, but of course no men ever come to this out-of-the-way place in the ocean, so the inhabitants of this little island know they are perfectly safe.”

In the center of the island rose high cliffs on top of which were to be seen great flocks of seagulls, some whirling in the air, while others were perched upon the points of rock.

“What do the birds find to eat?” asked Corporal Cal.

“They often feed upon seals which die of accident or old age, and they are expert fishermen,” explained Queen Aqulamia. “Curiously enough, the seals also feed upon these birds, which they are often able to catch in their strong jaws

when the gulls venture too near. And then, the seals frequently rob the nests of eggs, of which they are very fond.”

“I'd like a few gulls' eggs now,” remarked a big seal that lay near them upon the shore. Haute had thought him sound asleep, but now he opened his eyes to blink lazily at the group in the water.

“Good morning,” said the Queen. “Aren't you Chief Snatchesnuff?”

“I am,” answered the old seal. “And you are Aqulamia, the mermaid queen. You see, I remember you, although you haven't been here for years. And isn't that Princess Clitia? To be sure! But the other mermaids are strangers to me.”

“Our friends are earth dwellers,” explained the Queen.

“That's odd,” said Snatchesnuff. “I can't remember that any earth dwellers ever came this way before. I never travel far, you see, for I'm chief of this disorderly family of seals that live on this island—on it and off it, that is.”

“You're a poor chief,” said a big turtle lying beside the seal. “If your people are disorderly, it is your own fault.”

Snatchesnuff gave a chuckling laugh. Then, with a movement quick as lightning, he pushed his head under the shell of the turtle and gave it a sudden jerk. The huge turtle was tossed up on edge and then turned flat upon its back, where its short legs struggled vainly to right its overturned body.

“There!” snorted the Seal contemptuously. “Perhaps you’ll dare insult me again in the presence of visitors, you old mud-wallower!”

Seeing the plight of the turtle, several young seals came laughingly wabbling to the spot, and as they approached the helpless creature drew in his legs and head and closed his two shells tightly together. The seals bumped against the turtle and gave it a push that sent it sliding down the beach like a toboggan, and a minute later it splashed into the water and sank out of sight. But that was just what the creature wanted. On shore the upset turtle was quite helpless; but the mischievous seals saved him. For as soon as he touched the water, he was able to turn and right himself, which he promptly did. Then he raised his head above the water and asked:

“Is it peace or war, Snatchsnuff?”

“Whichever you like,” answered the Seal indifferently.

Perhaps the turtle was angry, for it ran on shore with remarkable swiftness, uttering a shrill cry as it advanced. At once all the other turtles awoke to life and with upraised heads joined their comrade in the rush for the seals. Most of Chief Snatchsnuff’s band scrambled hastily down the rocks and plunged into the water of the sea without waiting for the turtles to reach them; but the chief himself was slow in escaping. It may be that he was ashamed to run while the mermaids were watching, but if this was so he made a great mistake. The turtles snapped at his fins and tail and began biting round chunks out of them so that Chief Snatchsnuff screamed with pain and anger and floundered into the water

as fast as he could go. The vengeful turtles were certainly the victors, and now held undisputed possession of the island.

Haute laughed joyously at the incident, not feeling a bit sorry for the old seal who had foolishly begun the battle. Even the gentle queen smiled as she said:

“These quarrels between the turtles and the seals are very frequent, but they are soon ended. An hour from now they will all be lying asleep together just as we found them; but we will not wait for that. Let us go.”

She sank slowly beneath the water again, and the others followed after her.

CHAPTER 11 - GOZA THE TERRIBLE AND HER SEA SLINKS

“The sun must be going under a cloud,” said Haute, looking ahead.

They had descended far into the ocean depths again—further, the young woman thought, than they had ever been before.

“No,” the Queen answered after a glance ahead of them, “...that is a cuttlefish, and he is dyeing the sea around him with ink so that he can hide from us. Let us turn a little to the left, for we could see nothing at all in that inky water.”

Following her advice, they made a broad curve to the left, and at once the water began to darken in that direction.

“Why, there's another of 'em,” said Corporal Cal as the little party came to a sudden halt.

“So there is,” returned the Queen, and Haute thought there was a little quiver of anxiety in her voice. “We must go far to the right to escape the ink.”

So they again started, this time almost at a right angle to their former course, the young woman inquired:

“How can the cuttlefish color the water so very black?” The question had been asked so that Haute could start to suss out why her tail was tingling.

“They carry big sacks in front of them where they conceal the ink,” Princess Clitia answered. “Whenever they choose,

the cuttlefish are able to press out this ink, and it colors the water for a great space around them.”

The direction in which they were now swimming was taking them far out of their way. Aqulamia did not wish to travel very far to the right, so when she thought they had gone far enough to escape the inky water, she turned to lead her party toward the left—the direction in which she DID wish to go. At once another cloud of ink stained the water and drove them to the right again.

“Is anything wrong, ma'am?” asked Corporal Cal, seeing a frown gather upon the Queen's lovely face. He was trying to not sound too alarmed at the growing tingle in his own tail.

“I hope not,” she said. “But I must warn you that these cuttlefish are the servants of the terrible sea slinks, and from the way they are acting they seem determined to drive us toward the Slink Crevices, which I wished to avoid.”

This admission on the part of their powerful protector, the fairy mermaid, sent a chill to the hearts of the earth people. Neither spoke for a time, but finally Corporal Cal asked in a timid voice:

“Hadn't we better go back, ma'am?”

“Yes,” decided Aqulamia after a moment's thought. “I think it will be wise to retreat. The sea slinks are evidently aware of our movements and wish to annoy us. For my part, I have no fear of them, but I do not care to have you meet such creatures.”

But when they turned around to abandon their journey, another inky cloud was to be seen behind them. They really

had no choice but to swim in the only streak of clear water they could find, and the mermaids well knew this would lead them nearer and nearer to the caves of their enemies.

But Aqulamia led the way, moving very slowly, and the others followed her. In every other direction they were hemmed in by the black waters, and they did not dare to halt, because the inky fluid crept swiftly up behind them and drove them on. The tingling of Haute's hooch was slowly growing in intensity.

The queen and the princess had now become silent and grave. They swam on either side of their guests as if to better protect them.

"Don't look up," whispered Clitia, pressing close to the young woman's side. Haute could feel Clitia's enormous breasts bumping into her, which would have been quite pleasant if not for the tension of the situation.

"Why not?" asked Haute, and then she did exactly what she had been told not to do. She lifted her head and saw stretched over them a network of crimson tentacle-like arms interlaced like the branches of trees in winter when the leaves have fallen and left them bare.

Corporal Cal gave a start and muttered "Land sakes!" for he, too, had gazed upward and seen the crimson network of limbs.

"Are these the sea slinks?" asked the young woman, the protective buzzing of her mermaid mound making her more curious than frightened.

“Yes, dear,” replied the Queen. “But I advise you to pay no attention to them. Remember, they cannot touch us.”

In order to avoid the threatening tentacle arms overhead, which followed them as they swam, the group kept near to the bottom of the sea, which was here thickly covered with rough and jagged rocks. The inky water had now been left far behind, but when Haute looked over her shoulder, she shuddered to find a great crimson monster following closely after them, with a dozen long, snaky feelers stretched out from otherwise human shoulders, as if to grab anyone that lagged behind. And there, at the side of Princess Clitia, was another slink, leering silently with her cruel eyes at the pretty mermaid. Beside the Queen swam still another of their enemies. Indeed, the sea slinks had crept upon them and surrounded them everywhere except at the front, and Haute began to feel nervous and worried for the first time.

Corporal Cal kept mumbling under his breath, for he had a way of talking to himself when anything “upsot him,” as he would quaintly remark. Haute always knew he was disturbed or in trouble when he began to “growl.”

The only way now open was straight ahead. They swam slowly, yet fast enough to keep a safe distance from the dreadful creature behind them.

“I’m afraid they are driving us into a trap,” whispered the Queen softly. “But whatever happens, do not lose courage, earth friends. Clitia and I are here to protect you, and our fairy powers are sufficient to keep you from all harm.”

Corporal Cal growled something just then, but the only words Haute could make out were, "...never lived to tell the tale."

"Oh, pshaw, Corporal," she said. "We may be in danger, right enough, an' to be honest, I don't like the looks of these sea slinks at all. But I'm sure it's no KILLING matter, for we've got the fairy circles all around us."

"Ha ha!" laughed the monster beside her. Pointy teeth glared, and slim breasts barely big enough to move jiggled slightly with the chortle, shifting cherry red nipples, "WE know all about the fairy circles, don't we, Sprigg?"

"Ho ho!" laughed the monster on the other side, tentacles stretching from her shoulders and around her torso as if to contain a belly laugh. "We do, Murck, my dear, and we don't think much of fairy circles, either!"

"They have foiled our enemies many a time," declared the Princess with much dignity.

"Ha ha!" laughed one, her tentacles running down her thin body as if unable to contain a mix of evil glee and sexual awakening, "That's why we're here now."

"Ho ho!" laughed the other, making no secret of her tentacles grabbing at her red nipples, "We've learned a trick or two, and we've got you fast this time."

Then all the sea slinks—those above and the one behind, and the two on the sides—laughed all together, and their laughter was so horrible that it made even Haute shudder.

But now the Queen stopped short, and the others stopped with her.

“I will go no farther,” she said firmly, not caring if the monsters overheard her. “It is evident that these monsters are trying to drive us into some secret place, and it is well known that they are in league with Goza the Terrible, whom they serve because they are as wicked as she is. We must be somewhere near the hidden castle of Goza, so I prefer to stay here rather than be driven into some place far more dangerous. As for the sea slinks, they are powerless to injure us in any way. Not one of those thousand excuses for arms about us can possibly touch our bodies.”

The only reply to this defiant speech was another burst of horrible laughter; and now there suddenly appeared before them still another of the monsters, which thus completely hemmed them in. Then the creatures began interlacing their long arms—or “feelers”—until they formed a perfect cage around the prisoners, not an opening being left that was large enough for one of them to escape through. A mass of deep red tentacles, tails, and nipples completely encased them.

The mermaids and the young woman and sailor man kept huddled close together, for although they might be walled in by the sea slinks, their captors could not touch them because of the protecting magic circles – which had ramped up their warning sensations upon Haute and Cal quite a bit.

All at once Haute exclaimed, “Why, we must be moving!”

This was startling news, but by watching the flow of water past them they saw that the young woman was right. The sea

slinks were swimming, all together, and as the cage they were in moved forward, the group was carried with it.

Queen Aqulamia had a stern look upon her beautiful face. Corporal Cal guessed from this look that the mermaid was angry, but however angry the Queen might be, she was unable to help herself or her guests just now or to escape from the guidance of the dreaded sea slinks. The rest of the party had become sober and thoughtful, and in silence they awaited the outcome of this strange adventure, all the time Haute and Cal's slits buzzing more and more from the protective spells.

CHAPTER 12 - THE ENCHANTED CASTLE

All at once it grew dark around them. Neither Corporal Cal nor Haute liked this gloom, for it made them nervous not to be able to see their enemies.

“We must be near a sea cavern, if not within one,” whispered Princess Clitia, and even as she spoke the network of scarlet feelers parted before them, leaving an avenue for them to swim out of the cage. There was brighter water ahead, too, so the Queen said without hesitation:

“Come along, dear friends; but let us clasp hands and keep close together.”

They obeyed her commands and swam swiftly out of their prison and into the clear water before them, glad to put a distance between themselves and the loathsome sea slinks. The monsters made no attempt to follow them, but they burst into a chorus of harsh laughter which indicated that Haute and her friends had not yet accomplished their escape.

The four now found themselves in a broad, rocky passage, which was dimly lighted from some unknown source. The walls overhead, below them, and at the sides all glistened as if made of silver, and in places were set small statues of birds, beasts, fishes, women, and even mermaids perfectly portrayed in incredible details and occupying niches in the walls and seemingly made from the same glistening material.

The queen swam more slowly now that the sea slinks had been left behind, and she looked exceedingly grave and thoughtful.

“Have you ever been here before?” asked Haute.

“No, dear,” said the Queen with a sigh.

“And do you know where we are?” continued the young woman.

“I can guess,” replied Aqlamia. “There is only one place in all the sea where such a passage as that we are in could exist without my knowledge, and that is in the hidden dominions of Goza. If we are indeed in the power of that fearful magician, we must summon all our courage to resist her, or we are lost!”

“Is Goza more powerful than the mermaids?” asked Haute anxiously.

“I do not know, for we have never before met to measure our strength,” answered Aqlamia. “But if King Petrius could defeat the magician, as he surely did, then I think I shall be able to do so.”

“I wish I was sure of it,” muttered Corporal Cal.

Absolute silence reigned in the silver passage. No fish were there; not even a sea flower grew to relieve the stern grandeur of this vast corridor. Haute began to wonder if she would ever get back again to the white cottage on the cliff. Here she was, at the bottom of the great ocean, swimming through a big tunnel that had an enchanted castle at the end, and a group of horrible sea slinks at the other!

The light grew brighter as they advanced, until finally they perceived a magnificent archway just ahead of them. Aqlamia hesitated a moment whether to go on or turn back,

but there was no escaping the sea slinks behind them, and she decided the best way out of their difficulties was to bravely face the unknown Goza and rely upon her fairy powers to prevent her doing any mischief to herself or her friends. So she led the way, and together they approached the archway and passed through it.

They now found themselves in a vast cavern, so great in extent that the dome overhead looked like the sky when seen from earth. In the center of this immense sea cavern rose the towers of a splendid castle, all built of coral inlaid with silver and having windows of clear glass.

Surrounding the castle were beds of beautiful sea flowers, many being in full bloom, and these were laid out with great care in artistic designs. Goldfish and silverfish darted here and there among the foliage, and the whole scene was so pretty and peaceful that Haute began to doubt there was any danger lurking in such a lovely place.

As they approached to look around them, a brilliantly colored gagfish swam up and gazed at them curiously with his big, saucer-like eyes. "So Goza has got you at last!" he said in a pitying tone. "How foolish you were to swim into that part of the sea where she is powerful."

"The sea slinks made us," explained Clitia.

"Well, I'm sorry for you, I'm sure," remarked the Gag, and with a flash of his tail, he disappeared among the sea foliage.

"Let us go to the castle," said the Queen in a determined voice. "We may as well boldly defy our fate as to wait until Goza seeks us out."

So they swam to the entrance of the castle. The doors stood wide open, and the interior seemed as well lighted as the cavern itself, although none of them could discover from whence the light came.

At each side of the entrance lay a fish such as they had never seen before. It was flat as a doormat and seemed to cling fast to the coral floor. Upon its back were quills like those of a porcupine, all pointed and sharp. From the center of the fish arose a head shaped like a round ball, with a circle of piercing, bead-like eyes set in it. These strange guardians of the entrance might be able to tell what their numerous eyes saw, yet they remained silent and watchful. Even Aqulamia gazed upon them curiously, and she gave a little shudder as she did so.

Inside the entrance was a domed hall with a flight of stairs leading to an upper balcony. Around the hall were several doorways hung with curtains made of woven seaweeds. Chairs and benches stood against the wall, and these astonished the visitors because neither stairs nor chairs seemed useful in a kingdom where every living thing was supposed to swim and have a fish's tail. In Queen Aqulamia's palaces benches for reclining were used, and stairs were wholly unnecessary, but in the Palace of Goza the furniture and fittings were much like those of a house upon earth. Except that every space here was filled with water instead of air Haute and Corporal Cal might have imagined themselves in a handsome earthly castle.

The little group paused half fearfully in the hall, yet so far there was surely nothing to be afraid of. They were wondering what to do next when the curtains of an archway were pushed aside and a young woman entered. To Haute's

astonishment, she had legs and walked upon her bare feet naturally and with perfect ease. She was a delicate, thin woman, nude save for some seaweeds draped about her, although none were in any particular place to keep her decent. She was thin, and Haute felt she could do with an extra meal or too, but no so thin to appear malnourished. Her hair was yellow and banged across her forehead. Her eyes were large and dark, with a pleasant, merry sparkle in them. Around her neck she wore a swirl of weed, but in spite of this Haute could see that below her thin cheeks were several scarlet-edged slits that looked like the gills of fishes, for they gently opened and closed as the woman breathed in the water by which she was surrounded. These gills did not greatly mar the lady's delicate beauty, and she spread out her arms and bowed low and gracefully in greeting.

“Hello,” said Haute.

