

# A Tail of Transformation

By TheSpiralledEye

*A young man from Nebraska dreams of the ocean and decides, against his father's wishes, to move to California. However, upon entering the ocean for the first time he discovers he isn't quite human, in fact, he's a mermaid!*

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I sat back on the bed of my truck and breathed deep; my whole body was coated in sweat from working in the fields all day and I felt exhausted in more ways than one. Across the field I watched as my father worked the combine, harvesting yet another field of corn to add to the pile. Yet another day working the farm, just like yesterday and the day before that. I looked down at a random ear of corn that sat by my truck's wheel and sneered at it. My whole life revolved around that stupid vegetable, always had.

Whoever said farm life was idyllic had never worked a day in the soil because it was anything but. It was dirty, repetitive and mind numbingly dull. It was good money at least, Pa's farm had been running solid for years and there was always food on the table, corn based food to be fair but still.

"Come on, boy! Hop to it!"

I groaned and got to my feet, trying in vain to wipe some of the dust where it clung to the hair on my arms. I hefted up a box with ease and continued to load the truck. Years of farm work had left me suntanned and buff, so the work was easy but my mind wandered. I just wanted a little excitement in my life, was that so much to ask?

When I was a teenager I'd run off and drunk moonshine with the other boys but that had only been fun for so long. Once I realised they were all content to stay in this tiny town in the middle of bumfuck nowhere, farming corn and soybeans for the rest of time we'd grown apart.

I looked out over the field of corn swaying and imagined it was waves of the ocean, blue water turned golden by the setting sun. How would it feel to dive into cool ocean water with the afternoon sun on my back, dirt instantly washed away by salt and spray. I breathed deep, tasting the earth on my tongue and imagining it was sad or ocean spray instead. I

could almost hear the waves but then the rumble of heavy machinery and the stink of oil invaded my nostrils.

“Jacob, come on boy! Just a few more hours and we’re done for the season!” He called from the combine.

“Yes, Pa!” I called, the fantasy was broken anyway.

The ocean was gone, replaced with Nebraska skies and corn, so much bloody corn. I got back to loading the truck and did my best to ignore the ache in my chest. There was a letter there, hidden in my breast pocket. I’d written it over a month ago but kept finding reasons not to give it to Pa. My latest excuse had been the harvest, I couldn’t let my father do it all on his own. But in a few hours that excuse would have passed and I’d have no choice.

~

“Come on boy, have a beer!”

My Pa slapped me on the shoulder and grinned, handing a cold one to me in a frosty can.

“You earned it, my boy. That was our biggest harvest yet!”

I smiled uneasily; guilt clawing its way up my throat. I had to leave tonight, it was my best chance at a head start. We always celebrated the night harvest finished, then tomorrow morning my father would be up late for once, making us oat pancakes and planning some sort of movie to watch and relax.

Only I wouldn’t be here.

My bags were packed, my letter ready to be placed on my bed which would remain unslept. I’d put this off long enough, I needed to take the plunge and start living my life for me. But the universe seemed to be against it, everywhere I looked were reminders of how much Pa had worked to support me; the photos on the wall, the furniture he’d made by hand, my old high school certificate proudly displayed as though it were a college diploma.

“I know it’s hard work, Jacob.” He said soberly, “it’s probably not as glamorous as you’d like life to be but it’s honest work. Life here is simple and sometimes simple is just what you need.”

“But there’s no harm in spicing things up a bit once in a while, right?” I tried, taking a sip of the beer for courage.

“We could always take a little trip.” my father said uncomfortably. “There is a nice little hotel a few towns over, bit of change of scenery.”

I sighed.

“Pa, you know that’s not what I meant.”

“Why waste money going all the way across the country when everything we need is here?” He huffed, “In this day and age you can see everything on the TV or internet anyway!”

“But seeing isn't the same as experiencing!” I argued, “Pa, all we have here is fucking corn! I’m just saying maybe I could do more than this. If I went to college in California maybe, got some life experience-”

“You don’t need life experience.” Pa slammed his beer down on the table hard. “And you don’t need no fancy diploma from a school that you’ll be paying back for decades. People go to college to get a good job, you have a good job and you’re already good at it!”

I pinched the bridge of my nose and sighed; I should have known better. We’d had this argument a thousand times.

“Besides, California is far too close to the ocean and that place-”

“Is a death trap waiting to happen.” I finished, deadpan. “Pa, just because you fell off a boat and nearly drowned doesn't mean-”

“And those California girls, their trouble I tell you. Any coastal city is bound to breed debauchery. No, good simple folk here, that’s what you should be focusing on. What about that lady Daisy, I hear she’s single again.”

Daisy was a buck-toothed simpleton who thought fireworks were one step from witchcraft; and yet she was still the most eligible woman in this town. Just another reason to get out of here.

“You’re right dad, this is spoiling the evening, let’s just have a drink and relax, eh?”

Pa smiled and I copied him, guilt still swirling in my gut as we whiled away the evening drinking and chatting. My eyes fell to Pa’s hands, calloused and rough for years of hard work. Hard work he’d done to support me; up with the sunrise, to bed when it set, working the earth day in and day out. He was right, it was honest work.

But it wasn’t for me.

~

Sneaking out was easy enough, Pa slept like the dead. I took the slightly crinkled letter out of my shift pocket and placed it down on my bed.

