

Glimmer

By Myla Stauber

Drowned, buried alive; in water or dirt, didn't really matter, same heavy. Wanting to go under, his lack of action, his non committal stagnation clearly stated: won't you bury me? And now it was here, a strange, fortuitous endgame; and a hand will rise up from under the burying water, a last wave.

"Mark, I'm pregnant." Nope, it wasn't what he wanted to hear. Nope. Not even close. "Mark, I've decided to move out," or, "Mark, I've decided to change," those would have been good but not what had just been issued, fact; she's not kidding. He'd been drinking a beer staring out the window of his apartment into the upper story windows of the fish processing plant across the street where he'd be heading off to work in a couple hours. The news hit all the way down, a barium milkshake in a slow leaden drip. His eyes lit upon Janine's as he considered her for a moment, an unknown quantity now known to be carrying his progeny. She stood in the doorway, wet from the shower, giant mop of red hair done up in a towel twist, biting her lower lip. They stared at each other as the crashing announcement fell between them in its first attempt to find a home. He opened his mouth, he shut it; went back to his window gazing as a heavy sigh escaped through his nose. "Well geez, don't look so goddamn happy about it!" She fled to the single bedroom slamming the door; muffled sobbing sending the herald: and so it begins...

It wasn't so bad, he'd tell himself; nice view of Newport Bay happening for him as he packed shipping crates full of ice and crab; wrapping them in huge swaths of cling film. Not a heavy commute from across the street. He actually didn't mind the work and he liked the guys he worked with. It won't be so bad being a dad, no matter what happens with Janine. Alright. Let's do this.

The baby needs a father, Mark, and; I want to make it work, Mark, she'd said. Alright. And deeper down, somewhere in the mix of manhood, he didn't want to be like his own father, a Peter Pan man that showed up sometimes but at the wrong times and not enough times. Alright. Man up.

They spent the later pregnancy nights nestled in the little apartment staring at the TV until she announced she was tired and fell into bed by ten. What did he do then, left to his own devices with the sleeping ship of his destiny in the next room? Not so much. Another beer. Fox news, shovel it on. And then she announced that it was coming and no matter what, when the headlights of that train bare

down, you're not getting off those tracks.

And so, baby Violet came, and yes, he had that moment when he held her for the first time, that trumpet blaring, sky splitting moment followed immediately by a kind of terror hitherto unknown in his lexicon of fears. Seven pound baby undoes one hundred eighty pound man, as it ever was. Searing love, crashing fears; were these the new cornerstones? Seemed so.

And it was alright for a little while until Janine started partying too much again, hitting the triad of bars in tiny downtown Newport, the Alibi, the Ghost Hole, and the Mast. At first he didn't mind babysitting little Violet; she slept all the time anyhow. He said she looked like a cross between Uncle Fester and a pink rose and he did love her in a new and previously unheard of way. He liked the chill out factor of the baby sleeping on his chest, just like a little warm valium, he'd say. No, you go, it's alright, we're chilling.

He'd smoke a bowl once Violet was in her crib, drink some brews and watch TV; occasionally looking out the window wondering if Janine was screwing other guys (yes) and on the heels of that realized he didn't particularly care. Was she veering off into meth land again (yes,) a much darker concern; or, going to come home before dawn (maybe) which would be nice for the baby, if nothing else.

The escalation happened over the first three or four months and Mark had to finally admit to himself that Janine was a lousy mother, her thread unraveling. She would sometimes yell at the baby or would leave her screaming for him to deal with. Janine was a god damned monster and he began to suspect he should not leave her alone with the baby, but what could he do? Not much. He had to work; someone had to work. They fought but did not solve.

This wasn't going to function in the long term and even worse, what had he complacently signed on for? What had he done? He loved the baby, sure, but Janine? He wasn't ever sure that he'd loved her in the first place and now, there they were, together forever in one form or another, bound over Violet, to the mast of a cannon holed ship.