“Why, I'd like to,” replied the woman with a laugh, a laugh that sounded like one who had long accepted a fate they can do nothing about, “...but being a mere slave, it isn't proper for me to hello. But it's good to see earth people again, and I'm glad you're here.”

“We're not glad,” observed the young woman. “We're afraid.”

“You'll get over that,” declared the woman smilingly. “People lose a lot of time being afraid. Once I was myself afraid, but I found it was no fun, so I gave it up.”

“Why were we brought here?” inquired Queen Aqualamia gently.

“I can't say, madam, being a mere slave,” replied the woman. “But you have reminded me of my errand. I am sent to inform you all that Goza the Forsaken, who hates all the world and is hated by all the world, commands your presence in her den.”

“Do you hate Goza, too?” asked Haute.

“Oh no,” answered the woman. “People lose a lot of time in hating others, and there's no fun in it at all. Goza may be hateful, but I'm not going to waste time hating her. You may do so, if you like.”

“You are an odd young woman,” remarked the Mermaid Queen, looking at her attentively. “Will you tell us who you are?”

“Once I was Prince Sacklo of Opanlehgs,” she answered. “But in this domain I have but a new gender, one title, and one name, and that is 'Slave.'”

“How came you to be Goza's slave?” asked Clitia.

“And a princess?” asked Haute.

“The funniest adventure you ever heard of,” asserted the woman with eager pride. “I sailed in a ship that went to pieces in a storm. All on board were drowned but me, and I came mighty near it, to tell the truth. I went down deep, deep into the sea, and at the bottom was Goza, watching the people drown. I tumbled on her head, and she grabbed and saved me, saying I would make a useful slave. By her magic power she made me able to live under water as the fishes live, reshaped me to remind her better of the hated mermaid

folk, and she brought me to this castle and taught me to wait upon her as her other slaves do.”

“Isn't it a dreadful, lonely life?” asked Haute.

“No indeed,” said Sacklo. “We haven't any time to be lonely, and the dreadful things Goza does are very exciting and amusing, I assure you. She keeps us guessing every minute, and that makes the life here interesting. Things were getting a bit slow an hour ago, but now that you are here, I'm in hopes we will all be kept busy and amused for some time.”

“Are there many others in the castle besides you and Goza?” asked Aqulamia.

“Dozens of us. Perhaps hundreds. I've never counted them, and some end up as decorations along the entry passage, so it is hard to keep track,” said the woman. “But Goza is the only master; all the rest of us are in the same class, so there is no jealousy among the slaves.”

“What is Goza like?” Corporal Cal questioned.

At this the woman laughed, and the laugh was full of mischief. “If I could tell you what Goza is like, it would take me a year,” was the reply. “But I can't tell you. Everyone has a different idea of what she's like, and soon you will see her yourselves.”

“Are you fond of her?” asked Haute.

“If I said yes, I'd get a good whipping,” declared Sacklo. “I am commanded to hate Goza, and being a good servant, I try to obey. If anyone dared to like Goza, I am sure they'd be instantly fed to the turtles; so I advise you not to like her.”

“Oh, we won't,” promised Haute.

“But we're keeping the master waiting, and that is also a dangerous thing to do,” continued the woman. “If we don't hurry up, Goza will begin to smile, and when she smiles there is trouble brewing.”

The queen sighed. “Lead the way, Sacklo,” she said. “We will follow.”

The woman bowed again, and going to an archway, held aside the curtains for them. They first swam into a small anteroom which led into a long corridor, at the end of which was another curtained arch. Through this Sacklo also guided them, and now they found themselves in a cleverly constructed maze. Every few feet were twists and turns and sharp corners, and sometimes the passage would be wide, and again so narrow that they could just squeeze through in single file, mermaid breasts pushed against the walls and bulging upwards.

“Seems like we're gettin' further into the trap,” growled Corporal Cal. “We couldn't find our way out o' here to save our lives.”

“Oh yes we could,” replied Clitia, who was just behind him. “Such a maze may indeed puzzle you, but the Queen or I could lead you safely through it again, I assure you. Goza is not so clever as she thinks herself.”

The sailor, however, found the maze very bewildering, and so did Haute. Passages ran in every direction, crossing and recrossing, and it seemed bewildering that the woman Sacklo knew just which way to go. But she never hesitated an instant. Haute looked carefully to see if there were any marks

to guide her, but every wall was of plain, polished marble, and every turning looked just like all the others. Suddenly Sacklo stopped short. They were now in a broader passage, but as they gathered around their conductor they found further advance blocked. Solid walls faced them, and here the corridor seemed to end.

“Enter!” said a clear voice.

“But we can't!” protested Haute.

“Swim straight ahead,” whispered the gilled woman in soft tones. “There is no real barrier before you. Your eyes are merely deceived by magic.”

“Ah, I understand,” said Aqulamia, nodding her pretty head. And then she took Fayre's hand and swam boldly forward, while Corporal Cal followed holding the hand of Clitia.

And behold! the marble wall melted away before them, and they found themselves in a chamber more splendid than even the fairy mermaids had ever seen before.

CHAPTER 13 - PRISONERS OF THE SEA MONSTER

The room in the enchanted castle which Goza called the "den" - and in which the wicked sea monster passed most of her time - was a perfectly shaped dome of solid gold. The upper part of this dome was thickly set with precious jewels—diamonds, rubies, sapphires and emeralds, which sparkled beautifully through the crystal water. The lower walls were as thickly studded with pearls, all being of perfect shape and color. Many of the pearls were larger than any which may be found upon earth, for the sea people knew where to find the very best and hide them away where men cannot discover them.

The golden floor was engraved with designs of rare beauty, depicting not only sea life, but many adventures upon land. In the room were several large, golden cabinets, the doors of which were closed and locked, and in addition to the cabinets there were tables, chairs and sofas, the latter upholstered with softest sealskins. Handsome rugs of exquisitely woven seaweeds were scattered about, the colors of which were artistically blended together. In one corner a fountain of air bubbled up through the water. The entire room was lighted as brilliantly as if exposed to the direct rays of the sun, yet where this light came from our friends could not imagine. No lamp or other similar device was visible anywhere.

The strangers at first scarcely glanced at all these beautiful things, for in a well-padded throne sat Goza herself, more wonderful than any other living creature, and as they gazed upon her, their eyes seemed fascinated as if held by a

spell. Goza's face was the face of a woman, except that the tops of her ears were pointed, and she had small horns instead of eyebrows. Another horn perched on the end of her chin. In spite of these deformities, the expression of the face was not unpleasant or repulsive. Her hair was carefully parted and brushed, and her mouth and nose were not only perfect in shape but quite beautiful. The chin horn pointed downward towards a chest almost the size of Aqualamia's, capped with four inch nipples, achingly hard and formed similarly to phalluses.

Only the eyes betrayed Goza and made her terrible to all beholders. They seemed like coals of glowing fire and sparkled so fiercely that no one ever cared to meet their gaze for more than an instant. Perhaps the monster realized this, for she usually drooped her long lashes over her fiery eyes to shut out their glare. Goza had two well-shaped legs which ended in the hoofs of beasts instead of feet, and these hoofs were shod with gold. Her body was a shapely hourglass covered with richly embroidered remnants which were more for spectacle than modesty, around which was wrapped a great scarf of golden thread. Haute noticed that Goza's breasts moved constantly in little ripples, and a string of pearls was strung tightly from one nipple to the other.

The best features of which Goza could boast were her arms and hands, the latter being as well formed, as delicate and white as those of a well-bred woman. When she spoke, her voice sounded sweet and clear, and its tones were very gentle. She had given them a few moments to stare at her, for she was examining them in turn with considerable curiosity.

“Well,” said Goza finally spoke, “...do you not find me the most hateful creature you have ever beheld?”

The queen refrained from answering, but Haute said promptly, “We do. Nothing could be more horrid or more disgustin' than you are, it seems to me.”

“Very good, very good indeed,” declared the monster, lifting her lashes to flash her glowing eyes upon them. Then she turned toward Corporal Cal. “What do YOU think of me?”

“Mighty little,” the sailor replied.

“Very true,” answered Goza, frowning. She felt that she had received a high compliment, and the frown showed she was pleased with Corporal Cal.

But now Queen Aqulamia advanced to a position in front of their captor and said, “Tell me, Goza, why have you trapped us and brought us here?”

“To unmake you and remake you for my amusement,” was the quick answer, and the magician turned for an instant to flash her eyes upon the beautiful mermaid. “For two hundred years I have been awaiting a chance to get within my power some friend of Petrius the Sea Serpent—of Petrius, whom I hate!” she added, smiling sweetly. “When you left your palace today, my swift spies warned me, and so I sent the sea slinks to capture you. Often have they tried to do this before, but always failed. Today, acting by my command, they tricked you, and by surrounding you forced you to the entrance of my enchanted castle. The result is a fine capture of important personages. I have now in my power the Queen and princess of the fairy mermaids, as well as two wandering

earth people, and I assure you I shall take great pleasure in reshaping you utterly.”

“You are a coward,” declared the Queen proudly. “You dared not meet us in the open sea.”

“No, I dare not leave this castle,” Goza admitted, still smiling. “But here in my own domain my power is supreme. Nothing can interfere with my vengeance.”

“That remains to be seen,” said Aqlamia, firmly meeting the gaze of the terrible eyes.

“Of course,” she answered, nodding her head with a graceful movement. “You will try to thwart me and escape. You will pit your fairy power against my powers of magic. That will give me great pleasure, for the more you struggle, the greater will be my revenge.”

“But why should you seek revenge upon us?” asked Clitia. “We have never harmed you.”

“That is true,” replied Goza. “I bear you no personal ill will. But you are friends of my great enemy, King Petrius, and it will annoy him very much when he finds that you have been remade by me into something unpleasant. I cannot hurt the rascally old sea serpent himself, but through you I can make him feel my vengeance.”

“The mermaids have existed thousands of years,” said the Queen in a tone of pride. “Do you imagine the despised and conquered Goza has power to reshape them?”

“I do not know,” was the quiet answer. “It will be interesting to discover which is the more powerful.”

“I challenge you to begin the test at once, vile magician!” exclaimed Aqulamia.

“There is no hurry, fair Queen,” answered Goza in her softest tones. “I have been so many years in accomplishing your capture that it is foolish to act hastily now. Besides, I am lonely. Here in my forced retirement I see only those uninteresting earth mortals whom I have made my slaves, perversions of both the land and the sea peoples. For sea dwellers fear to serve me, save the sea slinks, but they dare not enter my castle. I have saved many mortals from drowning and brought them here to people my castle, but I do not love or despise mortals. Their reshaping is only practice to me. Two lovely mermaids are much more interesting, and before I allow you to face eternity as some purposeless thing, I shall have much amusement in witnessing your despair and your struggles to escape. You are now my prisoners. By slow degrees I shall wear out your fairy powers and break your hearts, as well as the hearts of these earth dwellers who have no magic powers, and I think it will be a long time before I finally permit your consciences to be released from my torment.”

“That's all right,” said Haute cheerfully. “The longer you take, the better I'll be satisfied.”

“That's how I feel about it,” added Corporal Cal. “Don't get in a hurry to remake us Goza. It'll be such a wear an' tear on your nerves. Jes' take it easy an' let us live as we are as long as we can.”

“Don't you even care to die?” asked the magician.

“It's a thing I never longed for,” the sailor replied. “You see, we had no business to go on a trip with the mermaids to begin with. I've allus heard tell that mermaids is dangerous, an' no one as met 'em ever lived to tell the tale. Eh, Haute?”

“That's what you said, Corporal Cal.”

“So I guess we're done for, one way 'r 'nother, an' it don't matter much which. But Haute's a good young woman, it don't seem like her time has come to die. I'd like to have her sent safe home so I've got this 'ere proposition to make, Goza. If your magic could make ME die twice, or even THREE times fer good measure, why you go ahead an' do it an' I won't complain. All I ask is fer you to send this young woman safe back to dry land again.”

“Don't you do it, Goza!” cried Haute indignantly, and turning to Corporal Cal, she added, “I'm not goin' to leave you down here in all this mess, Corporal, and don't you think it. If one of us gets out of the muddle we're in, we'll both get out, so don't you make any bargains with Goza to die twice.”

Goza listened to this conversation very carefully. “The dying does not amount to much,” he said. “It is the thinking about it that hurts you mortals most. I've watched many a shipwreck at sea, and the people would howl and scream for hours before the ship broke up. Their terror was very enjoyable. But when the end came, they all drowned as peacefully as if they were going to sleep, so it didn't amuse me at all. What I will do to you will be far worse than dying. Perhaps eternity as a pebble beneath my hoof. Or a barnacle on a sickly whale. Or just a tooth in-”

“I'm not worrying,” interrupted Haute.

“Ner me,” said Corporal Cal. “You'll find we can take what comes jes' as easy as anybody.”

“I do not expect to get much from you poor mortals,” said Goza carelessly. “You are merely a side show to my circus, a sort of dessert to my feast of vengeance. When the time comes, I can find a hundred ways to remake you. My most interesting prisoners are these pretty mermaids, who claim that none of their race has ever yet been remade by an outsider. The first mermaid ever created is living yet as she was shaped, and I am told she is none other than Queen Aqulamia. So I have a pretty problem before me to invent some way to destroy the mermaids or put them out of their present existence. And it will require some thought.”

“Also, it will require some power you do not possess,” suggested the Queen.

“That may be,” replied Goza softly. “But I am going to experiment, and I believe I shall be able to cause you a lot of pain and sorrow before I finally make an end of you that satisfies. I have not lived twenty-seven thousand years, Aqulamia, without getting a certain amount of wisdom, and I am more powerful than you suspect.”

“You are a monster and a wicked magician,” said the Mermaid Queen.

“I am,” agreed Goza, “Petrius even offered to remake me however I wanted if I swore off my wonderful hobbies, and I turned him down.”

“Why don't you reshape yourself?” asked Haute.

“I've tried that and failed,” she answered. “Only one being in the world has power to unmake me, and that is King Petrius, the sea serpent.”

“Then you'd better let him do it,” advised the young woman.

“No. I cannot allow King Petrius the pleasure of remaking me. He has always been my worst enemy, and it would be such a joy to him to make me something useless that I really cannot allow him. Indeed, I have always hoped to kill Petrius. I have now been three thousand six hundred and forty-two years, eleven months and nine days figuring out a plan to destroy old Petrius, and as yet I have not discovered a way.”

“I'd give it up, if I were you,” advised Haute. “Don't you think you could get some fun out of trying to be good?”

“No!” cried Goza, and her voice was not so soft as before. “Listen, Aqulamia, you and your attendants shall be prisoners in this castle until I can manage to forever change you into some other form. Rooms will be placed at your disposal, and I wish you to go to them at once, as I am tired of looking at you.”

“You're no more tired than we are,” remarked Haute. “It's lucky you can't see yourself, Goza.”

She turned her glowing eyes full upon her.

“Enjoy your form whilst you have it, for I shall find for you a shape and existence that will make you scream with terror.” She touched a bell beside her, and the young woman was surprised to find how clearly its tones rang out through

the water. In an instant the woman Sacklo appeared and bowed low before her dreadful master.

“Take the mermaids and the young women to the Rose Chamber,” commanded Goza.

Sacklo turned to obey.

“Are the outer passages well-guarded?” asked the monster.

“Yes, as you have commanded,” said the woman.

“Then you may allow the prisoners to roam at will throughout the castle. Now, go!”

The prisoners followed Sacklo from the room, glad to get away. The presence of this evil being had grown oppressive to them, and Goza had herself seemed ill at ease during the last few minutes. Her breasts jostled around her body jerkily, as if something disturbed them, and at such times Goza shifted nervously in her seat.

Sacklo's lithe legs trotted through the water and led the way into a different passage from the one by which they had entered. They swam slowly after him and breathed easier when they had left the golden domed chamber where their wicked enemy sat enthroned. The further they got from Goza's throne the more the buzz of Haute's tale diminished, but captured as they were the stimulating sensation would not cease. Haute didn't want to be turned on in such a serious situation, but she could feel that the scales around her slit were the wettest they had been.

“Well, how do you like her?” asked Sacklo with a laugh.

“We hate her!” declared Haute emphatically, but with a heavy breath to her voice.

“Of course you do,” replied Sacklo. “But you're wasting time hating anything. It doesn't do you any good, or her any harm. Can you sing?”

“A little,” said Haute, wishing she still had thighs to rub together, “...but I don't feel like singing now.”