*Dear Pa,*

*I’m so sorry to do this but I can’t stay here anymore. I know I am meant to do something different with my life. So I am going to California to find myself. When I am settled I’ll call you I promise.*

*Love, Jacob*

Simple and to the point, just like Pa himself. I knew telling him where I was going was a mistake but I couldn’t just up and disappear completely, he’d have a heart attack. Hurting Pa like this stung, but I had to do it. There was something deep inside me that said I belonged in California, near the waves and surf.

I snuck out the back door and started walking. I couldn’t take the truck on a one way trip so I began the long trek down the road to the bus depot in town. Everything was far apart in the town, separated by the seemingly never ending fields of goddamn corn. By the time I reached the bus depot the sun was threatening to crest over the horizon.

I knew the first bus out of town left at 6am on the dot, and I’d arrived just in time. Mr. Farley, who ran the depot, barely looked at me as he handed me a ticket and I bounded up

onto the rusty old clunker this town called its bus. I settled down in my seat and waited, staring at my reflection in the dirty glass.

Tousled brown curls and freckles stared back at me, my cornflower blue eyes only adding to my country boy aesthetic. I was probably going to stick out like a sore thumb in California but I'd adapt, I was sure. After what felt like an age the bus pulled out and began to rumble down towards the highway and for once the sight of cornfields made me smile as they passed. Soon they were gone all together, replaced with fields of cows and sheep, by the time Pa had woken up I'd be three towns over and getting on the greyhound to California and there was nothing he could do to stop me.

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It took four buses and almost as many days to reach California. After several long trips wearing the same jeans and hoodie I was feeling gross but I didn't bother changing before getting into the shuttle. I was here, I had a plan. I was going to wash all the grime from travel and my tiny town off by jumping into the ocean for the first time. I was buzzing with excitement as the shuttle bus approached the ocean. I could see it on the horizon and I wound down the window as low as it could go.

I leaned on the edge of the window and took a moment just to appreciate the sight; the bright blue water with sunlight glinting on the waves, the stiff sea breeze, the tang of salt in the air; yes, this was where I was supposed to be. I could feel it in my bones; this was *home*.

"Fresh off the plane?"

I turned to see a young guy about my own age grinning in the seat behind me. With blonde hair, sun kissed skin and a muscular build he was exactly the sort of person that came to mind when people picture California beaches. His sunglasses reflected my own cornfed features right back at me.

"Bus actually." I admitted, cringing a little at my accent, I never realised it was quite so thick.

"Oh wow, farm boy, come to the coastal city?" The man asked, "work?"

"Somethin' like that, I just needed a change."

“Well, if you want a good drink, the bar down the street from the next stop is the place to go. Shots, cheap beer and plenty of girls.” He wiggled his eyebrows at me and I snorted.

“Thanks, I’m Jacob.”

“Brody.” He stuck his hand out to shake and I took it. “Maybe I’ll see you round but uh, word of advice? Try not to look like such a...”

“Rube?”

“I was going to say redneck but that works too. People realise you’re new around here you’ll be scammed out of all your money by dinner.”

“Right...thanks?”

Brody clearly didn’t hear me hesitate because he just grinned and gave me a wave before jumping to his feet. The shuttle bus pulled up along a small spit of ocean by a pier and Brody jumped off and headed down the street, giving me a thumbs up. He was a little blunt but I appreciated the interaction anyway; it was nice knowing at least one friendly face, even if he did think I was a redneck.

Stepping out onto the footpath I could feel the crunch of sand beneath my feet, loose grains carried up onto the concrete by people’s shoes over time. The air was fresh, salty and brisk in a way that was totally new to me. There was no hint of hay or forest pine to it at all. It was enough to make my heart soar. I didn’t hesitate to run down onto the sand itself and kick off my shoes, wiggling them in the warm grains. I’d never felt so at home; and I’d only been here a few minutes!

Despite being so close to the bus stop; there was nobody else on the beach. The sand was gritty and the area small, compared to most California beaches it was probably not great but to me it was paradise. I stripped down to my boxers and quickly stuffed my belongings into my backpack and hid it beneath the pier and turned to face the water.

The waves lapped at my feet and sent a shiver up my spine before I dove in and was enveloped in the salty, cold water. It felt incredible! So much better than swimming in that dirty lake back home. I let myself sink below the waterline and sighed happily; this was utterly-wait hang on, I was breathing?

My eyes shot open in surprise as I took another breath. The blurry, underwater world came into stark focus all at once and the salt stopped stinging my eyes. I could feel a

strange tingle at my neck and when I ran my fingers along the sides I realised there were three slits either side; gills.

"What!" My voice had a warble to it, but was otherwise clear despite being underwater.

I spluttered in shock and quickly surfaced, thankful to find my gills instinctually snapped shut and I could still breathe using my lungs regularly. My whole body was starting to shiver though, not from cold, but from an odd pins and needles sensation that was rapidly spreading. But the tingling grew stronger, spreading up my legs. I treaded water and glanced down, my heart skipping a beat. My legs were... changing. I watched, horrified and fascinated, as my feet fused together, the skin shimmering with iridescent scales. My boxers ripped at the seams, the fabric floating off in water, swept away by the current in seconds. I tried to kick, but my legs, now a single appendage, moved awkwardly.