He began to feel he had allowed something that was for once, irrevocable, inescapable. He couldn't just leave and abandon Violet, could he? His mind began to circle on itself in that form that he recognized as depression. He'd been here before and didn't like it; pushed it away and it came back, like an amoeba that bulges out as you try to contain one side of it. Mornings engulfed in gray, numb evenings punctuated by fights. And just when he thought things would not, could not get worse; he found the meth pipe. Janine had hidden the stained glass tube in among the baby's bedding and things,

foul garbage in a sweet smelling garden. He stared at it there in his hand as if it were about to come alive and bite him, his mind striving to identify the object even though he knew very well what it was. Something snapped in him at last, broke free from the crushing stasis. Furious, beyond livid, confronting her in the cramped living room, yelling, "What the fuck, Janine?" shoving the pipe under her nose, but already it didn't matter. That ship had sailed. It was ugly of course, the most ugly. Checkmate. He slammed the door nearly off the hinges or so it felt when he slammed it, barely throwing on his old trench coat, muttering to himself, loudly. Endgame had arrived, and all he wanted to know was, where was the wall, was he hitting it hardest yet or was there yet more to smash?

He pounded his feet in a march that took him over the Yaquina Bay bridge with no conscious intent but found his rhythm set in a prime directive anyhow, toward the jetty. The weather wasn't good. He didn't care. Sideways bouts of stinging rain drove into his face. Let it; who gives a shit?

He noticed a beautiful tile mosaic spanning the bridge wall from the corner of his squinted eye. For some absurd reason it reminded him of the drawing he used to do. An artistic swirling red octopus made some sort of connection in the sleeping neurons of his brain activating the memory of curves and hips of nudes he'd drawn in college. He'd drawn, in college, in another life far from this bridge walk. He'd given up his drawing. No one told him to, he'd just done it. The pleasure of sitting and sketching had slipped away as "real life" encroached and he never really looked back until this moment, affording him a cruel and unasked for hindsight.

Scenes of the bay, magnificent masted fishing boats, the sea lions on the dock, the baby, his workmates... he could draw them all. He could, but didn't. Why? And why on earth was this stabbing him in the soft center of memory and regret at this exact moment when he was already so overdrawn at the bank of memory and regret? A strange urge to pick up fine pastels, graphite pencils, or some charcoals came over him, even as he marched there in the rain. How could he in this moment crave the sensational feel of expensive paper under his wet fingers? He made a shrill inner pact with himself that if and when he got out of this current mess, he swore he would return to his art, that he'd never let it go again. Nothing, but nothing was as it should be in his life. Clearly. Not. One. Thing. And now it seemed, legacy fulfilled, he was going to be another Peter Pan man and leave his kid when it was just a tiny baby. He was. Leaving them. This is what he knew as he crossed the bridge on his mission to reach the jetty; that one way or another, he had to leave. If it was himself versus the baby for survival, yes; he was manning down, he was going to save himself. Fuck, what had he done? Barely five months old and he was already asking the baby to forgive him.

A crabbing vessel, The Sea Hag, appeared from under the bridge, neatly chopping through livid white caps. A crew member with a little black dog, casually gazing out over the rail to the open sea looked so relaxed, divine even. Mark wished the man had been smoking a pipe and wearing a jaunty hat, like a man in a perfect painting, and mused that he would draw those things in when he took on that perspective, looking down on the boat from the top of the bridge. The little dog, trotting, yipping; dog moving, boat moving, the man standing still. All to the open sea. Yeah, that's where he was going too. Movement. He wanted to draw great swirling movements, to perpetuate movement in his feet, his thoughts. Where had he been? Now he thanked Janine crazily in his mind: thank you my enemy, for this gift of freedom, let's sacrifice the baby on the waves! His mind raved crazy internal dialogues that seemed to come from the bottom up; crashing, oppositional thoughts, end game hysteria. I cannot see the end, I didn't look at the beginning, I've been asleep, hands off the wheel. Time to wake the hell up, rain, ice, fire, it doesn't matter, wake me up. Wake up: the clarion call, coming back to life.

He picked his way at last out to the Yaquina Bay jetty, over a quarter mile of uneven rocks leading straight out to sea, out to where no one is supposed to stand. He was in peril; he knew this and didn't care. The words "maybe I'll die" didn't really cross his mind but then again, he didn't feel a great pull toward the survival instinct if they did manage to crop up. Big man, gonna leave a little baby to save yourself, yeah, big man; take this on why don't you, a raging Pacific, in your face. Waves smashed into the jetty, cascading up and over one side of it and down the other as he attempted to walk through. He'd stop and bend his knees, bracing, when the onslaught would hit, mercilessly soaking him.