“You're wrong about that,” the young woman asserted. “Anything that keeps you from singing is foolishness, unless it's laughter. Laughter, joy and song are the only good things in the world.”

Haute did not answer this absurd speech, for just then they came to a flight of stairs, and Sacklo climbed up them while the others swam. And now they were in a lofty, broad corridor having many doors hung with seaweed draperies. At one of these doorways Sacklo stopped and said, “Here is the Rose Chamber where the master commands you to live until you die. You may wander anywhere in the castle as you please; to leave it is impossible. Whenever you return to the Rose Chamber, you will know it by this design of roses sewn in pearls upon the hangings.”

“Thank you,” replied Queen Aquamia. “Are we to be fed?”

“Meals will be served in your rooms. If you desire anything, ring the bell and some of the slaves will be sure to answer it. I am mostly in attendance upon my master, but whenever I am at liberty I will look after your comfort myself.”

Again they thanked the strange woman, and she turned and left them. They could hear her whistle and sing as she returned along the passage. Then Princess Clitia parted the curtains that her queen and companions might enter the Rose Chamber.

CHAPTER 14 - SEAMAN SAL AND CORPORAL CAL

The room Goza had given her prisoners was as handsome as all other parts of this strange enchanted castle. Gold was used plentifully in the decorations, and in the Rose Chamber occupied by the mermaids, Haute, and Cal golden roses formed a border around the entire room. The sea maidens had evidently been expected, for the magician had provided couches for them to recline upon similar to the ones used in the mermaid palaces. The frames were of mother of pearl and the cushions of soft, white sponges. In the room were tables, mirrors, ornaments and many articles used by earth people, which they afterward learned had been plundered by Goza from sunken ships and brought to her castle by her allies, the sea slinks.

While the mermaids were examining and admiring the room Corporal Cal found a connecting doorway leading to what would later be revealed as the Peony Room. It, too, was very cozy and interesting. Some of the wall panels were formed of mirrors and reflected clearly the interior of the room. Around the ceiling was a frieze of imitation peonies in silver, and the furniture was peony-shaped, the broad leaves being bent to form seats and couches.

Beside a pretty dressing table hung a bell cord with a tassel at the end. Corporal Cal did not know it was a bell cord, so he pulled it to see what would happen and was puzzled to find that nothing seemed to happen at all, the bell being too far away for him to hear it. Then he began looking at the treasures contained in this royal apartment, and was much pleased with a golden statue of a mermaid that

resembled Queen Aquamia in every feature, from her detailed breasts and nipples to the finely realized folds of her tale slip. A silver flower vase upon a stand contained a bouquet of gorgeous peonies, “as nat'ral as life,” said Corporal Cal, although he saw plainly that they must be made of metal.

Haute followed from the doorway that connected the two rooms, gently pushing the door most of the way shut without it making noise nor revealing too much. She was shocked that the attention Cal’s rod was getting from the fairy circle wasn’t sending it rocketing from him.

“Isn't it pretty, Corporal?” Haute asked huskily, swimming up to Cal from behind and putting her arms around him, her hands gripping Cal’s breasts. Cal moaned a little and in their reflection Haute could see the tip of his wood begin to split the scales of his tale. “Who'd ever think that awful creature Goza owned such a splendid castle and kept his prisoners in such lovely rooms?”

Cal turned in Haute’s embrace, leaning back a little as his breasts pushed against hers. As he turned his stiff staff lunged from him and in a moment he and Haute had pushed it into her very wet and ready tail. She gasped as she felt Cal fill her. She wasn’t as tight as she’d been in their prior tryst, but she still felt much more stretched and filled than she had the last time she’d taken Cal on land – regardless of literal or metaphorical wood.

They kissed, saliva traded passionately and impossibly at the bottom of the sea. Haute’s lips had not loosened at all since she’d swallowed Cal’s syrup, and the sense of his feminine lips pushing against her full pout was exhilarating.

Haute ran her hands across Cal's smooth mermaid skin, tracing the curve of his lady ass and gripping his rear and slamming him towards her so suddenly Cal was caught off guard. Haute had hoped having Cal's warm wood inside her would help sate her drooling pussy, help put at ease the constant buzz of danger emanating from the fairy circle, but Haute could feel the warm buzzing igniting her needs even as Cal pushed deeper and deeper within her. The only way she was going to find a clear mind was if she came.

And if she came Cal would cum, and her pussy would get even tighter, and the fairy circle's ministrations would...

As she felt herself getting close to her own crest Haute changed course, pulled her hands back and guiding Cal from her. The sailor's eyes had been closed, his lip bitten in a most attractive fashion, and as he slipped from his mer-maiden he opened his eyes and looked to her.

"I don't think I can handle my pussy getting any tighter while we are here," Haute hissed. As she spoke she turned around, grabbing one of the tables to anchor herself, and she presented her partially scaled ass.

Cal did not have to ask for further instructions. He grabbed the round edges of her rear and guided his wooden shaft over her ass scales and between her generous cheeks. He was still coated in Haute's juices, and although it was a tight fit – and Haute gritted her teeth as she felt the head of his dick pushing against her back door – Cal felt himself pop inside with minimum resistance.

Haute let out a long moan. They'd rarely done this on land, and Corporal Cal certainly wasn't so girthy then.

Haute's fingers gripped the table tightly as Cal began to pump. Haute looked up and saw the pair of them in the mirrored walls. Haute's stretched tits were just barely resting on the table, bouncing and jiggling with each of Cal's thrusts. Haute's hair had become wild and loose, strands hanging down over her eyes. She could see the bubbles of her butt jiggling and gripped by Cal's female fingers, the once broad man's bulbous breasts bouncing upon his own chest.

The young woman watched herself get pounded from behind for a few moments, watching their altered and mer-shaped forms as if Haute was a voyeur of her own lusty lay. She looked so...naughty. Like a 50s pin-up, a mermaid of ridiculous proportions, being taken by another busty myth. She looked at her breasts, how big they were, how they changed her lines and silhouette. How they must drive Cal crazy with lust.

Cal ran his hands along Haute's side, and she remembered that the poor man was unable to cum until she did. Haute wondered what his sap would do to her rear. Her pussy had tightened up like she was a freshman, her throat was eager to feel something inside it, her lips – all of them – were plump and pleasurable. What would happen to her starfish?

These thoughts were getting Haute closer to orgasm than anything happening in her rectum – although she was enjoying it. Haute pushed a hand down to the gushing slit affront her tail and her fingers found her gooey clit. It only took a few moments of attention before Haute was screaming out her orgasm, and she felt Cal shudder before he released inside of her.

Both had experienced one of the most intense orgasms of their lives, and for a moment they could only be still as their muscles remained locked up in their pleasure. Slowly the afterglow crept in and released them, and the pair floated together towards a couch. There they lay, Cal spooned up behind Haute, his arm wrapped around her belly, and it was a few moments before either could muster something worth saying.

“I ne’er expected to do something like that while locked up,” Cal muttered.

“No,” replied Haute soberly, “I’m sure Goza does not expect us to be happy here. But I’m going to fool him and have just as good a time as I can.” As she spoke they both turned around—an easy thing to do with a single flop of their flexible tails—and Corporal Cal uttered a cry of surprise.

They both shot up from the couch, Haute turning towards the object of Cal’s exclamation. Just across the room stood a perfect duplicate of Cal – not the sailor man he had been, but the womanly form he had now. The lovely thin face was framed by the same brunette bob. Impressive breasts floated in the water, underneath of which was the same trim waist that flowed out to generous hips and – legs!

Long lovely female legs stretched down to petite feet resting on the floor. Something odd was that while one leg was supple flesh, the other was covered in brown curving lines interrupted by circular knots. It was quickly clear that this legs was fashioned of wood – but unlike Cal’s old leg this one was smooth and looked just like its pair. Where it met the upper thigh there were no straps or sockets, the wood grain just smoothly transitioned into the flesh.

Another difference between mer-Cal and this woman was that nestled between her legs was a plump and very glazed pussy.

“It can't be a reflection in a mirror,” Haute quietly murmured.

Both swam back a bit – more startled than scared – when the woman began to walk towards them, her gait almost natural. Despite its improved appearance it was clear that the wooden leg was still stiffer than the natural one.

“Now see here, this is a private room!” Cal exclaimed.

“That you wandered into...” Haute reminded him.

“Did you ring jes' to tell me to git out?” asked the other in a mild voice.

“I—I didn't ring,” declared Corporal Cal.

“You did. You pulled that bell cord,” replied the wooden-legged woman, walking over and indicating the cord.

“Oh, did pullin' that thing ring a bell?” inquired the Corporal, a little ashamed of his ignorance.

“It surely did,” was the reply.

“Who are you?” asked Haute, who was very curious and much surprised.

“I'm Seaman Sal,” was the reply. “Seaman Sal Wellington, formerly o' the brig 'Goodtime' an' now a slave o' Goza at the bottom o' the sea.”

“Sal Wellington!” gasped Corporal Cal, amazed. “Sal Wellington o’ the ‘Goodtime’! Why, dash my eyes, we were mates on that ship!”

“Are YOU Corporal Cal? The one about how the men claimed must be me twin, given how similar we looked?” asked the other. And then she added, “But no, you can’t be. Cal wasn’t no mermaid. He were a human critter like myself.”

“That’s what I am,” said Corporal Cal hastily. “I’m a human critter, too. I’ve jes’ borrowed this fish tail to swim with while I’m visitin’ the mermaids.”

“Well, well,” said Seaman Sal in astonishment. “Who’d o’ thought it! An’ who’d ever o’ thought as I’d find my long-lost shipmate in Goza’s enchanted castle full fifty fathoms deep down in the wet, wet water!”

“Why, as fer that,” replied Corporal Cal, “...it’s YOU as is the long-lost shipmate, not me. You an’ your ship disappeared many a year ago, an’ ain’t never been heard of since, while, as you see, I’m livin’ on earth yet.”

“You don’t look it to all appearances,” remarked Seaman Sal in a reflective tone of voice. “But I’ll agree it’s many a year since I saw the top o’ the water, an’ I’m not expectin’ to ever tramp on dry land again.”

“Are you dead, or drowned, or what?” asked Corporal Cal.

“Neither one nor t’other,” was the answer. “But Goza gave me gills so’s I could live in the water like fishes do, not to mention the new body she found more pleasin’ to ‘er eye, an’ if I got on land I couldn’t breathe air any more’n a fish out

o' water can, nor be recognized as a were. So I guess as long as I live, I'll hev to stay down here."

"Do you like it?" asked Haute.

"Oh, I don't objec' much, I've quite taken to bein' a fairer sex," said Seaman Sal, hefting one of her breasts. "There ain't much excitement here, fer we don't catch a flock o' mermaids ev'ry day, but the work is easy an' the rations fair. I might o' been worse off, you know, for when my brig was wrecked, I'd 'a' gone to Davy Jones's Locker if Goza hadn't happened to find me an' made me a fishy woman."

"You don't look as much like a fish as Corporal Cal does," observed Haute.

"P'raps not," said Seaman Sal, "...but I notice Cal ain't got any gills an' breathes like you an' the mermaids does. When he gets back to land, he'll have his two legs again an' live in comfort breathin' air."

"I won't have two legs," asserted Corporal Cal, "...for when I'm on earth I'm fitted with one wooden leg, jes' the same as you are, Sal."

"Oh, I hadn't heard o' that, Cal, but I'm not surprised," replied Brother Sal. "Many a sailor gets to wear a wooden leg in time. Mine's hick'ry."

"So's mine," said Corporal Cal with an air of pride. "I'm glad I've run across you, Sal, for I often wondered what had become of you. Seems too bad, though, to have to spend all your life under water."

“What's the odds?” asked Seaman Sal. “I never could keep away from the water since I was a boy, an' there's more dangers to be met floatin' on it than there is soakin' in it. I'm a good deal happier than I was.”

“Is Goza a kind master?” asked Haute.

“I can't say she's kind,” replied Seaman Sal, “...for she's as near a devil as any livin' critter CAN be. She grumbles an' growls in her soft voice all day. But I don't see much of her. There's so many of us slaves here that Goza don't pay much attention to us, an' we have a pretty good time when the ol' magician is shut up in her den, as she mostly is.”

“Could you help us to escape?” asked the young woman.

“Why, I don't know how,” admitted Seaman Sal. “There's magic all around us, and we slaves are never allowed to leave this great cave. I'll do what I can, o' course, but Sacklo is the woman to help you if anyone can. That little chip knows a heap, I can tell you. So now, if nothin' more's wanted, I must get back to work.”

“What work do you do?” Corporal Cal asked.

“I sew pearls on Goza's jewelry. Every time she gets mad, she busts one with her bust, an' I have to sew 'em together again. As she's mad most o' the time, it keeps me busy.”

“I'll see you again, won't I, Sal?” said Corporal Cal.

“No reason why you shouldn't, if you manage to keep alive,” said Seaman Sal. “But you mustn't forget, Cal, this Goza has her grip on you, an' I've never known anything to escape her yet.”

Saying this, the former sailor began to limp toward the door, but tripped when her wooden foot failed to clear a bit of carpet. She gave a swift dive forward, breasts swinging and jiggling and ass flying upwards. She would have fallen flat had she not grabbed the drapery at the doorway and saved herself by holding fast to it with both hands. Even then she rolled and twisted so awkwardly before she could get upon her legs that Haute had to laugh outright at her antics.

“This hick'ry leg!” said Seaman Sal, who looked as if she'd wanted to exclaim something else first but held it in, “Goza may had refashioned it more lovely, but wood is wood and it is so blamed water-logged that I can hardly use it some days. AuraGol, the goldworker, has promised me a gold leg brace that will stay down, but she never has time to make it. You're mighty lucky, Cal, to have a merman's tail instead o' legs.”

“I guess I am, Sal,” replied Corporal Cal, “...for in such a wet country the fishes have the best of it. But I ain't sure I'd like this sort o' thing always.”

“Think o' the money you'd make in a side show,” said Seaman Sal with a funny chuckling laugh. Then she pounded her wooden leg against the hard floor and managed to hobble from the room without more accidents.

CHAPTER 15 - THE MAGIC OF THE MERMAIDS

When Haute and Corporal Cal entered the Rose Chamber they found the two mermaids reclining before an air fountain that was sending thousands of tiny bubbles up through the water. Each had their hands gently resting on their breasts and tales, fingers grazing sensitive nubs and mounds but neither overtly groping themselves. They both noticed Haute and Cal with a calm, dreamy gaze.

“These fountains of air are excellent things,” remarked Queen Aqulamia, her long body hanging off the couch, “...for they keep the water fresh and sweet, and that is the more necessary when it is confined by walls, as it is in this castle. But now, let us counsel together and decide what to do in the emergency that confronts us.”

“How can we tell what to do without knowing what's going to happen?” asked Haute.

“Somethin's sure to happen,” said Corporal Cal.

As if to prove his words, a gong suddenly sounded at their door and in walked a thin little woman clothed all in seaweed woven to resemble a chef's uniform, including an apron and cap. Her face was round and jolly, and she had a long ponytail that curled forward and over her shoulder.

“Well, well!” said the wisp of a woman, spreading out her legs and putting her hands on her hips as she stood looking at them. “Of all the odd things in the sea, you're the oddest! Mermaids, eh?”

“Don't bunch us that way!” protested Corporal Cal.

“You are quite wrong,” said Haute. “I'm a—a young woman.”

“With a fish's tail?” she asked, laughing at her.

“That's only just for a while,” she said, “...while I'm in the water, you know. When I'm at home on the land I walk just as you do, an' so does Corporal Cal.”

“But we haven't any gills,” remarked the Corporal, looking closely at the little woman's throat, “...so I take it we're not as fishy as some others.”

“If you mean me, I must admit you are right,” said the little woman, twisting her ponytail. “I'm as near a fish as a woman can be. But you see, Corporal, without the gills that make me a fish, I could not live under water.”

“When it comes to that, you've no business to live under water,” asserted the sailor. “But I s'pose you're a slave and can't help it.”

“I'm chief cook for that old horror Goza. And that reminds me, good mermaids, or good people, or good young womans and sailors, or whatever you are, that I'm sent here to ask what you'd like to eat.”

“Good to see you, then,” said Corporal Cal, “I'm nearly starved, myself.”