Panic set in, and I thrashed, trying to swim back to shore. But with every movement, the transformation accelerated. My thighs melded together, the scales creeping higher. I could feel my muscles shifting, my bones realigning. The panic was replaced by a strange calmness, a sense of inevitability. This was happening, and there was nothing I could do to stop it. Despite the weirdness of the situation, a little part of me was whispering that this was right.

I slipped back beneath the waves and let the water embraced me, and I felt my body continue to change. My lower body elongated, becoming a powerful tail, the scales now covering it completely and creeping partially up my sides. That tingling seemed to follow them and swirl around my chest; just when things couldn't get any weirder, I felt the skin there begin to bulge outwards.

Bubbles escaped from my mouth as I cried out in shock watching my chest begin to fill out. My nipples turned pink and large before the skin beneath them inflated. Two round, distinctive shapes formed over my chest and I could only watch with morbid fascination as a set of breasts came to rest against me. The tingling ended and I was left floating beneath the waves in my new form barely able to comprehend what just happened.

Long hair floated in front of my face and I startled, I hadn't even felt it growing but grow it had. In fact, my hair was so long now that it reached where my ass should have been. Instead there was just a vaguely ass shaped mound and a small fin that melted into part of my tail.

"What the hell...This feels...good!"

A sudden clarity washed over me. I was a creature of the ocean, a mermaid, born of the waves. I tested my new tail, finding it strong and swift. The tits were a surprise, more so than the tail in a way. I could tell that my body shape had changed to be more feminine and as I ran my hands along my face I could tell the hard edges had been smoothed away.

I was clearly a woman, even if I didn't have anything between my legs to identify me as one. I swirled around a little, getting my bearings and feeling my new breasts float beneath me; it wasn't all that bad really.

I swam deeper, revelling in the new sensations, the freedom of movement, the connection to the water. I swam out of the tiny bay with ease, staying close to the ocean floor and grimacing at the trash embedded in the sand. I knew a lot of trash ended up in the ocean but seeing it up close made it far more real.

As I entered the deeper water I let myself float, eyes closed, and enjoyed the gentle push and pull of the currents. The ocean felt like an extension of myself. On some level, I knew I shouldn't be so calm but I couldn't help it. That feeling of rightness was still there, telling me this was my true form. The idea of going back on shore made me shiver with disgust but I knew it had to be done.

I flicked my tail and swam back to the beach, surfacing only to find the sun had set; I'd lost all track of time in the water. Now, the question was, how to change back. I swam under the pier and awkwardly pulled myself up onto the sand, wiggling in a vain effort to split my tail back into legs. A vague sort of panic began to build as I dried myself off, feeling the scales prickle in protest; what if I *couldn't* turn back?

Just when the horror of that reality was starting to crash down on me, I felt that tingle spread across my scales and my tail dissolved back into legs. The breasts sucked back into my chest and my hair back into my head. Just like that, fast as you could click your fingers, I was human, and male, again.

I stared down at my own legs and felt an odd sense of...resentment; which I immediately pushed away. Inside my bag I heard a gentle buzzing and realised it was the new phone I'd purchased for the journey.

"Hello?"

"Ah, is this Jacob? It's Miranda from the hostel, I was wondering if you still planned on checking in today."

"Yes, of course. Sorry I'll be there soon!"



I hung up and swallowed nervously. I was still naked on the sand beneath the pier. The waves lapped near my toes and I had the overwhelming urge to dive straight back into the water but I held back and got dressed instead. Every step I took toward the hostel and away from the ocean felt wrong but I forced myself to keep going. I could worry about what the hell was happening to me tomorrow.

~

I'd imagined my first morning waking up on the California coast dozens of times; but actually doing it was something else. Even in a crappy little cheap as chips hostel where I shared a room with half a dozen drunken booze cruise travellers, it was magical. I immediately leapt up and stared into the ocean, bright blue and gleaming under the sun. It felt almost as if it were calling to me, begging me to dive right on in...

I didn't even realise I was moving to open the window until my finger pricked some of the loose wood and I jumped back in surprise. What the hell was wrong with me? I thought back to yesterday but it honestly felt like a dream. I must have fallen asleep on the beach before going swimming, that was the only explanation. And yet, even as I tried to convince myself I couldn't quite manage it.

I wandered outside, grabbing a quick bite to eat and fully intending to wander the streets and take in the sights. Instead, I found myself at a crowded beach. It was like all the pictures and videos I'd seen online; packed full of beautiful tanned people in skimpy bathing suits enjoying the sunshine. Swimmers carried surfboards out into the spray and tanned themselves in the sun.

I was halfway across the sand and picking up speed before I even knew what I was doing. The call of the ocean was so strong it was impossible to ignore, I was just a few feet from the beautiful blue when a voice shocked me out of my stupor.

"Jacob, brah! You made it in one piece!"

I skidded to a halt and looked over to see Brody in his trademark sunglasses grinning at me.

"Brody, uh hey?"

I'd been so focused on the ocean I felt a little silly.

"You made it through your first night in California, country boy! Well done!" Brody cheered. "Wanna come surfing with us?"

“Yeah!” My eyes lit up at the idea, I’d always wanted to surf!

“We’ll show ya the ropes,” Brody grinned, ducking his head towards a small group of guys our own age. “You can borrow Skinner’s board.”