He made it to the very end of the rocks, land's end, where you'd be hard pressed to be stupid enough to go on a good day but in this weather, suicidal. His feet slid on every step; with very little hold on the seaweed slickened irregularly spaced rocks. This wasn't polite beach territory where you watched storms roll in from a safe distance. He was in the land of the waves now, standing out among them and he didn't belong. Wet and freezing, completely uncaring about his comfort or safety. Something, something had to be different, right now, the feeling bit like tinfoil on teeth. He wasn't going back to that apartment, was he? Not like this, not the same as he had left it; clueless and flailing.

As he stared hard at the churning slate waters a head popped up amidst the kelp, harbor seal, no doubt. He envied it so badly in that moment, playing in monster waves without a care. His own ability to weather storms seemed pale in comparison, that had always been his problem, too easily giving in, rolling over, belly up, he... what; wait! Wait just a god damned minute what the hell is that? He craned forward, squinting, seeing a face, a human face. It's a dead body, no, it's... it's gone again. It's up again,

it's moving, it's tilting its head up to the rain and opening its mouth, playing, it's splashing down again, with a flick of its...and then, his mind said it. The word that no grown man of this century is going to utter unless he is addressing his five year old daughter about a certain red headed Disney character with a fish tail. He said it to himself though, just a little whisper through his mind, cutting through the confusion like a silver knife, a word, in a whisper, "mermaid."

I hold him up- I am strong but this won't last long. I pull him to the rocks, I push him up. Is he sleeping? Is he living? I want him to wake up, I am unlike I was before, strange; struggling sideways, unable to fully retain what I see, smell. I lick at him with my tongue but he does not respond. His legs! Let me see them. I reach out a hand, hesitate, touch from his hip-where on me, the fish part begins- but on him it is the other way; split instead of fused. And feet, with those things covering that I find occasionally in the water and play with; I want one. Very complicated, knots, the feel of a foot through the thing! I've only held empty ones. I want this boot. He wakes up as I tug at knots. He gasps a raspy sound. I'm in terror, but I stay, I feel the same terror as if a shark had paid me too much attention. I should get away but the sight of his popping open mouth makes me stay, sounds come from it like glug glug glug..."what the fuck?" I don't know this meaning but we stare at each other one beat and then I am gone, gone. Except, I cannot go back to being as I was because I am... awakened. Stirred.

Stumbling back to town after midnight, he's not the first half drowned man to sit his ass down at the Ghost Hole's knotty pine bar and ask for a whiskey. He has no idea how he made it up and out and back over the bridge. His screams for her to come back reverberated still, in a headache that pounded from front to back. His mind was not snapping back into place as it should, and he saw that it was the utter annihilation of what he felt before his unintentional swim. Yes, that's the ticket, forward march. Everything looked smaller, insignificant; good. It was different now.

Several of the guys from work were at the bar, as usual. Billy ambled over, beer in hand, sat next to him. "What's up?" Billy, the fish gut philosopher. Mark stared through him, hollow eyed, and it gave Billy a start. He knew about the Janine situation and had a Fox news moment in his mind wondering if Mark had done a deed and finally flipped on the bitch? Is he in here steadying his nerves after a crime like a man in a movie; and why the hell did he look like he's been swimming with all his clothes on?

"Mark? You okay?" Mark sat motionless, staring at the bottles in the bar, only superficially aware of his friend, croaking, "She was real." Billy didn't quite know what to say, thought his friend might be on something, and wondered how this is going to go down at work. "Hey man, you should go home and get

some sleep, huh?” Mark ignored him. “Real.”

Billy looked down at the floor in an effort to avoid Mark’s crazy eyes and noticed that Mark was only wearing one boot.

I knew that he saw me. I knew it, but; it was just a game and I thought that if I came up again he would be gone, or never see me twice anyhow. It’s happened before but not this close. And never like this... some sensation in my echo chamber, (look) pervading my actions, a hushed tone (look.) I dared a peek, just a game, with my eyes barely breaking the surface, strategically planned kelp cover on my head, closer than I have ever been before; just playing. There he was, scanning, then snapping his eyes into mine. Huh!!! Eye contact made me feel a punch to my muscled belly! I saw him jerk backwards as I jerked backwards, gone.