“I had it in mind,” said the little woman, “...to prepare a regular mermaid dinner, but since you're not mermaids—”

“Oh, two of us are,” said the Queen, smiling. “I, my good cook, am Aqulamia, the ruler of the mermaids, and this is the Princess Clitia.”

“I've often heard of you, your Majesty,” returned the chief cook, bowing respectfully, “...and I must say I've heard only good of you. Now that you have unfortunately become my master's prisoners, it will give me pleasure to serve you as well as I am able.”

“We thank you, good lady,” said Aqulamia.

“What have you got to eat?” inquired Haute. “Seems to me I'm hollow way down to my toes—my tail, I mean—and it'll take a lot to fill me up.” Haute laughed at herself, think about what she and Cal had just done. She could feel his sap had started to absorb into her, and a particular puckering was underway, along with a general tightening within. “We haven't eaten a morsel since breakfast, you know,” she quickly followed up.

“I think I shall be able to give you almost anything you would like,” said the cook. “Goza is a wonderful magician and can procure anything that exists with no more effort than a wiggle of her thumb. But some eatables, you know, are hard to serve under water, because they get so damp that they are soon ruined.”

“Ah, it is different with the mermaids,” said Princess Clitia.

“Yes, all your things are kept dry because they are surrounded by air. I've heard how the mermaids live. But here it is different.”

“Take this ring,” said the Queen, handing the chief cook a circlet which she drew from her finger. “While it is in your possession, the food you prepare will not get wet, or even moist.”

“I thank your Majesty,” returned the cook, taking the ring. “My name is Cora Tein, and I'll do my best to please you. How would you like for luncheon some oysters on the half-shell, clam broth, shrimp salad, broiled turtle steak, and watermelon?”

“That will do very nicely,” answered the Queen.

“Do watermelons grow in the sea?” asked Haute.

“Of course, that is why they are called watermelons,” replied Cora Tein. “I think I shall serve you a water ice, in addition to the rest. Water ice is an appropriate sea food.”

“Have some watercress with the salad,” said Corporal Cal.

“I'd thought of that,” declared the cook. “Doesn't my bill of fare make your mouths water?”

“Hurry up and get it ready,” suggested Haute.

Cora Tein at once bowed and retired, and when they were done, Corporal Cal said to the Queen, “Do you think, ma'am, we can manage to escape from Goza and this castle?”

“I hope we shall find a way,” replied Aqulamia. “The evil powers of magic which Goza controls may not prove to be as strong as the fairy powers I possess, but of course I cannot be positive until I discover what this wicked magician is able to do.”

Princess Clitia was looking out of one of the windows. "I think I can see an opening far up in the top of the dome," she said. They all hastened to the windows to look, and although Haute and Corporal Cal could see nothing but a solid dome above the castle—perhaps because it was so far away from them—the sharp eyes of Aqlamia were not to be deceived.

"Yes," she announced, "...there is surely an opening in the center of the great dome. A little thought must convince us that such an opening is bound to exist, for otherwise the water confined within the dome would not be fresh or clear."

"Then if we could escape from this castle, we could swim up to the hole in the dome and get free!" exclaimed Haute.

"Why, Goza has probably ordered the opening well-guarded, as she has all the other outlets," responded the Queen. "Yet it may be worthwhile for us to make the attempt to get back into the broad ocean this way. The night would be the best time, when all are asleep, and surely it will be quicker to reach the ocean through this hole in the roof than by means of the long, winding passages by which we entered."

"But we will have to break out of the castle in some way," observed Corporal Cal.

"That will not be difficult," answered Aqlamia, flexing her larger form. "It will be no trouble for me to shatter one of these panes of glass, allowing us to pass out and swim straight up to the top of the dome."

"Let's do it now!" said Haute eagerly.

“No, my dear, we must wait for a good opportunity when we are not watched closely. We do not wish the terrible Goza to thwart our plan,” answered the Queen gently.

Presently two former sailors, now comely gilled women, entered bearing trays of food, which they placed upon a large table. They were cheery-faced young women, regardless of the gills at their throats, and had laughing eyes, and Haute was astonished not to find any of the prisoners of Goza weeping or miserable. Instead, they were as jolly and good-natured as could be and seemed to make the best of their life under the water – one they preferred over the watery grave they would have otherwise taken.

Corporal Cal asked one of the women how many slaves were in the castle, and she replied that she would try to count them and let him know.

Cora Tein had, they found, prepared for them an excellent meal, and they ate heartily because they were really hungry. After luncheon they renewed their conversation, planning various ways to outwit Goza and make their escape. While thus engaged, the gong at the door sounded and Sacklo entered.

“My diabolical master commands you to attend him,” said the young woman.

“When?” asked Aqulamia.

“At once, your Majesty.”

“Very well, we will follow you,” she said. So they swam down the corridors following Sacklo until they again reached the golden-domed room they had formerly visited. Here sat

Goza just as they had left her, seemingly, but when her prisoners entered, the magician arose and stood upon her cloven feet and then silently walked to a curtained archway.

Sacklo commanded the prisoners to follow, and beyond the archway they found a vast chamber that occupied the center of the castle and was as big as a ballroom. Goza, who seemed to walk with much difficulty because her ungainly body swayed back and forth, did not go far beyond the arched entrance. A golden throne was set nearby, more grand than the seat in her den, and in this the monster seated herself. At one side of the throne stood a group of slaves, womanly in form as all the rest had been. All had at each throat the fish's gills that enabled them to breathe and live under water. Yet every face was smiling and serene, even in the presence of their dread master. In parts of the big hall were groups of other slaves.

Sacklo rangled the prisoners into a circle before Goza's throne, and slowly the magician turned her eyes, glowing like live coals, upon the four.

"Captives," said she, speaking in her clear, sweet voice, "...in our first interview you defied me, and both the mermaid queen and the princess declared they could not be unmade. But if that is a true statement, as I have yet to discover, there are various ways to make you miserable and unhappy, and this I propose to do in order to amuse myself at your expense. You have been brought here to undergo the first trial of strength between us." None of the prisoners replied to this speech, so Goza turned to one of her slaves and said, "Ravenna, bring in the Joy-Sapper."

Ravenna was a broad woman, brown of skin and with flashing, black eyes. She bowed to her master and left the room by an archway covered with heavy draperies. The next moment these curtains were violently pushed aside, and a dreadful sea creature swam into the hall.

It had a body much like that of a sea slink, only more of a jet-black color. Its eyes were bright yellow balls set on the ends of two horns that stuck out of its head. They were cruel-looking eyes, too, and seemed able to see every person in the room at the same time. The tendrils of the Joy-Sapper, however, were the most curious part of the creature. There were six of them, slender and black as coal, and each extended twelve to fifteen feet from its body when stretched out in a straight line. Unlike other sea slinks they were not rubbery like an octopus, but of carapace and hinged in several places so they could be folded up or extended at will. At the ends of these thin extensions were immense claws shaped like those of a lobster, and they were real “nippers” of a most dangerous sort.

The prisoners knew, as soon as they saw the awful claws, why the thing was called the “Joy-Sapper,” and Haute gave a little shiver and crept closer to Corporal Cal, the fairy circles sending their slits into tingling overdrive. Goza looked with approval upon the creature she had summoned and said to it, “I give you four victims, the four people with fish’s tails. Let their pleasure forever be reduced.”

“Yes...truly...” the Joy-Sapper uttered with a grunt of pleasure and in a flash stretched out one of its long legs toward the Queen’s quivering flower, its extended lips floating freely before her. The Joy-Sapper’s powerful claws came together with a loud noise. Aqulamia did not stir; she

only smiled. Both Goza and the creature that had attacked her seemed much surprised to find she was unhurt.

“Again!” cried Goza, and again the Joy-Sapper's claw shot out and tried to pinch the Queen's tail front. But the magic of the fairy mermaid was proof against this sea-rascal's strength and swiftness, nor could she touch any part of Aqulamia, although she tried again and again, roaring with anger like a mad bull.

Haute began to enjoy this performance, and as her merry laughter rang out, the Joy-Sapper turned furiously upon the young woman, two of the dreadful claws trying to nip her at the same time – and same place. She had no chance to cry out or jump backward, yet she remained unharmed, the only impact being a quick intense buzz on her mermaid slit. For the fairy circle of Queen Aqulamia kept her safe.

Now Corporal Cal was attacked, and Princess Clitia as well. The half-dozen slender legs darted in every direction like sword thrusts to reach their victims, and the cruel claws snapped so rapidly that the sound was like the rattling of castanets. But the four prisoners regarded their enemy with smiling composure, and no yell greeted the Joy-Sapper's efforts.

“Enough!” said Goza, softly and sweetly. “You may retire, my poor Joy-Sapper, for with these people you are powerless.”

The creature paused and rolled its yellow eyes. “May I nip just one of the slaves, oh Goza?” it asked pleadingly. “I hate to leave without pleasing your ears with a single yell.”

“Let my slaves alone,” was Goza's answer. “They are here to serve me and must not be injured. Go, feeble one.”

“Not so!” cried the Queen. “It is a shame, Goza, that such an evil thing should exist in our fair sea.” With this, she drew her fairy wand from within her folds and waved it toward the creature.

At once the Joy-Sapper stiffened up, her body twisting and changing. The majority of her clawed appendages began to shift backwards towards her tail, a single one remaining at each of her shoulders. As they shifted their place they also changed their substance and lost their chitin, the ones moving to the rear becoming soft and rubbery, while the ones on her torso became muscular and jointed.

The Joy-Sapper's eyes pulled into her head as blonde hair grew from it. The sharp pointed features of the slinks softened, the face become full and beautiful. The same could be said of the woman's body, as her pointy teats grew outward into full soft breasts bobbing in the water.

At her hips her tail and former claws had softened and split into tentacles, each growing out smoothly from her widening hips and bulging ass. The Joy-Sapper settled onto the floor, her new tentacles sucking upon the hard surface and anchoring her in place. She was looking down at herself in shock and surprise.

Gentle hands reached up, and the Joy-Sapper gasped as she grabbed her breasts, thumb-sized nipples grinding square into the center of her palms. Haute noted that not all the tentacles had seized the floor, a few of them working into the fleshy skirt that had form between them at the she-

creature's hips. As they poked around Haute saw the Joy-Sapper's face twitch and smile, and the young woman could guess what Aqulamia had slipped within.

The entrapped guests broke their attention from the self-pleasuring Joy-Sapper as Goza spoke.

"That is very pretty magic, Aqulamia," said the monster. "I myself learned the trick several thousand years ago, so it does not astonish me. The Joy-Sapper was shaped by that old magic." Goza leaned forward, her breasts dangling, and smiled, and Haute noticed that whenever Goza smiled, her slaves lost their jolly looks and began to tremble. "Let's try some new magic."

Very suddenly the Joy-Sapper's tentacles all fell to the floor, anchoring themselves like the others but this time the action was not on the command of the transformed creature. She opened her eyes and looked down as her new hands were pulled from her breasts, her arms beginning to merge and compress into her sides. Soon she was just a torso atop a ring of tentacles.

The Joy-Sapper knew better than to question Goza, or beg for anything. She just looked down forlornly as her bountiful bust melted away. At the same time her skin was taking on a brownish-green sheen. Haute watched as she started to shrink, the mer-features of her body becoming less and less defined.

As the subject of Goza's magic got smaller her hair merged with her skin, and said skin was looking more and more like kelp. The Joy-Sapper's ears were absorbed into her head, as was her nose. Her mouth sealed over, and although

she did not lose her eyes they started to turn a pale yellow. They had not shrunk at the same pace as the rest of her, leaving a wide pathetic look that was directed at Haute.

As the shrinking thing reached about a foot tall her tentacles – now slimy green tendrils – pushed down into the castle floor. She was now permanently anchored there, a helpless, limbless thing not quite animal but not quite plant, two slight bulges on her stalk all that indicated that she'd once had any other form. The polyp could not close her eyes, nor even flex much of her body, but was cursed to just rock back and forth however the water guided her.

“Now, dear queen, you see my new magic, the magic I have used to craft my slaves.” The grin returned as Goza motioned towards the gilled women cowering around her, and then she indicated the poor polyp rooted before Goza's audience, “Please, remake her as something more pleasant.”

Haute could not tell if the Joy-Sapper still had some ability to move herself, or if it was a well-timed push of water, but as Goza finished stating her challenge the big yellow eyes of the pathetic polyp turned directly towards Aqulamia. The mermaid queen held out her wand for a few moments before lowering it in defeat.

“I cannot,” Aqulamia quietly admitted, “She is now how she will be.”

The Joy-Sapper's gaze turned back, and she swayed hopelessly where she had been planted.

“Then she is now a fantastic decoration, and eternal reminder of how my power has grown,” Goza laughed,

leaning back, "Have you fairies nothing that is new to show me?"

"We desire only to protect ourselves," replied the Queen with dignity.

"Then I will give you a chance to do so," said Goza, eager to flaunt her newly proven power. As she spoke, the great marble blocks in the ceiling of the room directly over the heads of the captives gave way and came crashing down upon them. Many tons of weight were in these marble blocks, and the magician had planned to crush her victims where they stood. But the four were still unharmed. The marble, being unable to touch them, was diverted from its course, rolling behind them towards scattering slaves, and when the roar of the great crash had died away, Goza saw her intended victims standing quietly in their places and smiling scornfully at her weak attempts to destroy them.

CHAPTER 16 - THE TOP OF THE GREAT DOME

Corporal Cal's heart was beating pretty vast, but he did not let Goza know that. Haute was so sure of the protection of the fairy mermaids that she would not allow herself to become frightened. Too many other sensations were already flooding her thanks to the Fairy Circle. Aqulamia and Clitia were as calm as if nothing had happened. The polyp attempted to blink, but no longer had muscles to command.

“Please excuse this little interruption,” said Goza. “I knew very well the marble blocks would not hurt you. But the play is over for a time. You may now retire to your rooms, and when I again invite you to my presence, I shall have found some better ways to entertain you.”

Without reply to this threat they turned and followed Sacklo from the hall, and the woman led them straight back to their own rooms.

“Goza is making a great mistake,” said Sacklo with a laugh. “She has no time for vengeance, but the great magician does not know that.”

“What is she trying to do, anyway?” asked Haute.

“She does not tell me all her secrets, but I've an idea she wants to turn you into something to be hated for all eternity,” replied Sacklo. “How absurd it is to be plotting such a thing when she might spend her time in laughing and being jolly! Isn't it, now?”

“Goza is a wicked, wicked creature!” exclaimed Haute.

“But she had her good points,” replied Sacklo cheerfully. “There is no one about in the world so bad that there is nothing good about her.”

“I'm not so sure of that,” said Corporal Cal. “What are Goza's good points?”

“All her slaves were saved from drowning, and she is kind to them,” said Sacklo, “She granted us these amazingly wonderful bodies, so much fun to touch and hold and play with when the moment permits.”

“That is merely the kindness of selfishness,” said Aqulamia. “Tell me, my lady, is the opening in the great dome outside guarded?”

“Yes indeed,” was the reply. “You cannot hope to escape in that way, for the Baroness of the Sea Slinks, who is the largest and fiercest of her race, lies crouched over the opening night and day, and none can pass her network of curling grippers.”

“Is there no avenue that is not guarded?” continued Aqulamia.

“None at all, your Majesty. Goza is always careful to be well guarded, for she fears the approach of an enemy. What this enemy can be to terrify the great magician I do not know, but Goza is always afraid and never leaves an entrance unguarded. Besides, it is an enchanted castle, you know, and none in the ocean can see it unless Goza wishes them to. So it will be very hard for her enemy to find her.”

“We wish to escape,” said Clitia. “Will you help us, Sacklo?”

“In any way I can,” replied the woman.

“If we succeed, we will take you with us,” continued the Princess.

But Sacklo shook her head and laughed. “I would indeed like to see you escape Goza's vengeance,” said she, “...for vengeance is wrong, and you are too pretty and too good to be destroyed. But I am happy here and have no wish to go away.”

“But your homeland-”

“Has undoubtedly moved on, as they should have, and my return would only upset things.”

Then she left them, and when they were again alone, Aqulamia said, “We were able to escape Goza's attacks today, but I am quite sure she will plan more powerful ways to torture or reshape us. She has shown that she knows some clever magic, and can improve on it, and perhaps I shall not be able to foil it. So it will be well for us to escape tonight if possible.”

“Can you fight and conquer the Baroness of the Sea Slinks up in the dome?” asked Haute.

The queen was thoughtful, and did not reply to this question at once. But Corporal Cal said uneasily, “I can't abide them slinky critters, an' I hopes, for my part, we won't be called on to tackle 'em.”