“Oi! Yelled the bald guy, Skinner I presumed. “Don’t go offering my board to strangers.”

“Aw Skinner, it’ll be fine. Jacob’s a real class act, he’s got that ol’ southern charm about him.”

I blushed a little; I really had to lose the farm boy look. Somehow. I did my best not to look like a deer in the headlights as Brody shoved a board in my arms and showed me how to carry it down to the water. As soon as we slipped into the waves, I felt at home, even if I did feel a bit ridiculous trying to paddle the giant board underneath me.

A wave slowly built up behind us and Brody started to explain how to catch it but his words went in one ear and out the other. I could feel something tingling around my toes. I peered through the water but it was hard to make out with the water rising as the wave picked us up. It was only at the last second, when my legs snapped together of their own accord I realised what was happening; that transformation hadn’t been a dream and it was about to happen again, in front of Brody!

I’d only just met the guy but he was my first California friend and I didn’t want to immediately out myself as a total freak. Panic surged through me, enough that I stopped paying attention to the board and felt myself wobble and plunge into the cold spray. The change was faster this time, tail appearing in a swirl of bubbles and my hair and tits growing out in a matter of seconds. Below the waves I could hear Brody laughing and searching for me; crap, crap, crap!

There was no choice, I had to run. Or rather, swim. I swished my tail up and down as fast as I could manage, darting down deeper and further out into the bay where nobody would be able to see me. My scales were a dazzling shade of emerald green and melted into the ocean scenery perfectly; if only the platinum blonde hair weren’t so noticeable. Hopefully if anybody did manage to see me, they’d think it was seaweed.

Once I was far enough away from the beach I took a few deep breaths of seawater and managed to calm down. Alright, so I was a mermaid again. Now what? The sunlight filtered through the water, casting dancing patterns on the ocean floor and reflecting off my tail. The scales glimmered and it brought a soft smile to my face. I’d always felt a connection

to the ocean, it was what had drawn me to California in the first place. I didn't understand how this change had happened but clearly it was for a reason; I may as well make the most of it.

I swam out deep, away from the shoreline and its trash into the ocean itself. I swam past towering kelp forests, their fronds swaying gently with the current. Schools of colourful fish darted around me, flashing their vibrant scales in the sunlight. I laughed, a bubbly sound that echoed through the water, and chased after them, delighting in their quick, synchronised movements.

“Wait for me!” I giggled.

It was a game of tag where I was always just a bit slower, but it didn't matter. The fish didn't speak, but I felt a strange kinship with them. I could tell they were having just as much fun as I was. The joy was in the chase, in the freedom of movement. This is what flying must feel like. I picked up speed, practising my underwater movements with a smile on my face. I'd never felt more free.

As I ventured further, I came across a rocky outcrop covered in anemones and starfish. I paused, hovering in the water to examine them closely. The anemones waved their delicate tentacles, and I reached out, brushing them gently with my fingers, feeling the soft, almost ticklish sensation. This was magical.

I didn't even care that I was naked, and that the change had ruined yet another pair of shorts. The water swirled around my bare breasts and I sighed in happiness. All this time, it hadn't been the coast calling me but the ocean itself, this was where I belonged. After a few hours though, my stomach grumbled and I wasn't confident enough to go after any of those fish to eat so I made my way back to shore.

As I approached the surf spot the sun began to dip lower in the sky, casting a golden glow that penetrated the water. I surfaced briefly, breathing in the salty air. I watched from below as surfers caught waves, their boards slicing through the water, their movements a dance with the ocean.

I swam to the edge of the bay and found a large boulder behind which I could surface. I dragged myself up onto the sand and let the afternoon heat dry away the water, taking my tail with me. Once I was human again I realised that I had a new problem; I was totally naked.

“Fuck, didn't think about that...”

It wasn't like I could wade out into the water to hide my modesty either. I peaked over the rocks and felt my eyebrows rise; the beach was crawling with lifeguards and police officers. I spied Brody too, sitting with his surfboard alone looking miserable.

“Hey!” I called and he turned, jumping to his feet so quickly that his sunglasses almost fell off.

“He’s there!” Brody cried, “He’s alive!”

Oh shit. As far as Brody was concerned, I fell off my board and never surfaced; all those officers were probably trawling the bay for my body. Police officers and life guards suddenly swarmed me, one of which thankfully handed me a towel to cover myself. Luckily, I was able to spin a story about getting caught in a rip and tugged out to sea before struggling back to shore. Some people looked like they doubted me, but I had no reason to lie, especially when I shooed the press away. Still, by the time I was finished giving my fake statement for the thousandth time I was exhausted. I was ready to drag myself back to the hostel and sleep for a week but to my surprise, Brody was waiting for me outside the police station looking pensive.

“Dude, I’m so sorry.” He said as soon as he saw me. “I shouldn't have thrown a newbie right into the surf like that, I knew you’d fall off the first time. We...we thought it would be funny. A bit of hazing y’know? I didn't think you’d get caught in a rip and almost drown.”

“Oh, don't worry it was an accident.” Guilt swirled in my gut.

Poor Brody, I couldn't imagine what it must have been like sitting on that beach thinking a harmless little joke had resulted in somebody's death.

“I’ll make it up to you-”

“No!” I said a little too quickly. “I just mean, maybe I shouldn't be going in the ocean after all that.”