Dive down! All the way down. But forget fear quickly, and truly, only forward with no real reasons for anything I do except to seek light and air at the surface, up for a sky check and then down, that’s what had brought me. I do enjoy lounging on my back as night takes day, spitting arcs of water. Clear nights spent watching the great wheel of stars begin to steer the sky, one spoke at a time emerging through the membrane of indigo night. Was it star gaze time? I wanted to know. No matter, the stars will come. Forget my games, washed in stars.

I like this patch near these rocks. Here, there are hundreds of purple and orange starfish in a crevice, and I sweep over their colony, touching them as I go by, laughing. Do they feel me touch them or are they more like plants? I know they move because I’ve watched them in terrible, long drawn out battles for supremacy during which it is very hard to tell if they making more like themselves, eating, or fighting. I am reminded when in fascination of them that the stars above and the stars below bear a remarkable resemblance to each other in their imperceptible crawl across ocean floors and Milky Ways.

I needed a gulp, popped up; it was raining so, a drink, why not? Just my little head floating in a clump of kelp, I suppose they always think they’ve seen a seal. They rub their eyes, think they saw... never mind. Ridiculous. A trick of the waves. I’m a trick.

I see him struggling to stand, his face to a high spuming wave, no- he can’t take it, he’s under, thrown in. They can’t take it; they’re not supposed to be there. I dive deep, with speed to his side. He’s tumbled under the waves, impossible, this meeting, but... I grab him, I swim powerfully, it’s easy for me, he’s in my arms which I raise above my head. I push him up out of the water; he, my arms, my face, all out of the water at the same time.

Why do I understand? How can I form these thoughts in this dead language that does not flow but clunks through mind in chunks of explaining? It's because I saved him. Once. That's the key. I didn't know until it happened or that there was a door to walk through or a key to be had. Before contact I was one way now I am another.

Once; I understood in movement and image and now I understand movement, image, and word.

Who did all this explaining? He did of course, the one that fell in my waters. He told me things and they became my discovery of the unknown, using my mind like I'd use my hand in a crevice just because it's there and I wanted to find what's inside. A wolf eel, a starfish, an angry octopus, they all fascinate and make me laugh. And all his things, they make me laugh and they call out to and repulse me. Baby, soul, mother, father, god; all these things. What a burden they have to understand these things.

I never would; I never could. Being of the surface was being born out of my water womb into harsher light; the hazy cushion is gone. Cigarette smoke, plastic bottles, batteries, tears, sunglasses, keys, wallet, destiny, palaces, pain... the gift of the words. I would think: I have no need of this curse. Oh, but he gave me a gift; and I contort and wince so that I may also live in the fascination that he brings, despite his curse. What is it that he says now, and how it hurts him and twists him and makes him agonize, no, I don't want it, really. I'm just... interested. But there's more. There's the humanity that is only half mine, but that attachment, it's so strong; the part that says I would love.

So that is how I came to be born twice; once below and once above. Was he the right man to birth me? Was he a king, a poet, a destiny? No. He was a shambles, a mess. It doesn't matter. If I save a king or a beggar they give me the same gift of language and insight that I did not possess, they give me my... selfhood. Not a female creature wholly, no, but at least half a woman now certainly.

The spark needs to be given by a human to save, a human to push up through the waters on my sinewy strong arms, with oceanic force, up, to the light, to the breath. It is my light and breath too, so the saved one and I merge in that moment, we eat together off one breath. And then, reborn, I become, but, I feel nothing, no divine spark no lightning crash in a wild storm or purple shimmering glitter raining down. Nothing; except... I hear and listen and somehow form an understanding of what is said in my mind; my echo chamber. It's as if another half of my mind opened and in it there are rooms with doors, I go through them to reach understandings, levels, and shadows, with rays of cognition bursting through. If once I used only the right of my thoughts and the left were paralyzed, it is as if both sides awaken together and form a new. It is not instantaneous; not a crash but a trickle.