“Why not, Corporal?” asked the young woman. “We're safe enough so far. Can't you trust our good friend, the Queen?”

“She don't seem plumb sure o' things herself,” remarked the sailor. “The mermaids is all right an' friendly, mate, but this 'ere magic maker, ol' Goza, is a bad one, out 'n' out, an' means to make us sea bugs or grains o' sand or shells about'a clam if she can.”

“But she can't!” cried Haute bravely.

“I hope you're right, dear. I wouldn't want to bet on Goza's chances jes' yet, an' at the same time it would be riskin' money to bet on our chances. Seems to me it's a case of luck which wins.”

“Don't worry, friend,” said the Queen. “I have a plan to save us. Let us wait patiently until nightfall.”

Aqulamia and Clitia retired to their loungers, while Haute and Cal again slipped into the attached room.

Once the pair was certain they had some privacy they wasted no time. The fairy circle's tingling had pushed them both to their limits, juices practically running to the tips of their tails, and Cal's rod was inside Haute's tail as fast as he could let it out of his own tail.

Joined as they were they awkwardly moved towards a couch – Haute's tail flexing with Cal already inside of her making her gasp with every swish. She felt her ass touch the cushiony material, and she was reminded of the changes she'd undergone, things she'd not been able to think about while facing Goza.

As Haute's rear pressed into the couch her cheeks squeezed and squished together, putting pressure on her hole. It had tightened up so much the rim of it was actually

puckering, and Haute could tell that anything moving through her down there would feel as pleasurable as it now felt to swallow through her enhanced throat.

But after a few sessions of Cal in her tightened pussy Haute was ready to feel the reinvigoration there once again. She let Cal pump down from atop her, the fans of their tails slapping together as he did so. Their breasts pushed together and bulged out, and Haute licked at her cleavage. Haute was so wound up that it did not take long for her to find herself cresting, and both she and Cal cried out as Haute's belly went warm with pleasure while Cal's sap warmed her bellow. They collapsed together onto a couch, each taking deep breaths and enjoying their company despite their situation. Haute wiggled her tail, already feeling the tightened taking place within her.

After a while of afterglow embrace they rejoined the mermaids in the other room.

Once more Aqlamia and Clitia were reclined, doing nothing more than teasing their bodies. They sat up and welcomed the land people and together they waited in the Rose Chamber. For a long time they were talking earnestly together, but the brilliant light that flooded both the room and the great dome outside did not fade in the least. After several hours had passed away the gong sounded and Cora Tein again appeared, followed by four slaves bearing many golden dishes upon silver trays. The friendly cook had prepared a fine dinner, and they were all glad to find that, whatever Goza intended to do to them, she had no intention of starving them. Perhaps the magician realized that Aqlamia's fairy powers, if put to the test, would be able to provide food for her companions, but whatever her objective

may have been, their enemy had given them splendid rooms and plenty to eat.

“Isn't it nearly nighttime?” asked the Queen as Cora Tein spread the table with a cloth of woven seaweed and directed her servers to place the dishes upon it.

“Night!” she exclaimed as if surprised. “There is no night here.”

“Doesn't it ever get dark?” inquired Haute.

“Never. We know nothing of the passage of time or of day or night. The light always shines just as you see it now, and we sleep whenever we are tired and rise again as soon as we are rested.”

“What causes the light?” Princess Clitia asked.

“It's magic, your Highness,” said the cook solemnly. “It's one of the curious things Goza is able to do. But you must remember all this place is a big cave in which the castle stands, so the light is never seen by anyone except those who live here.”

“But why does Goza keep her light going all the time?” asked the Queen.

“I suppose it is because she herself never sleeps,” replied Cora Tein. “They say the master hasn't slept for hundreds of years, not since Petrius, the sea serpent, defeated her and drove her into this place.”

They asked no more questions and began to eat their dinner in silence. Before long, Seaman Sal came in to visit

and took a seat at the table with the prisoners. She proved a jolly dinner guest, and when she and Corporal Cal talked about their days on the sea, the stories were so funny that everybody laughed and for a time forgot their worries.

When dinner was over, however, and Seaman Sal had gone back to her work of sewing on pearls and the servants had carried away the dishes, the prisoners remembered their troubles and the fate that awaited them. "I am much disappointed," said the Queen, "...to find there is no night here and that Goza never sleeps. It will make our escape more difficult. Yet we must make the attempt, and as we are tired and a great struggle is before us, it will be best for us to sleep and refresh ourselves."

They agreed to this, for the day had been long and adventurous. Corporal Cal and Haute quietly retired to the Peony Room, where they laid down upon the spongy couch and fell fast asleep in each other's arms. The mermaids took to their own couches, teasing their reclined lusty forms until they, too, slipped into slumber.

CHAPTER 17 - THE QUEEN'S GOLDEN SWORD

“Goodness me!” exclaimed Haute. She had woken suddenly, raising herself by a flirt of her pink-scaled tail and a wave of her fins, “...isn't it dreadful hot here?”

The mermaids had risen at the same time, and Haute and Corporal Cal went swimming in from the Peony Room to join them in their observations.

“Hot!” echoed the sailor. “Why, I feel like the inside of a steam engine!”

The perspiration was rolling down his round, red face, and he instinctively took out his handkerchief from his vanished coat and carefully wiped it away, waving his fish tail gently at the same time. Cal then remembered his nudity as he looked to the fabric puff in shock, recalled how it was he was able to produce it, and slipped it away just as easily.

“What we need most in this room,” he blubbered, “...is a fan.”

“What's the trouble, do you s'pose?” inquired Haute.

“It is another trick of the monster Goza,” answered the Queen calmly. “She has made the water in our rooms boiling hot, and if it could touch us, we would be well cooked by this time. Even as it is, we are all made uncomfortable by breathing the heated air.”

“What shall we do, ma'am?” the sailor man asked with a groan. “I expected to get into hot water afore we've done

with this foolishness, but I don't like the feel o' bein' parboiled, jes' the same."

The queen was waving her fairy wand and paid no attention to Corporal Cal's moans. Already the water felt cooler, and they began to breathe more easily. In a few moments more, the heat had passed from the surrounding water altogether, and all danger from this source was over.

"This is better," said Haute gratefully.

"Do you care to sleep again?" asked the Queen.

"No, I'm wide awake now," answered the young woman, recognizing that now was not the time to deal with the sexual heat the fairy circle had pushed into her tail.

"I'm afraid if I goes to sleep ag'in, I'll wake up a pot roast," joked Corporal Cal.

"Let us consider ways to escape," suggested Clitia. "It seems useless for us to remain here quietly until Goza discovers a way to unmake us."

"But we must not blunder," added Aqulamia cautiously. "To fail in our attempt would be to acknowledge Goza's superior power, so we must think well upon our plan before we begin to carry it out. What do you advise, sir?" she asked, turning to Corporal Cal.

"My opinion, ma'am, is that the only way for us to escape is to get out o' here," was the sailor's vague answer. "How to do it is your business, seein' as I ain't no fairy myself, either in looks or in eddication."

The queen smiled and said to Haute, "What is your opinion, my dear?"

"I think we might swim out the same way we came in," answered the young woman. "If we could get Sacklo to lead us back through the maze, we would follow that long tunnel to the open ocean, and—"

"And there would be the sea slinks waitin' for us," added Corporal Cal with a shake of his bald head. "They'd drive us back inter the tunnel like they did the first time, Haute. It won't do, mate, it won't do."

"Have you a suggestion, Clitia?" inquired the Queen.

"I have thought of an undertaking," replied the pretty princess, "...but it is a bold plan, your Majesty, and you may not care to risk it."

"Let us hear it, anyway," said Aqulamia encouragingly.

"It is to destroy Goza herself and put her out of the world forever. Then we would be free to go home whenever we pleased."

"Can you suggest a way to destroy Goza?" asked Aqulamia.

"No, your Majesty," Clitia answered, blushing. Haute could not contain a small, frustrated, sigh as Clitia continued, "I must leave the way for you to determine."

"In the old days," said the Queen thoughtfully, "...the mighty King Petrius was wary of an attempt to unmake this monster. He succeeded in defeating Goza and drove her into

this great cavern, but if even Petrius erred away from revising her form into something less dangerous I have my concerns.”

“I have heard the sea serpent explain that it was because he could not reach the magician,” returned Clitia. “Such a feat had to be done in direct contact of his magic. If King Petrius could have seized Goza in his coils, he would have made an end of the wicked monster quickly. Goza knows this, and that is why she does not venture forth from her retreat. Petrius is the enemy she constantly dreads. But with you, my queen, the case is different. You may easily reach Goza, and the only question is whether your power is sufficient to remake her.”

For a while Aqulamia remained silent. “I am not sure of my power over her,” she said at last, “...and for that reason I hesitate to attack her personally. Her slaves and her allies, the sea slinks, I can easily conquer in one way or another if not overwhelmed as we were when we were brought here, so I prefer to find a way to overcome the guards at the entrances rather than to encounter their terrible master. But even the guards have been given strength and power by the magician, as we have already discovered, so I must procure a weapon with which to fight them.”

“A weapon, ma'am?” said Corporal Cal, and then he produced a jackknife from his invisible coat pocket and opened the big blade, afterward handing it to the Queen. “That ain't a bad weapon,” he announced, “Would 'ave thought of it sooner t'were it not that I keep fergettin' I has my jacket in spirit!”

“But it is useless in this case,” she replied, smiling at the old sailor's earnestness. “For my purpose I must have a golden sword.”

“Well, there's plenty of gold around this castle,” said Haute, looking around her. “Even in this room there's enough to make a hundred golden swords.”

“But we can't melt or forge gold under water, mate,” the Corporal said.

“Why not? Don't you s'pose all these gold roses and things were made under water?” asked the young woman.

“Like enough,” remarked the sailor, “...but I don't see how.”

Just then the gong at the door sounded, and the woman Sacklo came in smiling and cheerful as ever. She said Goza had sent her to inquire after their health and happiness.

“You may tell her that her water became a trifle too warm, so we cooled it,” replied the Queen. Then they told Sacklo how the boiling water had made them uncomfortable while they slept.

Sacklo whistled a little tune and seemed thoughtful. “Goza is foolish,” said she. “How often have I told her that vengeance is a waste of time. She is worried to know how to unmake and remake you, and that is wasting more time. You are worried for fear she will injure you, and so you also are wasting time. My, my! What a waste of time is going on in this castle!”

“Seems to me that we have so much time it doesn't matter,” said Haute, her tone heavy with reflection of her situation. “What's time for, anyhow?”

“Time is given us to be happy, and for no other reason,” replied the woman soberly. “When we waste time, we waste happiness. But there is no time for preaching, so I'll go.”

“Please wait a moment, Sacklo,” said the Queen.

“Can I do anything to make you happy?” she asked, smiling again.

“Yes,” answered Aqulamia, a smile creeping up the side of her face. “We are curious to know who does all this beautiful gold work and ornamentation.”

“Some of the slaves here are goldsmiths, having been taught by Goza to forge and work metal under water,” explained Sacklo. “In parts of the ocean lie many rocks filled with veins of pure gold and golden nuggets, and we get large supplies from sunken ships as well. There is no lack of gold here, but it is not as precious as it is upon the earth because here we have no need of money.”

“We would like to see the goldsmiths at work,” announced the Queen.

The woman hesitated a moment. Then she said, “I will take you to their room, where you may watch them for a time. I will not ask Goza's permission to do this, for she might refuse. But my orders were to allow you the liberty of the castle, and so I will let you see the goldsmiths' shop.”

“Thank you,” replied Aqulamia quietly, and then the four followed Sacklo along various corridors until they came to a large room where a dozen gilled women were busily at work. Lying here and there were heaps of virgin gold, some in its natural state and some already fashioned into ornaments and furniture of various sorts. Each woman worked at a bench where there was a curious iron furnace in which glowed a vivid, white light. Although this workshop was all under water and the smiths were all obliged to breathe as fishes do, the furnaces glowed so hot that the water touching them was turned into steam. Gold or other metal held over a furnace quickly softened or melted, then it could be forged or molded into any shape desired.

“The furnaces are electric,” explained Sacklo, “...and heat as well under water as they would in the open air. Let me introduce you to the forewoman, who will tell you of her work better than I can.”

The forewoman was the slave named AuraGol, who was lean and lank and had an expression more serious than any slave they had yet seen. But she seemed willing to leave her work, standing and displaying a body decorated in gold – small circulates gripped her nipples, bands were wrapped around arms and thighs, bracelets and anklets adorned respective limbs, even a small crescent was pressed atop her labia like a clothes pin. She explained to the visitors how she made so many beautiful things out of gold, for she took much pride in this labor and knew its artistic worth. Moreover, since she had been in Goza's castle these were the first strangers to enter her workshop, so she welcomed them in her own gruff way.

The queen asked her if she was happy, and she shook her head – golden earrings swaying and her hair floating about a thin band holding back her blond locks - and replied, “It isn't like Calcutta, where I used to work in gold before I was wrecked at sea and nearly drowned. Goza rescued me, reshaped my flesh as easily as I would reshape an ingot, and brought me here a slave. It is a stupid life we lead, doing the same things over and over every day, but perhaps it is better than being dead. I'm not sure. The only pleasure I get in life is in creating pretty things out of gold.”

“Could you forge me a golden sword?” asked the Queen, smiling sweetly upon the goldsmith.

“I could, madam, but I won't unless Goza orders me to do it.”

“Do you like Goza better than you do me?” inquired Aqulamia.

“No,” was the answer. “I hate Goza.”

“Then won't you make the sword to please me and to show your skill?” pleaded the pretty mermaid.

“I'm afraid of my master. She might not like it,” the woman replied.

“But she will never know,” said Princess Clitia.

“You cannot say what Goza knows or what she doesn't know,” growled the woman. “I can't take chances of offending Goza, for I must live with her always as a slave.” With this she turned away, revealing an ornate golden plug

between her rear cheeks as she leaned over and resumed her work hammering the leaf of a golden ship.

Corporal Cal had listened carefully to this conversation, and being a wise old sailor in his way, he thought he understood the nature of old AuraGol better than the mermaids did. So he went close to the goldsmith, and fumbling for the invisible pockets of his coat finally drew out a silver compass shaped like a watch. "I'll give you this if you'll make the Queen the golden sword," he said.

AuraGol looked at the compass with interest and tested its power of pointing north. Then she shook her head and handed it back to Corporal Cal. The sailor dived into his pocket again and pulled out a pair of scissors, which he placed beside the compass on the palm of his big hand.

"You may have them both," he said.

The gilled goldsmith hesitated, for she wanted the scissors badly, but finally she shook her head again. Corporal Cal added a piece of cord, an iron thimble, some fishhooks, four buttons and a safety pin, but still the AuraGol would not be tempted. So with a sigh the sailor brought out his fine, big jackknife, and at sight of this AuraGol's eyes began to sparkle. Steel was not to be had at the bottom of the sea, although gold was so plentiful.

"All right, friend," she said. "Give me that lot of trinkets and I'll make you a pretty gold sword. But it won't be any good except to look at, for our gold is so pure that it is very soft."

"Never mind that," replied Corporal Cal. "All we want is the sword."

So the bribed goldsmith set to work at once, and so skillful was she that in a few minutes she had forged a fine sword of yellow gold with an ornamental handle. The shape was graceful and the blade keen and slender. It was evident to them all that the golden sword would not stand hard use, for the edge of the blade would nick and curl like lead, but the Queen was delighted with the prize and took it eagerly in her hand.

Just then Sacklo returned to say that they must go back to their rooms, and after thanking AuraGol, who was so busy examining her newly acquired treasure that she made no response, they joyfully followed the woman back to the Rose Chamber. Sacklo told them that she had just come from Goza, who was still wasting time in plotting vengeance.

“You must be careful,” she advised them, “...for my cruel master intends to remake you into something awful, and she may succeed. Don’t be unhappy, but be careful. Goza is angry because you escaped her Joy-Sapper and the falling stones and the hot water. While she is angry she is wasting time, but that will not help you. Take care not to waste any time yourselves.”

“Do you know what Goza intends to do to us next?” asked Princess Clitia.

“No,” said Sacklo, “...but it is reasonable to guess that, being evil, she intends evil. She never intends to do good, I assure you.” Then the woman left them.