At least not with anybody else around to see me change. Brody nodded and looked down at his feet.

“I don’t blame you, I’m sorry I made the ocean such a shit place for you, especially since it’s your first time here. Why don’t we hang out on land?”

I grinned.

“That sounds fun, I do need to find a job here so I can support the new lifestyle.”

“And I can show you all the best places to spend the money once you start earning!”

We both laughed.

“Sounds good.”

~

That became my new life; sneak out to a beach early in the morning and spend hours exploring the ocean floor, then meet up with Brody for lunch before dropping resumes in the afternoon before sneaking back for an evening swim. It was sort of thrilling, living this double life as a mermaid. I was becoming as familiar with the bays surrounding the coast as I was with my own hand. As the weeks passed though I did feel a stab of guilt thinking about Pa. It would be time to replant soon, he hadn’t done it alone since I was twelve and he was getting on in years now.

Was he looking for me? Did he miss me? Or was he so angry that I abandoned him that he pretended like I’d never existed. More than once I picked up my new phone and considered sending him a text, but I knew in my heart the moment he knew where I was he’d be calling constantly trying to convince me to go back to the farm. I couldn’t go back there, just thinking about being so far away from the ocean made my heart ache. I was a mermaid, I belonged near the sea.

In fact, now that I had started embracing my mermaid nature I was finding it harder and harder to drag myself back up onto land. It felt...wrong. When I finally did get a job making coffee in a little cafe it only got worse. Entire days spent on split shift, counting down the hours till knock off when I could sprint down to the ocean and dive back into the waves.

I didn’t even care about growing breasts anymore, or my long hair and feminine face. They felt wonderful in the water and I’d even dug a little hand mirror out of the sand that somebody had thrown away and used it to admire myself more than once.

Three months of this life passed before something finally went wrong. I’d just finished a stifling shift and was so antsy that I stayed in the water well past the time I normally went

home. The ocean around me was near black as I explored down deep with only the far away moonlight to guide me. Some people might have found the black realm unnerving, but not me. My arms were aching with tiredness though.

“A cave...” I muttered, noticing a little rocky outcropping near the bottom.

The cave was shallow, only a few feet deep, but sheltered enough that the currents wouldn't wash me away. I was so tired, but I really didn't want to go back up on land just yet so I settled down in the cool sand to rest. It was surprisingly comfortable and when I blinked, I found the water around me a pleasant blue; I'd fallen asleep.

“Oh shit!”

I flicked my tail and started for the surface, breaking through the waves in the open ocean to find the sun high in the sky.

“Fuck, I am so fired!”

I raced back to shore as quickly as I could and dragged myself up under a secluded pier to dry. The seconds ticked by aching slow as I waited, tapping my nails against a shell in irritation.

“Come on, come on...change back!” I hissed, but I didn't.

My scales were so dry they were starting to itch and my heart began to thunder in my chest; why wasn't I changing, normally all it took was a few minutes out of the water. My breasts hung heavy and unsupported on my chest and suddenly they didn't feel quite so much fun anymore. Nor did my long hair which usually flowed behind me, light as a feather. Now it was a heavy, tangled mess that was going frizzy in the open air.

I waited a whole hour under that pier until I couldn't deny it anymore; I was stuck. I fumbled out a message to my boss about having to take some personal days, rehid my backpack and slid back into the water, feeling a lot more apprehensive than usual. Had sleeping underwater somehow made this change permanent? That had to be it right? But what was the logic there; something, maybe some mermaid instinct, told me there was more to it.

I spent the next few days dragging myself up onto shore on secluded beaches in the vain hope that I would change back, but I didn't. I'd sent a few texts to Brody, explaining that I was out of town but other than that, I had no reason to come ashore.

I was forced to fill my days with playful swimming and hunting for food. Now that I was in the water twenty-four seven I was ravenous and finding myself oddly okay with eating nothing but seafood and various ocean plants. Honestly, this life of underwater living was quite idyllic, I could even get used to it, if I wasn't so damn lonely.

"There have to be other mermaids..." I whispered to myself, "Somewhere."

I gazed out into the deep open ocean, the idea of swimming away from the coast, out into the deepest parts of the sea to try and find others of my kind was intimidating to say the least. But I was lonely enough that with each day I considered it more seriously.

I was gathering up sea cucumbers for lunch one morning when I saw it; a flash out of the corner of my eye. I turned, expecting to see some fisherman dumping his trash into the ocean but instead, I saw scales. It seemed almost comical how little fanfare there was the first time I saw another mermaid. She was swimming down to the ocean floor and evidently hadn't noticed me yet amongst all the coral. She was an older woman, perhaps forty going on fifty, with long hair like my own and a pink tail. Her large chest was wrapped in a seaweed shirt and she seemed to be looking around worriedly for something when she finally locked eyes with me.

"Jacob?" She called and my jaw fell open.

"How do you know my name?"

In a flurry she was at my side and throwing her arms around me tight and I blinked in surprise.

"You foolish boy! I knew I'd find you here, there was no way you'd be able to stay away from seawater once you got here."

"I'm sorry," I said, pulling away. "Do I know you?"

The woman's face fell and she sighed.

"It's me Jacob, Pa."

I felt my eyes almost bug out of my skull. This mature, womanly mermaid was my weathered old farmer Pa? Aside from the bronzed skin they couldn't look more different! I flushed suddenly, hurried covering my chest up in humiliation. This couldn't be right, it just couldn't.