He forms words; I hear them; what my face looks like to him, what my mythologies are to him. I

hear him as he comes again and again and every day I feel the tickle, an urge, to see him. He enthused that I form colonies down below and that we enticed and killed sailors, that we are jealous and mean. I have only seen a few of my kind and only from a distance. We have nothing to do with each other. There is no mythology. There is only being. I don't know where he gets these stories from. He talks and talks: baby, woman, crazy, going crazy, real, real, real, are you real?

Too complicated, I cannot entertain so much crashing word knowledge, so I dive and he waits, I know that he waits and his heart churns in his chest. Will I? Will I come back? Of course I come back; I want to know now. I cannot form what this curse and beauty has done to me. I feel bound to come again and again to see him, I want to know more, so I come, and it's more, ever more, beauty, his face, his eyes, our faces, our eyes together. This he said is love. Touch? To hold me? A first time, all he brings are first times, a clumsy wet embrace. I did not know what to do with my hands. It ignites more, makes me want to tumble in the waves, wrap myself in a silky kelp caress on my skin... I... want to be held.

I like the look of amazement on his face, the round O of his mouth, the searing, searching in his eyes. He is searching me for something and I search in him also. He reaches for my hand. It's one of the strangest things I could ever feel, human hand. I have never held my own hand, how strange to not know this, but, it is as if it is its own separate animal moving completely aside from the whole rest of the giant being which struggles to balance and talks and crouches and seems to have very many of what he calls "emotions," the faces to put on; I try them on with him. He shows upset and I try to make my face just like his, which makes him laugh and then I try to make my face into his same laugh. He called me a monkey, a siren, unbelievable.

He comes all the time, says he prays, calls out my name, what name, what prayer? "Please! Don't go! Please! Stay!" At first the yelling makes me cringe, but it is only more "feeling." His face in its full expression fascinates. He reaches a hand to me often, and I let him. He touches the top of my head, gasps, sighs..."Real, you are real." I look again and again into his eyes, raising mine up. Green then brown, light playing changes in his eyes; eyes exactly like the light affected, churning sea.

I have to come to him from the depths; my body is not built for the shallows. I would want a safe, calm place for him but he has to stand out here in order for me to come, it's not good for him, waves often sneak up and knock him sideways. It's a struggle to maintain. I want to see him, I want to touch him but it is too dangerous for him here. Not only are the rocks above too jagged and torn for his flat feet but they are no less vicious below the water. He must have shelter from these things. I know that below the surface is calm, and if only... longing; this new famine, this new feast.

He crouches on the rocks, a flat footed bird, shifting, darting glances. When is the moment, when does it arrive? This nervous bird awaits me. I see him from below the surface appearing as a shifting color mass, a kaleidoscopic jewel, always in this clothing he must wear. He assumes I tease, taking my time but it is that I love the colors from below, he should see himself haloed in light like that, he would stop all this raving that he does. Psychiatrist, he called me psychiatrist, witch, tease, beautiful love, imaginary friend, girlfriend, outshining the sun, heartless robot, all this raving. I wish he would swim. I wish things now and it is painful to feel a wish, something different than what is, but I cannot form fully what this curse and beauty has really done to me. Pain? It doesn't slide off quite as easily as the one he calls anger. Pain has a sticking power like the love. Sticky. Ah, this curse, sometimes I want to swim away. I know of islands down below, you'd swear you were on the surface; you could lounge and feel the sway of the kelp forests in the currents, just like trees swaying in the wind, pretty anemones of every color to entertain your senses. Touch, blow, a million sticky fingers feeling. You're a god in this place.

The gift of understanding, the curse of caring. What is my name? What name? So small a thing to call a thing. I don't know my seal playmates by name only by nature. Sometimes with the names for all things in a tumult upon me; I have to dive. Always this makes him very nervous; has he driven me away? He waits for my re-emergence which always comes.

Now I have time to measure with, or at least, a thing he told me about that I lay down over my existence to measure and I find it is not fitting. We are not the same, we are not one, we are not of worlds that mesh even as he says yes, yes we can, we are, we do; look how we do this. He comes back and he comes back and he looks strange and he wants something and I do not owe it, I do not have it.

This, he said, is love. What is this love like an anchor to the bottom? And what is this love like light that strains through dark water urging me to the top again; to look for him more. Once when our faces were close, he gave a kiss. This made me want to leave my home, do what he said, and stay on the surface somehow. His kiss created happiness and unhappiness. I felt the bottom lip the giver and the top lip the taker away, pulling me, pulling me up, out, where I cannot be. There is hair on his face, it tickles me, and finally I have to swim away, laughing.