“I am no longer afraid,” declared the Mermaid Queen when they were alone. “When I have bestowed certain fairy powers upon this golden sword, it will fight its way against

any who dare oppose us, and even Goza herself will not care to face so powerful a weapon. I am now able to promise you that we shall make our escape.”

“Good!” cried Haute joyfully. “Shall we start now?”

“Not yet, my dear. It will take me a little while to charm this golden blade so that it will obey my commands and do my work. There is no need of undue haste, so I propose we all sleep for a time and obtain what rest we can. We must be fresh and ready for our great adventure.”

As their former nap had been interrupted, they readily agreed to Aqulamia's proposal. Haute and Cal retired to the Peony Room and lay together on the couch, facing each other with their breasts pushed tightly aside their opposite pair. They were indeed exhausted, but the buzz of the fairy circles on their tales needs some response.

Haute took her hand and guided Cal's womanly digit beneath their breasts and to her slit. Cal's fingers gently separated her scaly folds and found Haute's clit at stiff attention. She bit her puffy lips as Cal began to massage it.

The young woman could feel Cal's wooden shaft push out and press upwards between them, just reaching where scales gave way to soft skin. Her thin hand gripped its girth, and while Cal attended to her she ran her soft fingers up and down its smooth grain. They were both making sexy little cooing sounds under the ministrations of their partner, each using their other hand to tease and play along their bodies.

Soon Haute could feel a balloon of pleasure fill up inside her and burst into the warmth of orgasm. As she threw back her head and pushed herself into cumming, Cal also let loose

his load. His sap fired so forcefully from him it broke past the little slip of air surrounding them and dissipated into the water. Both of them came down and breathed deeply, not realizing Cal's dissolved sap was slowly making its way back through the water into their air folds like a fine mist.

After a few moments Haute sat up, a thoughtful look on her face.

"What is it, mate?" Cal asked.

We've no reason to think Goza's attempts on us in the room are over. Perhaps it would be best if we stayed close.

"A good idear I ever 'eard one."

Haute and Cal slowly and quietly reentered the Rose Room. They saw Clitia already slumbering on her couch, her hands gently gliding over her skin. Aqulamia was still awake, seated on her couch and concentrating on her sword. She gave them a small head nod so they understood she knew they were there, but otherwise they did not bother the Queen.

Haute went to another couch and Cal took to a comfy looking chair and ottoman. After a few minutes they had composed themselves to slumber. Whilst they slept the fairy mermaid finished charming her golden sword and then she also lay down to rest herself.

CHAPTER 18 - A DASH FOR LIBERTY

Haute dreamed that she was at home in her own bed, silk nightie wrapped around her beneath a down comforter. But the night seemed chilly, her nipples painfully erect against the silk, and she wanted to draw the comforter tighter to her. Regardless of how much she wrapped herself the cold encroached, starting at her feet, encasing her legs, engulfing her hips and up over her breasts. She was not wide awake, but realized that she was cold and unable to move her arms to cover herself up. She tried, but could not stir. Then, as the chill of the dream began to engulf her head, she roused herself a little more and tried again.

Yes, it was cold, very cold! Really, she MUST do something to get warm, she thought. She opened her eyes and stared at a great wall of ice in front of her.

She was awake now, and frightened, too. But she could not move because the ice was all around her. It was frozen all around Haute, trapping her inside of it, and the air space around her was not big enough to allow her to turn over. Her body was locked in place – just short of touching the ice because of the slip of air around her, but that seemed to be pushing against her, constricting her movements even more. The most she could do was shift her eyes and feel her breasts jiggle as she struggled, her nipples pinched in place by the pressurized air.

At once the young woman realized what had happened. Their wicked enemy Goza had by her magic art frozen all the water in their room while they slept, and now they were all

imprisoned and helpless, the ice expanding and pushing against their magical protection. Haute and Corporal Cal were sure to freeze to death in a short time, for only a tiny air space remained between their bodies and the ice, and this air was like that of a winter day when the thermometer is below zero.

Despite that their respective slips were on fire thanks to the fairy circles, their juices dripping out and freezing to the scales of their tails.

Across the room of ice Haute could see the mermaid queen lying on her couch, for the solid ice had trapped few bubbles within it and was clear as crystal. Aqulamia was imprisoned just as Haute was, and although she held her fairy wand in one hand and the golden sword in the other, she seemed unable to move either of them, and the young woman remembered that the Queen always waved her magic wand to accomplish anything. Princess Clitia's couch was behind that of Haute, so the young woman could not see her, and Corporal Cal was also beyond her vision but most certainly frozen fast in the ice as the others were.

The terrible Goza had surely been very clever in this last attempt to destroy them. Haute thought it all over, inasmuch as the Queen was unable to wave her fairy wand, she could do nothing to release herself or her friends. But despite this Haute continued to struggle, even if all she was doing was jiggling her chest and causing her nipples to be stretched and pinched.

In regardless to Aqulamia's helplessness the young woman was mistaken. The fairy mermaid was even now at work trying to save them, and in a few minutes Haute was

astonished and delighted to see the Queen rise from her couch. She could not go far from it at first, but the ice was melting rapidly all around her so that gradually Aqulamia approached the place where the young woman lay. Haute could hear the mermaid's voice sounding through the ice as if from afar off, but it grew more distinct until she could make out that the Queen was saying, "Courage, friends! Do not despair, for soon you will be free."

Before very long the ice between Haute and the Queen had melted away entirely, and with a cry of joy the young woman flopped her pink tail and swam to the side of her deliverer.

"Are you very cold?" asked Aqulamia.

"N-not v-v-very!" replied Haute, but her teeth chattered and she was still shivering. Her nipples, like the Queen's, jutted out as if rail ties.

"The water will be warm in a few minutes," said the Queen. "But now I must melt the rest of the ice and liberate Clitia and Cal."

Clitia was closest and she was freed in an astonishingly brief time, and the pretty princess, being herself a fairy, had not been at all affected by the cold surrounding her.

They now swam the side of Corporal Cal and the queen worked her magic power as hard as she could, and the ice flowed and melted quickly before her fairy wand. Yet when they reached the sailor he was almost frozen stiff, and Haute and Clitia had to rub against him very briskly to warm him up and bring him back to life, a particular part of him springing forth before he could get his wits about him.

Clearly embarrassed, once he was aware enough to draw his wooden phallus back into himself, Cal found Clitia and Aqualamia unconcerned about the faux pas, saying they would not have gifted him something they were offended to see.

“I’ve made up my mind to one thing, Haute,” Cal said, still trying to put the moment behind him, “If ever I get out o’ this mess I’m in, I won’t be an Arctic explorer, whatever else happens. Shivers an’ shakes ain’t to my likin’, an’ this ice business ain’t what it’s sometimes cracked up to be. To be friz once is enough fer anybody.”

In response Haute playfully flicked one of Cal’s nipples, still quite hard. Haute noticed, even though she had warmed up, that her own nipples had remained very tightly erect, sitting high on her breasts. In fact, even with the room back to normal, she found that her skin felt slightly tighter, her breasts rounder and with less slope to them, as if she had her younger eighteen-year-old skin once more.

Meanwhile the Queen and Clitia had been talking together very earnestly. They now approached their earth friends, and Aqualamia said:

“We have decided not to remain in this castle any longer. Goza’s cruel designs upon our lives and happiness are becoming too dangerous for us to endure. The golden sword now bears a fairy charm, and by its aid I will cut a way through our enemies. Are you ready and willing to follow me?”

“Of course we are!” cried Haute.

“It don't seem 'zactly right to ask a lady to do the fightin',” remarked Corporal Cal, “...but magic ain't my strong p'int, and it seems to be yours, ma'am. So swim ahead, and we'll wiggle the same way you do, an' try to wiggle out of our troubles.”

Haute blinked away the thought of watching Aqulamia and Clitia's tight asses and tails wiggling in front of her – now was not the time. But she would need do something about the lingering furnace within her tail, and soon.

“If I chance to fail,” said the Queen, “...try not to blame me. I will do all in my power to provide for our escape, and I am willing to risk everything, because I well know that to remain here will mean to be unmade in the end.”

“That's all right,” said Haute with fine courage. “Let's have it over with.”

“Then we will leave here at once,” said Aqulamia.

She approached the window of the room and with one blow of her golden sword shattered the thick pane of glass. The opening thus made was large enough for the Queen to swim through if she were careful not to scrape against the broken points of glass, and more than enough room for the others. Aqulamia went first, followed by Haute and Corporal Cal, with Clitia last of all.

And now they were in the vast dome in which the castle and gardens of Goza had been built. Around them was a clear stretch of water, and far above—full half a mile distant—was the opening in the roof guarded by the Baroness of the Sea Slinks. The mermaid queen had determined to attack this monster. If she succeeded in destroying her with her golden

sword, the little band of fugitives might then swim through the opening into the clear waters of the ocean. Although this Baroness of the Sea Slinks was said to be big and wise and mighty, there was but one of her to fight; whereas, if they attempted to escape through any of the passages, they must encounter scores of such enemies.

“Swim straight for the opening in the dome!” cried Aqlamia, and in answer to the command, the four whisked their glittering tails, waved their fins, and shot away through the water at full speed, their course slanting upward toward the top of the dome.

CHAPTER 19 - KING PETRIUS TO THE RESCUE

The great magician Goza never slept. She was always watchful and alert. Some strange power warned her that her prisoners were about to escape.

Scarcely had the four left the castle by the broken window when the monster stepped from a doorway below and saw them. Instantly she blew upon a golden whistle, and at the summons a band of wolf-fish appeared and dashed after the prisoners. These creatures swam so swiftly that soon they were between the fugitives and the dome, and then they turned and with wicked eyes and sharp fangs began a fierce attack upon the mermaids and the earth dwellers.

Haute was a little frightened at the evil looks of the sea wolves, whose heads were enormous, and whose jaws contained rows of curved and pointed teeth. But Aqulamia advanced upon them with her golden sword, and every touch of the charmed weapon slicing through Goza's magic and instantly remaking an enemy, so that one by one the wolf-fish became cherubfish and their little blue bodies darted helplessly through the water, leaving the prisoners free to continue their way toward the opening in the dome.

Goza witnessed the unmaking of her wolves and uttered a loud laugh that was terrible to hear. Then the dread monster determined to arrest the fugitives herself. Goza allowed her body to shoot upward through the water in swift pursuit of her victims. Her cloven hoofs, upon which she usually walked, heated the water to boiling and that propelled hers with great speed. Previously obscured while seated at her

thrown, at Goza's shoulders two broad, leathery wings expanded, and these enabled the monster to cleave her way through the water with terrific force.

Now, with her horned head and its glowing eyes thrust forward, wings flapping from her shoulders, and her boiling propulsion bubbling behind her, this strange and evil creature was a thing of terror even to the sea dwellers, who were accustomed to remarkable sights.

The mermaids, the sailor and the young woman, one after another looking back as they swam toward liberty and safety, saw the monster coming and shuddered with uncontrollable fear. They were drawing nearer to the dome by this time, yet it was still some distance away. The four redoubled their speed, darting through the water with the swiftness of skyrockets. But fast as they swam, Goza swam faster, and the good queen's heart began to throb as she realized she would be forced to fight her loathsome foe.

Presently Goza's magic was circling around them like a whirlwind, lashing the water into foam and gradually drawing nearer and nearer to her victims. Her eyes were no longer glowing coals, they were balls of flame, and as she circled around them she laughed aloud that horrible laugh which was far more terrifying than any cry of rage could be. The Queen struck out with her golden sword, but Goza shifted a roiling current of magic and water around it and, wrestling it from her hand, crushed the weapon into a shapeless mass. Then Aqualamia waved her fairy wand, but in a flash the monster sent it flying away through the water.

Corporal Cal now decided that they were lost. He drew Haute closer to his side and placed one arm around her.

“I knew, Haute, when first we sawr them mermaids, as we'd—we'd—”

“Never live to tell the tale,” said the young woman. “But never mind, Corporal Cal, we've done the best we could, and we've had a fine time.”

“Forgive me! Oh, forgive me!” cried Aqulamia despairingly. “I tried to save you, my poor friends, but—”

“What's that?” exclaimed the Princess, pointing upward. They all looked past Goza's imposing body and whirling magic, which was slowly enveloping them in its folds, toward the round opening in the dome. A still form was descending through the water, a shape reminiscent of the sea slinks, except bigger.

The roiling whirl lessened for a moment as even Goza's attention was turned upwards. The object fell through the hole, coming closer and closer. Soon it was clear to the land livers that the three around them now recognized what was approaching.

“It is the Baroness of the Sea Slinks...” Aqulamia said quietly. And it was indeed, although Haute noticed a look on her face unlike what she had seen on the slinks before – pleasure. Pure orgasmic pleasure locked on her visage, her limbs wrapped around her and touching herself in places Haute assumed were quite erogenous.

And Haute knew that the Baroness would be looking as she was for some time, for as she fell past the group Haute could see that she had been remade into a statue of obsidian.

“My beautiful Baroness!” Goza cried out, “What trickery is this that she is petrified – oh no.”

As Goza again turned her wicked face upwards – now so in terror - the others looked up as well. They could see another dark object had appeared there, sliding downward like a huge rope and descending toward them with lightning rapidly. They gave a great gasp as they recognized the countenance of King Petrius, the sea serpent, its gray hair and whiskers bristling like those of an angry cat, and the usually mild blue eyes glowing with a ferocity even more terrifying than the orbs of Goza.

The magician gave a shrill scream at the sight of her dreaded enemy. Abandoning her intended victims the magic and sharp current became still as Goza made a quick dash to escape. But nothing in the sea could equal the strength and quickness of King Petrius when he was roused. In a flash the sea serpent had caught Goza fast in his coils, and his mighty body swept round the monster and imprisoned her tightly.

The four, so suddenly rescued, swam away to a safer distance from the struggle, and then they turned to watch the encounter between the two great opposing powers of the ocean's depths.

“You were offered a quiet life of peace!” Petrius bellowed, “With a form that would find you pleasure anywhere in the ocean. You scoffed at my generosity and I left you be! But now I find you imprisoning my friends, sending armies of sea slinks to destroy that which belongs to others! So I will impose upon you now a form of peace and pleasure!”

There was no desperate fight to observe, for the combatants were unequal. The end came before they were aware of it. Goza had been taken by surprise, and her great fear of Petrius destroyed all of her magic power. When the sea serpent slowly released those awful coils Goza could be seen once more, but a similar fate had befallen her as it had the Baroness.

Goza's obsidian body sank into the water. One of her hands gripped a stiffened breast, while the other was buried between her thighs. Upon her face was a look of one about to crest into an incredible orgasm. As she reached the square of her castle Goza's stone hooves sank into the sand, and she came to a rest not far from where the Baroness had settled, eternal monuments to what had once belonged to Goza, the Magician.

Petrius shook his body and advanced his head toward the group of four whom he had so opportunely rescued. "It is all over, friends," said he in his gentle tones, while a mild expression once more reigned on his comical features. "You may go home at any time you please, for the way through the dome will be open as soon as I get my own body through it."

Indeed, so amazing was the length of the great sea serpent that only a part of him had descended through the hole into the dome. Without waiting for the thanks of those he had rescued, he swiftly retreated to the ocean above, and with grateful hearts they followed him, glad to leave the cavern where they had endured so much anxiety and danger.

CHAPTER 20 - THE HOME OF THE OCEAN MONARCH

They were now in the wide, open sea, with liberty to go wherever they wished, and Haute and Cal could feel that the tingling of the fairy circles around their mermaid nethers had left them, although the needy fires had not been extinguished.

As much as their bodies wanted Haute and Cal to find a private moment, they knew the mermaids must be considered. Aqulamia and Clitia had been true and faithful friends to their earth guests while dangers were threatening, and it would not be very gracious to leave them at once. Moreover, King Petrius was now with them, his big head keeping pace with the mermaids as they swam, and this mighty preserver had a distinct claim upon Haute and Corporal Cal's attention.

"If you people had come to visit me as I invited you to do," said the Sea Serpent, "...all this bother and trouble would have been saved. I had my palace put in order to receive the earth dwellers and sat in my den waiting patiently to receive you. Yet you never came at all.

"Finally," continued Petrius, "I went to inquire as to what had become of you, and found that the sea slinks had been sent to destroy the kingdom of the mermaids. They believed that without the power of the queen your home would fall easily, that was Goza's plan, regardless of whether or not she could truly remake you. Moira had defended your borders with honor and skill, and once she had a moment to speak

with me she said you had been gone from the palace a long time. It was clear that you had been captured by Goza.