“What?”

“This is why I moved inland, so that you'd never find out what we are.” Pa sighed.

My mind was still reeling; trying to reconcile this woman with the father who raised me. I knew I looked different while in mermaid form but it was so much harder to grasp seeing somebody from the outside. I looked him (her?) up and down as slowly his words sunk in; and then I felt my blood starting to boil as my hands curled into fists.

“You knew? My whole life you knew I was a mermaid and you never thought to mention it?!”

“It was for your own good.” Pa argued. “I thought if I moved us inland, taught you to appreciate the nature of the land, you might not feel the call of the ocean.”

“Well all it did was make it worse.” I hissed. “All this time, you knew why I wanted to go so badly and you didn't think to explain?”

“I just wanted you to be normal.” Pa said. “There are...biological impulses mermaids cannot fight. I didn't want you at war with yourself the way I was.”

“Biological...is that why I can't change back?”

The blood drained from Pa's face and my anger seemed to evaporate, replaced with genuine fear. I'd never seen Pa look so worried as he quickly swam around me, examining my body from all angles.

“How long have you been in the water? Have you been submerged for more than twelve hours?” He asked hurriedly.

“Yes...I fell asleep on the ocean floor a few weeks ago and ever since-”



“A few weeks!?” Pa wailed. “Oh no...there is nothing that can be done now.”

“What do you mean? I’m stuck as a woman forever?”

“No, but for a long time.” Pa bit his lip. “A few more months at least...Jacob...you’re pregnant.”

Blood rushed in my ears.

“Wha-pregnant? How?? No that’s not possible. I haven’t even had sex since I got here, especially not in mermaid form, I don’t even have a...you know. How can I get pregnant?”

“Mermaid’s don’t reproduce with sex.” His father shook his head sorrowfully, “We are all female, when we are mature enough, our bodies begin the process, provided we are in good health, well fed and underwater for at least twelve hours after spending enough time with a human man. Most mermaids stay on land for that reason, only coming to the ocean when their instincts compel them to breed.”

The antsy feeling I’d been getting in the lead up to my sleep, I thought I’d just wanted to swim but had that been my female mermaid brain compelling me to breed? My horror must have shown on my face and my hands instinctively went to my stomach, palms resting on the ever so slight rise of my belly.

“This is why I raised you so far away. I didn’t want you getting pregnant as a teenager, or until you were truly ready.” Pa sighed. “I guess I failed.”

“Yeah.” I grit my teeth. “You did.”

“Jacob-”

“No! If you had just told me the truth, I could have been careful! I would never have fallen asleep and gotten myself knocked up by the ocean! Now I am stuck like this and I’m going to have a baby! All on my own!”

“I’ll be here-”

“No. You won’t Pa!”

“Jacob, please. I’ve been searching for you for weeks. I don’t want to lose you again.”

“Well, too bad.” I crossed my arms over my chest. “You fucked up. Leave.”

“Ja-”

“LEAVE!”

I could feel tears of frustration building up behind my eyes but luckily they flowed seamlessly into the water. Or at least I hoped so; I didn’t want Pa to see me cry. His face looked thunderstruck and after a moment he sighed deeply.

“Alright but please, if you head out of the bay and down the trench, you’ll find a community there. They can help you with the birth and raising the baby if you won’t let me help.”

“Noted. Bye.”

Angry as I was, I still felt bad watching Pa turn around and swim away. I had missed him all this time and part of me wanted nothing more than to swim after him and return that hug properly. But I couldn’t; this was a matter of pride now. It was thanks to him that I was in this mess in the first place.

I placed my hands back over my stomach and looked down nervously. I’d never given much thought to being a father, much less being a mother! Kids had been one of those ‘one day’ things I’d never really considered before. I didn’t know the first thing about being a parent and I knew even less about being a mermaid. How was I supposed to raise one? Hell, how was I supposed to *birth* one considering I had a tail now? I swallowed nervously.

“Alright kid, it’s just you and me against the ocean now...I guess.”

~

Now that I knew I was pregnant, it was obvious. I was ravenous, my nipples were so sensitive I almost moaned when putting on my first seashell bra and my stomach was starting to round. I nervously gathered everything I could for the journey to the mermaid

settlement Pa had mentioned. I had no idea how long it would take me to swim there and I didn't want to get caught without any food in a strange area.

I was almost ready to go when I felt compelled to return to the shoreline one last time. I had such high hopes for life in California; maybe once the baby was born I could come back and start again. It would be easy enough to spin a tale about getting a girl knocked up and her running off. Thinking about it made me bite my lip.

Pa had mentioned I had to spend time with a man in order to get pregnant, the only man I'd been hanging out with consistently was Brody. Did that technically make him the father of my baby? Should I tell him? How would I tell him? I got as close to the shore as I dared and watched the surfers until I spotted him. He looked distracted as he rode the waves and all at once I felt dread creep up my spine.

As a mermaid, I could feel the ebb and flow of the ocean around me far better than any human. I could feel the strong rip below us and the wave getting bigger as Brody unbalanced. I dove beneath the waves as he crashed into the water and watched in horror as he confidently turned himself around, ready to head back to the surface, only to get sucked into the current and forced down deep.