I don't know my father. More mythologies stating that Poseidon, god of the sea is the father of all my kind, oh, I think not. Whoever he was, if he was, I guess that he was not a god. I don't know my mother. Did I have one? What is this to know another and come again and stay and feel... upset... if they go away. I try on the upset but it slides off.

I became: a swish of a tail in water. I became hunger, first and only. I eat light, breathe air. I must have once been what he calls “a baby.” Surfacing for the first time in a storm, there was light, feeble, but lighter than where I came from, so I was fed. The waves, my brothers that rocked me, and egged me on, fifty feet up and forty five down. This first rhythm, food for what he calls “a soul” though I don’t have one. I’ve had it explained to me and I conclude, no, no really, I don’t have one, but perhaps, a glimmer of one. His touch gave recognition to the language of things and being, so is this what illuminated my soul, my half soul?

He wanted to know my birth, where did I come from? There was lightning. I learned that the waves in such a storm could kill a man, shatter the boat that they float in like matchsticks; soak their bodies through with sea water rendering the fine features food for the fishes. It happened frequently. But not me, I am not killed, I am rocked in the deep trough with my face to the raging sky, and I am borne under the crash. I play in ecstasy through fast currents that I now know no man could withstand. His lungs would burst, his heart would stop. Lungs, heart, more complication from those above. Ah well, the curious creatures. They have been known to stir me, to repulse me. This man, pulls, repulses, brings me to return, dive deeper. And when I return, I’m laughing, a small tinkling sound I am told- like a shimmer, the sound: the whole ocean is mine; come and play.

From below, a knot forms in my belly, he is there and there are more colors than ever! Crouched down, waiting for me, oh my curious mind alights; what does he have? He made an image of me, paper with color, and once, he brought a mirror. I saw it from below, shimmering, reflecting sunlight back at me. I came at him with force, the sight was too much, and I jumped and fell away, spiraling through bubbles.

Mostly he comes in the dark now because of fear of being seen. He said he doesn’t want anyone to see me, only him. Don’t call attention in the day, but look, here in the sunlight; and what did I like best, the paper mirror that he made of me, or the silver mirror that he calls the “real me?” Me. I didn’t know a “me” before these images. Do I like what I see because he likes what he sees. Like? I am that. If I do not like it what else could I be? So I like it. I never thought about it before. Thought, self, mirrors- ah, this man, too much, too much always and yet when I go away? It’s never enough, want more.

I see from these mirrors that my eyes are greener than his, a steady unchanging sunlit sea green whereas his are shot through with earth brown. We’re green upon green when sometimes that certain light comes to illuminate us both. I love those times; they make me laugh... all green. Flash change, the light goes and his eyes are brown again, the water teal, slate, azure in a moment. He says my green eyes

have yellow flecks in them, and that my creamy skin is freckled, just like the “girl next door.” My chest is almost always submerged but when he does see it, he stares. I’ve seen him bite his lip and try to tear his eyes away. Do I look like any woman that walks and talks in that moment? But then the green of my lower half begins, which looks at first like a pale green sunrise blooming around my waist, becoming itself in iridescent glory all the way down to the tips of my tail.

I’m no girl next door.

He brought me music. This made electric sensations as if sparks could generate in the water around me, so excited, turning paroxysms of joy, splashing figure eights... Mister Jimi! I grabbed the little black box from where the music came because I wanted it for down below, to bring magnificence to the silent world but he shouted, “No! It doesn’t go there!”

This is for the surface world only; I see they were given a supreme gift for all the trials they must endure. Does the music take the pain away? This gift that he brought me called “If Six Were Nine” by someone he called Mister Jimi Hendrix. Mister Jimi: gives me a feeling of launching from the rock bottom of the sea past the fleeting insignificant surface world and way up in to the sky. If I could shoot myself there, I would, so I come close by leaping out of the water like my friends the dolphins. It’s dangerous he says, don’t show yourself, but how does he expect me to keep quiet the sensation in my chest? I’m laughing; the wide eyed stare and O of his surprised mouth at my reaction!