“Naturally all of this disturbed me and made me unhappy,” said Petrius, “...for I well knew, my Aqlamia, that the magician's evil powers were greater than your own fairy accomplishments. But I had never been able to find Goza's enchanted castle, and so I was at a loss to know how to save you from your dreadful fate. After I had wasted a good deal of time thinking it over, I decided that if the sea slinks were attacking on behalf of Goza she would keep the Baroness nearby for her own protection, and if I found the leader of the sea slinks I would know where the enchanted castle was located.

“I followed some slinks and saw them bringing her food, perched atop the cusp of a hollow rock on the bottom of the sea. I went to her and demanded access to Goza's castle. Of course, she would not tell me. She was even cross and disrespectful, just as I had expected her to be, so I allowed myself to become angry and remake her. I thought it funny that since she had defied me while clinging upon a cusp, thus she would always be. Within her stone form, incapable of stimulating herself further, she is eternally trapped just at the edge of an orgasm, but constantly denied the satisfaction.

“As the Baroness in her new form began to sink through the hole of stone I thrust my head in and found a great domed cave underneath with a splendid silver castle built at the bottom. You, my friends, were at that moment swimming toward me as fast as you could come, and the monster Goza, my enemy for centuries past, was close behind you, and I gave her the same eternal dissatisfaction as I gave the Baroness. Well, the rest of the story you know. I would be

angry with all of you for so carelessly getting captured, had the incident not led to the destruction of the one evil genius in all my ocean. I shall rest easier and be much happier now that Goza is remade into helplessness.”

The exposition had brought the swimmers near to a great, circular palace made all of solid alabaster polished as smooth as ivory. Its roof was a vast dome, for domes seemed to be fashionable in the ocean houses. There were no doors or windows, but instead of these, several round holes appeared in different parts of the dome, some being high up and some low down and some in between. Out of one of these holes, which it just fitted, stretched the long, brown body of the sea serpent.

Haute, being astonished at this sight, asked, “Didn't you take all of you when you went to the cavern, Petrius?”

“Nearly all, my dear,” was the reply, accompanied by a cheerful smile, for Petrius was proud of his great length. “But not quite all. Some of me remained, as usual, to keep house while my head was away. But I've been coiling up ever since we started back, and you will soon be able to see every inch of me all together.”

Even as he spoke, his head slid into the round hole, and at a signal from Aquamia they all paused outside and waited. Presently there came to them four beautiful winged creatures. They resembled fishes more than anything else, but with sharp focused faces like those of a mannequin, and gentle breasts that stuck out pointily from their smooth forms. Their long hair and eyelashes were of a purple color, and their cheeks had deep blush that looked as if they had been painted upon them.

“His Majesty bids you welcome,” said one of the mannequin fishes in a sweet voice, despite her mouth making almost no movement. “Be kind enough to enter the royal palace, and our ocean monarch will graciously receive you.”

“Seems to me,” said Haute to the Queen, “...these things are putting on airs. Perhaps they don't know we're friends of Petrius.”

“The king insists on certain formalities when anyone visits him,” was Aqulamia's reply. “It is right that his dignity should be maintained.”

They followed their winged conductors to one of the upper openings, and as they entered it Aqulamia said in a clear voice, “May the glory and power of the ocean king continue forever!” Then she touched the palm of her hand to her forehead in token of allegiance, and Clitia did the same, so Corporal Cal and Haute followed suit. The brief ceremony being ended, the young woman looked curiously around to see what the palace of the mighty Petrius was like.

An extensive hall lined with alabaster was before them. In the floor were five of the round holes. Upon the walls were engraved many interesting scenes of ocean life, all chiseled very artistically by the tusks of walruses who, Haute was afterward informed, are greatly skilled in such work. A few handsome rugs of woven sea grasses were spread upon the floor, but otherwise the vast hall was bare of furniture. The mannequin-faced fishes escorted them to an upper room where a table was set, and here the revelers were invited to refresh themselves. As all four were exceedingly hungry they

welcomed the repast, which was served by an army of lobsters in royal purple aprons and caps.

The meal being finished, they again descended to the hall, which seemed to occupy all the middle of the building. And now their conductors said, "His Majesty is ready to receive you in his den."

They swam downward through one of the round holes in the floor and found themselves in a brilliantly lighted chamber which appeared bigger than all the rest of the palace put together. In the center was the quaint head of King Petrius, and around it was spread a great coverlet of purple and gold woven together. This concealed all of his body and stretched from wall to wall of the circular room.

"Welcome, friends!" said Petrius pleasantly. "How do you like my home?"

"It's very grand," replied Haute.

"Just the place for a sea serpent, seems to me," said Corporal Cal.

"I'm glad you admire it," said the King. There was an awkward pause, and Haute realized she needed to fill it or else be overwhelmed by a need to fill something else.

"Oh! You never told me of that third pain," said the young woman.

"Ah yes," returned the Sea Serpent, blinking his blue eyes thoughtfully. "No one likes to be reminded of a pain, and that third pain was—was—"

“What was it?” asked Haute.

“It was a stomach ache,” replied the King with a sigh.

“What made it?” she inquired.

“Just my carelessness,” said Petrius. “I'd been away to foreign parts, seeing how the earth people were getting along. On the way home,” continued Petrius calmly, “I was a little absent-minded and ate an anchor. There was a long chain attached to it, and as I continued to swallow the anchor I continued to eat the chain. I never realized what I had done until I found a ship on the other end of the chain. Then I bit it off.”

“The ship?” asked Haute.

“No, the chain. I didn't care for the ship, as I saw it contained some skippers. On the way home the chain and anchor began to lie heavily on my stomach. I didn't seem to digest them properly, and by the time I got to my palace, where you will notice there is no throne, I was thrown into throes of severe pain. So I at once sent for Dr. Shark—”

“Are all your doctors sharks?” asked the young woman.

“Yes, aren't your doctors sharks?” he replied.

“Not all of them,” said Haute.

“That is true,” remarked Corporal Cal. “But when you talk of lawyers—”

“I'm not talking of lawyers,” said Petrius reprovingly. “I'm talking about my pain. I don't imagine anyone could suffer more than I did with that stomach ache.”

“Did you suffer long?” inquired Haute.

“Why, about seven thousand four hundred and eighty-two feet and—”

“I mean a long time.”

“It seemed like a long time,” answered the King. “Dr. Shark said I ought to put a mustard poultice on my stomach, so I uncoiled myself and summoned my servants, and they began putting on the mustard plaster. It had to be bound all around me so it wouldn't slip off. In about four weeks fully one-half of the pain had been covered by the mustard poultice, which got so hot that it hurt me worse than the stomach ache did.”

“I know,” said Haute. “I had one, once.”

“One what?” asked Petrius.

“A mustard plaster. They smart pretty bad, but I guess they're a good thing.”

“I got myself unwrapped as soon as I could,” continued the King, “...and then I hunted for the doctor, who hid himself until my anger had subsided. “

“You're lucky, sir, to have escaped so easy,” said Corporal Cal. “But you seem pretty well now.”

“Yes, I'm more careful of what I eat,” replied the Sea Serpent. Then he laughed heartily, as if indicating that he knew the absurdity of all they had just spoken of, “But now some unpleasantness which must follow our much enjoyed

foolishness. By the law of the ocean, you must obey me in everything, correct?"

The sailor scowled a little at hearing this, but Haute laughed and, feeling that perhaps it was still game, said, "The law of the ocean isn't OUR law, 'cause we live on land."

"Just now you are living in the ocean," declared Petrius, he tenor indicating he was not joking, "...and as long as you live here, you must obey my commands."

"What are your commands?" inquired the young woman, her skin growing warm, but from anxiety in this instance.

"Ah, that's the point I was coming to," returned the King with his comical smile. "The ocean is a beautiful place, and we who belong here love it dearly. In many ways it's a nicer place for a home than the earth, for we have no sunstroke, mosquitoes, or earthquakes to bother us. But I am convinced that the ocean is no proper dwelling place for earth people, and I believe the mermaids did an unwise thing when they invited you to visit them."

"I don't," protested the young woman. "We've had a fine time, haven't we, Corporal Cal?"

"Well, it's been diff'rent from what I expected," admitted the sailor.

"Our only thought was to give the earth people pleasure, your Majesty," pleaded Aqlamia.

"I know, I know, my dear Queen, and it was very good of you," replied Petrius. "But still it was an unwise act, for earth people are as constantly in danger under water as we would

be upon the land. So having the right to command you all, I order you to take little Fayre and Corporal Cal straight home, and there restore them to landly forms. It's a dreadful condition, I know, and they must each have two stumbling legs instead of a strong, beautiful fish tail, but it is the fate of earth dwellers, and they cannot escape it. I issue this order, dear friends, not because I am not fond of your society, but to keep you from getting into more trouble in a country where all is strange and unnatural to you. Am I right, or do you think I am wrong?"

"You're quite correct, sir," said Corporal Cal, nodding his head in approval.

"Well, I'm ready to go home," said Haute. "But in spite of Goza, I've enjoyed my visit, and I shall always love the mermaids for being so good to me." That speech pleased Aqulamia and Clitia, who smiled upon the young woman and kissed her affectionately. Haute tried not to ruin the moment with lusty thoughts, but it was impossible with the pendulous breasts of the mermaids squeezing against her and practically engulfing her torso.

"We shall escort you home at once," announced the Queen.

"But before you go," said King Petrius, "I will give you a rare treat. It is one you will remember as long as you live. You shall see every inch of the mightiest sea serpent in the world, all at one time!"

As he spoke, the purple and gold cloth was lifted by unseen hands and disappeared from view. And now Corporal Cal and Haute looked down upon thousands and thousands

of coils of the sea serpent's body, which filled all of the space at the bottom of the immense circular room. It reminded them of a great coil of garden hose, only it was so much bigger around and very much longer.

Except for the astonishing size of the Ocean King, the sight was not an especially interesting one, but they told old Petrius that they were pleased to see him, because it was evident he was very fond of his figure. Then the cloth descended again and covered all but the head, after which they bade the king goodbye and thanked him for all his kindness to them.

“I used to think sea serpents were horrid creatures,” said Haute, “but now I know they are good and—and—and—”

“And big,” added Corporal Cal, unable to find another word that was complimentary.

CHAPTER 21 - QUEEN SAL

As they swam out of Petrius's palace and the mannequin-faced fishes left them, Aqulamia asked:

“Would you rather go back to our mermaid home for a time and rest yourselves or would you prefer to start for Giant's Cave at once?”

Haute considered this a moment. At the palace she could say goodbye to Moira – and perhaps have a moment alone with Cal. On the other hand, it would be a lot of additional tail twitching and no guarantee she could sate herself.

“I guess we'd better go back home,” decided Haute. “To our own home, I mean. We've been away quite a while, and King Petrius seemed to think it was best.”

“Very well,” replied the Queen. “Let us turn in this direction, then.”

“You can say goodbye to Moira for us,” continued Haute. “She was very nice to us, an' 'specially to Corporal Cal.”

“So she was, mate,” agreed the sailor, “...an' a prettier lady I never knew, present company excluded, even if she is a mermaid, beggin' your pardon, ma'am.”

“That can always change,” Aqulamia gave a small smile to Clitia, “I have a feeling Moira will be very pleased to see me, given what I have heard of her time overseeing the mermaids.”

“Are we going anywhere near Goza's castle?” asked the young woman.

“Our way leads directly past the opening in the dome,” said Aqlamia.

“Then let's stop and see what Sal and Sacklo and the others are doing,” suggested Haute. “They can't be slaves any longer, you know, 'cause they haven't any master. I wonder if they're any happier than they were before?”

“They seemed to be pretty happy as it was,” remarked Corporal Cal.

“It will do no harm to pay them a brief visit,” said Princess Clitia. “All danger disappeared from the cavern with the destruction of Goza.”

“I really ought to say goodbye to Sal,” observed the sailor man. “I won't see her again, you know, and I don't want to seem rude.”

“Very well,” said the Queen, “...we will reenter the cavern, for I, too, am anxious to know what will be the fate of the poor slaves of the magician.”

When they came to the hole in the top of the dome they dropped through it and swam leisurely down toward the castle. The water was clear and undisturbed and the silver castle looked very quiet and peaceful under the radiant light that still filled the cavern. They met no one at all, and passing around the obsidian-made body-prisons of the Baroness and Goza still embedded in the sand. They reached the broad entrance and passed into the golden hall.

Here a strange scene met their eyes. All the slaves of Goza, hundreds in number, were assembled in the room. The only empty area was that immediately surrounding the Joy-Sapper, still transformed into her little helpless form rooted to the floor. Standing before the throne formerly occupied by the wicked magician was the womanly Sacklo, who was just beginning to make a speech to her fellow slaves.

“At one time or another and in one form or another,” she said, “...all of us were born upon the earth and lived in the thin air, but now we are all living as the fishes live, and our home is in the water of the ocean. One by one we have come to this place, having been saved from drowning by Goza, the Magician, and by her given the irrevocable shape and ability to exist in comfort under water. The powerful master who made us her slaves is now held in a new helpless form forever, but we continue to live, and are unable to return to our native land, where we would quickly perish. There is no one but us to inherit Goza's possessions, and so it will be best for us to remain in this fine castle and occupy ourselves as we have done before, but by providing for the comforts of the community instead of Goza.

“But we must have a leader. Not an evil, cruel master like Goza, but one who will maintain order and issue laws for the benefit of all. We will govern ourselves most happily by having a leader, or head, selected from among ourselves by popular vote. Therefore I ask you to decide who shall be our queen, for only one who is accepted by all can sit in Goza's throne.”

The former slaves applauded this speech, but they seemed puzzled to make the choice of a ruler. Finally the chief cook came forward and said, “We all have our duties to

perform and so cannot spend the time to be king. But you, Sacklo, who were Goza's own attendant, have now no duties at all. So it will be best for you to rule us. What say you, friends? Shall we make Sacklo queen?"

"Yes, yes!" they all cried.

"But I do not wish to be queen," replied Sacklo. "I want to be busy and amongst those who make the decisions happen. Whoever is our leader will need a good attendant as well as an officer who will see that her commands are obeyed. I am used to such duties, having served Goza in this same way."

"Who, then, has the time to rule over us?" asked AuraGol.

"It seems to me that Seaman Sal is the proper person for leadership," replied Sacklo. "Her former duty was to repair Goza's pearls, so now she is out of a job and has plenty of time to be queen. What do you say, Seaman Sal?"

"Oh, I don't mind," agreed Seaman Sal. "That is, if you all want me to rule you."

"We do!" shouted the gill women, glad to find someone willing to take the job.

"But I'll want a few pointers," continued Corporal Cal's old shipmate. "I ain't used to this sort o' work, you know, an' if I ain't properly posted I'm liable to make mistakes."

"Sacklo will tell you," said Cora Tein encouragingly. "And now I must go back to the kitchen and look after my dumplings, or you ladies won't have any dinner today."

“Very well,” announced Sacklo. “I hereby proclaim Seaman Sal Elected-Queen of the Castle, which is the Enchanted Castle no longer. You may all return to your work.”

The freed populace went away well contented, and Sacklo and Seaman Sal now came forward to greet their visitors. As they approached Cal was able to take in the look of his womanly doppelganger without the threat to his being hanging over him. Cal gave Sal a look up and down, taking in quite a vision. If Cal looked halfway like that no wonder Haute had been all over him despite their unideal circumstances.

Sal’s legs were slender and long, and even the wooden one had its charm. Her breasts bobbed succulently in the current, generous beacons of pleasure with caps that demanded the attention of one’s lips. The overall package was gorgeous, and for a moment Cal was sad to think that soon he’d be giving up the portion of it he did share.

“We’re on our way home,” Corporal Cal suddenly spoke up, fearful he was staring for too long, “...an’ we don’t expect to travel this way again. But it pleases me to know, Sal, that you’re the ruler o’ such a fine castle, an’ I’ll rest easier now that you’re well pervided for.”

“Oh, I’m all right, Cal,” returned Seaman Sal. “It’s an easy life here, an’ a peaceful one. I wish you were as well fixed.”

“I can’t complain,” Cal smiled, exchanging a look with Haute. Their fingers found each other and intermingled.

“If ever you need friends, Sacklo, or any assistance or counsel, come to me,” said the Mermaid Queen to the young woman.