The current wasn't too long, but I could already tell he was going to run out of breath before he could swim back to the surface. Without hesitation I dove, hooking my arms around him and dragging him back up the surface where he coughed and spluttered to life.

"What the hell?" He muttered, "What a wipe ou-agh!"

He jumped away from me in shock, eyes immediately drawn down to where my pink tail was treading water.

"Are you okay, Brody?"

"Yeah I'm fine...how do you know my name?"

Well...fuck.

"Ummmm..."

"Are you some sort of weird stalker mermaid?"

"No!" I cried before raising an eyebrow. "And you're taking the whole 'almost drowning then immediately finding out mermaids are real' thing pretty smoothly."

“No use freaking out about what’s past, girl.” He grinned, “And you’re right here so...why deny it?”

How much weed did this guy's mother smoke while pregnant to make him *this* chill?

“Alright well, if you’re cool with this maybe the rest won’t be so bad.”

“The rest?”

“...here, hold onto my back and we’ll find somewhere private to chat, this is going to take a long time to explain.”

~

“So...I knocked you up?”

“Basically.”

“...huh.”

“Yeah...”

To say the conversation had been awkward was an understatement, only exacerbated by the fact that every time Brody asked about Mermaids, I had to admit I didn't know. .

“I’m thinking maybe you should go find your dad.” He sighed eventually. “Taking care of a kid on your own is hard enough, if you don't even know how you’re going to have it you’re probably going to need help. No offence.”

“How are you this calm?”

“Go with the flow my dud-uh, my girl?” Brody blushed. “Look I didn’t expect to become a dad any time soon, let alone a baby daddy to a half male mermaid but hey, what’s done is done. I’d offer to support or whatever but I can’t live under water.”

I flicked my tail with irritation; he was right about finding Pa. I knew that but I didn't want to admit it.

"Look, I will stick to my usual routine and all. I'll put aside some savings, if mermaids need stuff maybe I can help buy it. Like, clothes or whatever." Brody suggested. "I'll go surfing every Saturday at 4pm, then when you want to find me, you can! If you figure out how to turn back into a dude and walk on land we'll go from there."

My heart swelled a little at Brody's support, especially considering we weren't a couple at all.

"And you don't have to worry about cheating on me." I added quickly. "I know this is a bit weird, but if you meet some nice girl or whatever, go ahead. We're not a couple even if this kid is technically ours."

Brody actually laughed.

"I uh, don't do that."

"Oh...so if you meet a nice guy-"

"No man, I mean I don't do that at all, or should I say, do anybody."

"...Oh!"

Brody laughed at my face as it burned and elbowed me in the side.

"What a pair we make, eh? Poor kids got no shot of being normal."

He meant it as a joke, but the use of the word resonated with me. That's what Pa had said; he'd wanted me to be normal. I thought about my child for a moment, how hard it was going to be for them, never being able to truly be themselves around proper humans, either having to deny a part of themselves or force themselves away from the ocean they loved so much to avoid being alienated like I was about to be. Maybe Pa really did have a point; I can't say I liked his methods, but now that I was going through this myself they didn't seem all that far fetched.

"I'm going to head to that city Pa mentioned with the other mermaids." I announced after a moment. "I'll have the kid and then once it's safe I'll come back here and let you know what the plan is."

"Sounds good, baby mama."

"...don't call me that."

~

It took several weeks of swimming to find the city Pa had mentioned. In that time my belly began to swell, slowly becoming round as the little life grew inside me. Even with Pa's vague directions I somehow knew the way instinctually and for that I was grateful. The hidden city was built within a massive underwater cavern, illuminated by bioluminescent plants and glowing crystals. As I approached, I felt the gentle tug of a current guiding me toward the entrance, a grand archway made of coral and shells.

I swam through the archway and felt a shiver of...something, magic perhaps. It would explain why nobody had ever found the place, hidden away as it was. The sight took my breath away. Towers of coral rose from the seabed, intertwined with shimmering kelp. Mermaids moved gracefully through the water, their tails leaving trails of sparkling bubbles. It wasn't nearly as big as a human city, closer in size to the little cowpoke town where I'd grown up, but far more beautiful.

Once the initial wonder wore off I felt a sense of awkwardness settle over me; where was I supposed to go? Luckily, a small group of mermaids spotted me and swam up to greet me with warm smiles. One of them, a regal-looking older mermaid with flowing silver hair and deep blue scales, swam forward.

"Welcome," she said, her voice melodic and soothing. "I am Sera, and I am going to make a guess and say you're Jacob? Your mother mentioned you were coming."

I felt a wave of relief wash over me, I couldn't even muster the energy to be annoyed at Pa's meddling.

"Thank you, Sera. I... I'm pregnant and I wasn't sure where else to go."

Sera smiled and took my hand. "You have come to the right place, Jacob. Your mother was foolish to keep you in the dark for so long, I cannot imagine how scared you must be. Come, let us take care of you."

She led me through the city, pointing out various landmarks and introducing me to other mermaids who smiled and greeted me warmly. This place really did have a small town vibe, everybody seemed to know one another; no wonder Pa had chosen to move to another small town on the surface. He probably hoped it would have a similar vibe, but with less coral and more corn. We arrived at a beautiful structure built into the side of the cavern, where soft lights glowed and the water felt particularly warm and soothing.