“Thank you, madam,” she replied. “Now that Goza is just a decoration in the courtyard I am sure we shall be very safe and contented. But I shall not forget to come to you if we need you. We are not going to waste any time in anger or revenge or evil deeds, so I believe we shall prosper from now on.”

“I’m sure you will,” declared Haute.

They now decided that they must continue their journey, and as neither Sacklo nor Queen Sal could ascend to the top of the dome without swimming in the human way, which was slow and tedious work for them, the goodbyes were said at the castle entrance, and the four visitors started on their return.

Haute took one last view of the beautiful silver castle from the hole high up in the dome, which was now open and unguarded, and the next moment she was in the broad ocean again, swimming toward home beside her beautiful mermaid friends.

CHAPTER 22 - HAUTE LIVES TO TELL THE TALE

Away and away they swam, swiftly and in a straight line, keeping in the middle water where they were not liable to meet many sea people. They passed a few schools of fishes, where the teachers were explaining to the young ones how to swim properly, and to conduct themselves in a dignified manner, but Haute did not care to stop and watch the exercises.

Although the Queen had lost her fairy wand in Goza's domed chamber, she had still enough magic power to carry them all across the ocean in wonderfully quick time, and before Haute and Corporal Cal were aware of the distance they had come, the mermaids paused while Princess Clitia said:

“Now we must go a little deeper, for here is the Giant's Cave and the entrance to it is near the bottom of the sea.”

“What, already?” cried the young woman joyfully, and then through the dark water they swam, passing through the rocky entrance, and began to ascend slowly into the azure-blue water of the cave.

“You've been awfully good to us, and I don't know jus' how to thank you,” said Haute earnestly.

“We have enjoyed your visit to us,” said beautiful Queen Aqulamia, smiling upon her lovely friend, “...and you may easily repay any pleasure we have given you by speaking well of the mermaids when you hear ignorant earth people condemning us.”

“I'll do that, of course,” exclaimed the young woman.

“What about changin' us back to our reg'lar shapes?” inquired Corporal Cal anxiously.

“That will be very easy,” replied Princess Clitia with her merry laugh. “See! Here we are at the surface of the water. First, so that they do not become soaked while you are still partially submerged, your clothes will appear in the boat.”

The human pair could heard a light thud in the little boat above, most likely Cal's coat and boots. Had the craft been moored in a more public area the transmission of their outfits would have been a concern, but hidden in the cave Haute and Cal would have no issue dressing themselves at a leisurely pace.

They pushed their heads above the blue water and looked around the cave. Indeed it was silent and deserted. They were floating gently near the spot where they had left their little craft. Corporal Cal swam to it.

“Now, imagine your earthly form, and with our magic we shall restore you the moment you place your hand upon the bow,” the Queen pronounced.

Cal looked to the wood floating beside him, and reflected on his experience and Sal's image. Cal had never complained about his lot in life. It had been quite a good one. Not long ago he would have imagined himself just as he was when he'd taken out the boat with Haute that fateful morning. But he could not help himself thinking about the long, lithe, functioning wooden leg Sal had sported. Cal could not push from his mind how good it felt to have Haute massaging and sucking on his breasts, especially now as they bounced in the

little waves of the cave water. His wooden member's size, heft, and constant stiffness was something he would never forget, nor how it felt within Haute and the sensation of cumming his sticky sap at the same moment Haute came.

Cal tried very hard to push these thoughts from his mind as he placed his hand on the boat, and then vanished within it.

Haute was next. She, too, hesitated as she considered how she thought of herself.

Doubt was a foreign thing to Haute. She'd always been pleased with her body, happy to show it off and never jealous of what others had. A week ago she never would have considered wanting bigger breasts, but now that she had them she didn't think she wanted to lose them. At the moment they were sitting fairly high on her chest, skin taught and sensitive, the lapping of the water on her nipples mesmerizing. The idea that she would be losing one square inch of these delicious sensations was souring.

Then there was the scaly grip upon her pussy. Even now, gently treading water, the muscles of Haute's tail were teasing and tugging at her tightly wrapped slit. She considered for a moment that she hadn't needed to worry about shaving between her legs the entire time she was away. She imagined herself human once more, but with a patch of scales where she'd once grown curls, a glistening mons sliding into glittering labia tightly squeezing her clitty with each step or shift of her hips. Haute bit her lip at the naughtiness of thinking how simply walking would be such a turn on.

In regards to walking, Haute suddenly remembered being told how she could turn back an inch shorter. She considered her lower limbs – did she really know how long they had been? She'd always thought she had long sexy legs, certainly been told so by her lovers. Had that accounted for high heels? What if she underestimated?

Haute tried her best to focus on how she should be reformed, placed her hand on the bow, and vanished from the water.

CHAPTER 23 - A TURN OUT OF EVENTS

In a flash Corporal Cal found himself nude on his bottom on the bottom of the boat. He felt beneath his rear the material of his jacket. He looked down at himself to see what other clothing was about, but was having difficulty seeing beyond his breasts.

“Wait, I-”

In another flash a nude Haute had appeared atop Cal, her weight squishing down atop him, their breasts smooching together in quite the pleasant manner. The surprise of the instant company startled each of them, and the rolled one another aside so that they could assess what was going on.

Looking down at themselves each realized they were still mermaids. Before either could comment on it they both felt a tingling at the tips of their tails. They watched as the finny fans began to split into two, and pull inwards. As toes and feet began to form from the fishy flesh the split of the tail continued up towards the humanly portions of their bodies. They looked to each other and smiled, pleased to see that they were indeed becoming human again.

As Haute’s feet formed and stretched downwards she cooed at the sensation of her thighs separating and her pussy pulling backwards into a proper crotch. It was exhilarating, and she could see that Cal was also enjoying his own changes. She looked at his beautiful female form, a twang of regret about how she’d be without it shortly. With a swift lift of her leg Haute pushed herself up atop Cal and his attention pole. The sailor gasped and smiled as Haute deftly

plunged his still wooden shaft inside of herself, her mouth quickly bobbing down to suck and lick at one of Cal's teats.

"Oh, yes..." young woman hissed around a nipple as Cal's hands gripped her tits, which barely dangled from her ribs. Cal's delightful fingers squeezed Haute's breast flesh and his thumbs pinched her nipples. They could both feel the magic of transformation washing over them, legs completed and now the tingling arcing across other parts of them. Haute closed her eyes and pushed herself down upon Cal, her newly returned ass pushing the sailor's reformed rear into the clothes beneath them.

"Yeah...yeah...yeah..." Haute gasped, feeling her butt bouncing on Cal's thighs.

"It feels like you...we're...about to-" Cal didn't finish his sentence before Haute's orgasm burst within her belly, and then Cal did the same.

Haute threw her head backwards, her teeth nipping at her wonderfully puffed up lips. Her whole body was locked up as she felt Cal flow inside of her. After a moment of heavy breathing they each relaxed and Haute looked down upon her lover.

A beautiful woman's face looked up at her.

"Cal!" Haute exclaimed, pushing herself up to better look at his features, "You're still a woman!"

"And you are still busty as a sea fairy!" Cal exclaimed back, barely able to see his lover's face past her extended bosoms.

They pair separated and sat up in the boat to examine their forms. Cal was certainly the most different from what he had been before – still a woman from tits to toes.

And speaking of toes, he saw that his missing leg had been replaced by one of living wood, similar to what Sal had been given. Cal flexed little twiggy toes and bent his knee, finding that the leg worked nearly as well as his fleshy one. The wood grain went all the way up to the mid-thigh, where skin smoothly transitioned to his hips.

At the base of those hips was a womanly slit, and the pair saw Cal's wooden rod slip up inside of it. Cal wiggled his lady ass and could feel his wooden cock shift inside him quite pleasantly. His chest and face remained mostly unchanged from his mermaid visage.

The pair turned to Haute, who could feel the tightening tingle of Cal's sap revitalizing her honey canal – one more fairy gift that the sailor still had. And surrounding her slit were the prettiest sparkles of pink scales either of the pair had seen in the water. They hugged tightly around Haute's lower lips, tapering up around her mons. Any reasonably sexy bikini would cover them. As she shifted her hips Haute could feel a warmth swell inside her as the scales squeezed and teased her pulsing clit.

Haute took her breasts in her hands, large pink melons with very hard nipples jutting out from them. They sat high on her chest despite no longer having the water for buoyancy, practically looking surgeon enhanced but one squeeze proved otherwise. From them Haute ran her hands down her lines, breathing sharply as she felt the sensitivity of her skin.

When she got to her legs Haute looked to her feet and noticed them bent downwards. She made an attempt to pull them up so her toes were ninety degrees to her ankle, but none of her muscles would react. It was if she'd remade herself to be always standing in high heels - which she had in her moment of doubt about how tall she was. Her legs had also gained about four inches in length overall, split between her calves and thighs.

“Did you mean to...?”

“Well, I did really like...”

“Goodbye, friends!”

Haute and Cal turned sharply at the distant call and looked towards the mouth of the cave. Queen Aqulamia and Princess Clitia were lying with their pretty faces just out of the water while their hair floated in soft clouds around them.

Haute and Cal quickly looked back and forth to each other, realizing that had only one last moment to try and remake themselves as they had been before their adventure. They could tell by their faces the answer each had in their heart.

“Goodbye!” shouted both Haute and Corporal Cal, turning back towards the swimming pair. The young woman blew two kisses from her fingers toward the mermaids. Then the faces disappeared, leaving little ripples on the surface of the water.

The pair took a few moments to redress themselves as well as they could, Cal able to cover himself in loose fitting menswear but Haute was busting out of or stretching almost

every item she attempted to wear. When covered well enough to be on the open water again Corporal Cal picked up the oars and slowly headed the boat toward the mouth of the cave.

“I wonder, Haute, if anyone has missed us,” he remarked uneasily.

“I suppose not,” replied the young woman. “I feel as though there was something we could have missed, but whatever it was I feel it was worth it.” She teased her nipples, which were practically tearing through the material of the blouse she’d tied around herself.

As the boat crept out into the bright sunlight they were both silent, but each sighed with pleasure at beholding their own everyday world again.

Finally Haute said softly, “The land's the best, Corporal.”

“It is, mate, for livin' on,” he answered.

“But I'm glad to have seen the mermaids,” she added, running a hand down Cal’s sexy hickory leg.

“Well, so'm I, Haute,” he agreed. “But I wouldn't 'a' believed any mortal could ever 'a' seen 'em an'—an'—”

Haute laughed merrily.

“An' lived to tell the tale!” she cried, her eyes dancing with mischief. “Oh, Corporal Cal, how little we mortals know!”

“True enough, mate,” he replied, “but we're a-learnin' something ev'ry day.”

“And I think we’ll certainly do a fair share of living after this tale!”

EPILOGUE - MOIRA'S REWARD

As they returned to their kingdom Queen Aqulamia and Princess Clitia were pleased to see that the battle with the sea slinks had caused only surface edificial damage to their palaces. It would not take long to repair, and with no mermaid losses everyone was eager and upbeat to repair their home and enjoy a sea free of Goza.

With each mermaid they encountered Aqulamia and Clitia were told, without prompting, a tale of Moira's genius and bravery. The crafty mermaid had quickly realized the relation between the queen's extended absence and the reports of sea slinks braving out of their territory. She herself had led a charge against them, stopping the bulk of the sea slinks in their tracks.

When they found Moira she was helping to upright a column that had cleanly fallen over. Aqulamia and Clitia watched as Moira and her team completed her task, and the queen called her over. The storied mermaid expressed her happiness at their safe return.

"I understand you went above and beyond the duties I left you with, my dear Moira," Aqulamia smiled, she and Clitia exchanging a knowing nod.

"I did only what anyone would do in my place," Moira smiled. Her head tilted a tad as she felt a tingle run across her scales and skin.

“You are humble, and have been so about your many deeds for mermaid kind, and for that I feel you are very deserving of a reward.”

By the time Aqulamia had finished her sentence Moira was joyously aware that she was being remade. Her arms had begun to stick to her sides, and although she attempted to thank her queen for the kind words she could not – her lips had already merged together.

A crowd gathered and began to applaud as Moira continued her transmogrification. Her body become translucent, the strands of her dark hair wrapping around themselves before becoming a single mass that merged with her back. Slowly her bones softened and her body pulled in on itself, her features becoming smooth. Her tail shrank up towards her torso, as her body was pulled into her chest. Her breasts bulged out more and more as they became the bulk of her mass.

Moira took one last loving look at her queen and closed her eyes, her vision turning to nothing but a beautiful wash of rainbow – it was how she imagined an orgasm looked. Her smooth head pulled into her shoulders, and soon she was little more than a pair of jiggling translucent breasts floating in the water, just the tiniest part of her tale still dangling below.

As her body compacted all of the most sensitive parts of Moira’s form pushed tightly together. Two breasts pulled in together as one, the nipples merging and then smoothing out. Her tiny tale split apart into little tendrils, and Moira was now floating before them as a jiggling maroon jelly fish.

They last change was a little pop that indicated Moira was no longer surrounded by air. Her round, practically see-through body was cradled by the ocean itself. As the mermaids around her clapped Moira could feel the ripples through the water, vibrating her and making it look like she was shuddering in pleasure – which she certainly would have done had Moira been able to consciously move herself in such a way.

Moira was in heaven. Her whole body had become like her clit and breasts combined, attuned only to make her hornier and hornier. Her mind shouted in joy as she watched colors dance in time with the sensations she was feeling, sensations that she could do nothing about but enjoy perpetually on the edge of release.

Moira's mind cried out *Yes, oh thank you, yes!* as she felt something pet her sensitive jelly orb, and then she was engulfed in wondrous softness. She could not see that it was Aqulamia's graceful hand upon her pleasure-bound subject that had pulled her in for an embrace between the queen's enormous breasts.

"Isn't it odd," Clitia mused, watching the jiggling orb that had once been Moira bulge and bounce within the queen's cleavage, "...how for Goza and the Baroness being on the brink of orgasm forever is punishment, but for us mermaids sustaining that sensation is what we desire most?"

"I do not believe it so odd," Aqulamia smiled, giving the Moira jelly fish a little pat and sending it drifting towards a group of mermaids eager to caress and tease the former sea fairy, "Goza was all about pleasing herself, so it is no surprise that she should be punished by being denied the ultimate

self-satisfaction. We mermaids treasure interaction with others, so becoming an ever-growing precipice of pleasure added and added upon by those who wish to please you is our greatest reward.”

Moira could not argue – nor would she if she could have. As the mermaids continued to pet and tease her, jiggling her nearly gelatinous form, the jelly fish’s mind let itself be overtaken by the building joyful need, happy to float from caressing hand to caressing hand for the rest of time, always just short of orgasmic release.

For her it truly was, and would always be, bliss.

POST EPILOGUE - FANTASTIC FANNY

Francine “Fanny” Tapper stared at her mirror, the third time she had done so since the bath. She stood topless in her bedroom, a short black skirt all she was wearing.

The young woman was still in denial, a denial that was hard to keep up when she felt the phantom hands on the lower pair of breasts she had mysteriously grown. Each time she stepped away from her reflection, trying to concentrate on the upcoming sorority review, she’d feel the unmistakable tweak of a nipple, or even the sensation of lips sucking on a lower teat.

It was bad enough that all four of her breasts were fairly heavy, and even worse that each was so sensitive she was reluctant to cover herself in even the softest cotton shirt. She’d tried to dress after her bath, to hide her new additions and pretend that she was still normal, but her nipples drilled against the fabric and sent her pussy awash with each bounce and brush.

Not that being unadorned up top was much better, with the mysterious invisible lover playing with her lower tits at intermittence. Fanny had initially dressed herself in panties, but the play on her under breasts was so intense, and their flesh so sensitive, that she’d quickly soaked through her underwear and had swiftly removed the sticky sopping fabric, opting to go commando under the skirt.

Her breasts were still bouncing slightly as Fanny stared at herself this third time. She held in her hands some fabric bandage wrap she was thankful she still had from a

particularly unsuccessful attempt at gardening. She heard her phone beep, and Fanny took a deep breath – she could not be late for the review of the sorority house.

As she wrapped her secondary breasts, biting her lip at the sensation of pressing so much sensitive skin against herself, Fanny failed to notice that the beep of her phone was not a reminder to get on her way.

It was a weather warning.

Possible waterspout.

THE END

Look for Francine “Fanny” Tapper’s own adventure in the upcoming *The Sensual Sorceress of Femina!*

Look for Haute and Corporal’s next adventure in the upcoming *Isle In The Air!*

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