Inside, a group of mermaids with gentle expressions greeted us and one even hugged me warmly. Seraphina introduced them as the city's healers and midwives. They guided me to a bed of soft seaweed and shells, where I could rest comfortably and I followed their lead.

One of the healers examined me with practised care. Her hands were warm and her touch was reassuring. She used various tools made of polished shells and delicate coral to listen to the life growing inside me.

"Everything looks good," Thalassa said with a smile. "Your baby is healthy and strong."

"Thank you," I whispered, feeling a weight I didn't even know was there lift off my shoulders.

"You can stay here for the next few months till it comes time to surface and give birth." Sera said and all my calm immediately evaporated.

"Surface?"

"Yes, mermaids give birth in human form so we must make sure you are near the surface so that you can easily get on land before your tail disappears."

She said it so calmly that I almost screamed.

"But I'm-I don't have a...a..."

"Vagina? You will for the birth." One of the midwives shrugged. "Don't worry, your body knows what to do."

Oh good, because I sure as shit didn't. This was my chance to learn though, I suppose. Sera provided me with a small room to make my own while I was living in the city and I settled in as best I could. I spent my days slowly feeling my belly grow bigger and heavier as the child grew and did my best to learn everything I could about mermaids.

Pa was right, they were all female, but turned into men on shore. Unlike Pa though, they all saw themselves as female. Sera explained, a little awkwardly after one too many odd looks, that a mermaid with a male name like mine was an oddity. She even suggested picking a female name but I refused, it didn't seem right.

"You're getting close." One of the midwives beamed one day.

"I was hoping you'd say that, if this belly gets any bigger I would struggle to swim!"

I'd seen plenty of pregnant women in my time but they had nothing on me. Mermaid bellies were almost twice the size of a pregnant human woman's thanks to the water taking the weight off our spine. Still, it wasn't exactly easy swimming around with what felt like a boulder strapped to my front.

"We should head to the cove tomorrow, I doubt you'll need to wait more than a week."

The cove was a small, warm cove on an island not far from the city. The island itself was nothing more than a handful of trees, rocks and sand so no humans lived there. Making it the perfect place for a mermaid to give birth without worrying about her cries alerting anybody.

I'd been so excited to get this baby out of me at last but the idea that it could happen any day now filled me with anxiety. I could only hope that everything went smoothly and that women had been exaggerating just how painful childbirth could be; I didn't think they had though, unfortunately.

"I'll go and see if there is a mermaid free to come with you." The midwife added as happily as she could, but I could still see the pity in her eyes.

Mermaids usually had a family member with them, usually their mother, to help them give birth. But I was alone. I sat up on the table as much as my tail and round belly would allow



and sighed, running a hand over the curve. I missed Pa, after months of living here I just couldn't be angry with him anymore. Holding onto all that fury just wasn't in my nature.

I sat there waiting for what felt like a long time before the seaweed curtain move aside and I looked up, expecting to see the midwife but instead;

“Pa?”

“Hello, Jacob.” He smiled. “Now before you say anything, I know you said to stay away but you're my son, I had to see you before you give birth!”

There was a beat of silence and I felt something bubbling in my throat. Before I could stop myself I was giggling.

“Your son is giving birth, Pa do you know how weird that sounds?” All the tension inside me turned to giggles and I couldn't seem to stop. They were infectious, and soon pa was laughing too before throwing his arms around me in a tight hug.

“I'm so sorry.”

“Me too.”

Some of the anxiety I was feeling melted away and for the first time I understood why some women invited their mothers to their birth; Pa's presence seemed to be doing wonders.

“Will you come with me?” I asked timidly and he squeezed my shoulder.

“Of course.”

~

The cove was beautiful, like something out of those fake instagram stories influencers were always posting. Crystal blue water, warm sands and good company. There were a few mermaids waiting on their delivery here and it felt nice to have people going through the same thing as me, and especially nice to have Pa around now that we had reconciled.

Still, nothing could have prepared me for when I felt the first contraction. A second later I felt my tail coming undone for the first time in months, it would have been a relief if the circumstances were different. Immediately I started to kick and flounder; I'd almost forgotten

how to swim without a tail and Pa had to help me to shore. I could feel salt water swirling around my new pussy and if my stomach wasn't pulsing, I might have even found it pleasant.

The birth was a blur, Pa held my hand as I worked through it and time lost all sense of meaning. Sera was right, my body did seem to know what to do though and I listened. The sun was setting when finally, the air filled with a cry that wasn't my own and pa placed a little bundle into my arms, wrapped in a blanket made from tightly woven seaweed.

The baby had legs and was pink with crying, his little face all scrunched up like a prune. He was beautiful.

"Well done, son." Pa kissed my forehead.

"I...I don't know what to name him."

"You'll think of something."

I put naming out of my mind and focused on making sure he was fed. My body would stay female as long as the child needed milk. So at least I didn't need to worry about that. For the first few weeks we'd stay here before returning to California. I had no idea how Brody would react to his mermaid son, but I knew we'd figure it out.

"You can always come back to the farm." Pa reminded me, "If you ever need help."

"We'll come visit." I promised, "but I think I belong in California."

Pa nodded and hugged me again.

"I understand."

I knew there was a long road ahead of me, and my son but now that I knew who and what I was, things didn't seem too bad. We'd figure it out, Brody, I and our baby. Somehow.