I have now absorbed Mr. Jimi and I hope he is a king because he is a poet. I can see there are other ones to give knowledge, not just this one who fell in to my waters, one who was not a king but a messenger of kings.

I am, I eat, I look at things and I dance in currents that caress me as I pass through. I am curious about all I see and I touch much of it. A bubble on a fingertip, my own long, dark hair suspended like blood in the water. I am exactly what I sound like, half woman, half fish. The fish half lacks a certain evolution and the woman half lacks certain aspects so if you want to call me half a creature you can but there is none more alive than me. I know this now only because I see the above life, with work and baby and longing, soul and heart; no... it does not make living more exciting or better. Even if I do not walk and talk, even if I cannot feel, only experience.

I want him in here with me, yes, I do, and so one day... one day I pull him. He reaches for my hand like he always does and I pull. He knew the look in my eyes, playful, curious! Not what he said in mythology, not pulling the sailors down to a watery grave! What grave to dig in water? There is only light and play in water.

“Come with me,” the only thing I have ever said out loud, come... with... me. And he did.

Now whose fault is that? Fault with love, love with fault, these always seem to go together in his world, part of the curse. He’d said, real, you’re real, and the face of him washed in amazement that cannot be seen on the animals’ faces. Searching the faces of even my playmates the seals gives no amazement, only humor or hunger, rest or fear. To be real gave a sensation never known which he explained to be a “feeling.” The sensation became as food and the hunger became as love. So I did what they do, I did like they do; I wanted something more.

Remember then, looking to his eyes, the quick changes as the sun played in them as it plays in water. Green as water, brown as earth, flash green, flash brown, the feeling it gave to look in human eyes! The top half of me curiously warmed. And when he reached for me that first time, I pulled away. Instinct. But every day after became a game, and then craving as strong as a craving for breathing; a glimpse, to feed the heart, what he said was a heart. And the touch that once had saved was the touch that took away, the touch the gift, and the curse.

He would rave at times he said we could do this, it could work, and we could be together. He would take me, he would show me, but I didn’t want to go to the dead place, out of the water. I took him, instead.

That didn’t work out.

Snapped into existence: not and then was, that is all. I eat light, breathe air. I did not know “afraid” as he taught later. How fragile they are; afraid. Me? Not afraid in the lightning and noise of my stormy birth; just primal, strong. If a challenge arises in the atmosphere, rise to meet and conquer it, that is all. No fear. There is only one fear and that is the hunter, the dead eyed shark, the great oldest one that melts out of shadows. We are equally fast, equally smart, equally willing to survive. But only one of us has knives.

I am living on, swimming; life for me means forward motion. My hair is so long that I dance within it as it spreads like a giant latticed fan around me. I twist, I bend my fish self toward my human self and back again and tumble and turn as many times as I like. Many times; infinity.

I wish to see the man’s eyes once more but they are gone. I find some things like his eyes; stone treasures the approximate shape and color. I prop them on a little ledge and I sit with my chin in my hand and stare at the dead stones. No life there but I close my own eyes and drift back in mind to when the eyes would look at mine. Look at me! Look at me, I will them, just once more. It is the words real and love I want to hear again.

And now, I don't know what will happen. I said there is no mythology but maybe there is prophecy? Now that I can think ahead in time, and now that I've brought him where he could not go, what of me?

I am born to be a savior and for this, receive the reward of human thought, but the curse within the reward of humanity made me want, and my want made me pull, and my pull made him drown. What of me now? Am I a monster? I want to hold my own hand, pretend it is his hand, suspended motionless halfway between the dark and the light, I close my eyes and remember. There is no end time for me, not like him. I understood his time cycle because I see other creatures around me die all the time. But I'm not like them; so fragile.

No, I have no inner understanding of what he called "emotion," still I try it on because he left me that legacy. I try on "regret" and it fits but does not stay. I have to pick it up again and again if I think to experience what it could feel like: regret. I regret. It is the one I can now most easily identify, of their emotions. The one I wanted most, love, was not the one so easily kept after all.

I tell a story backwards, I flip backwards again and again as I try to feel backwards in his time. How to get back there, when he would come, when we were together. Rare as the ring around the moon, no, more rare than the aurora borealis, I call it "the shine." Yes, that rare, to be together, to feel with one with legs, with heart. Unconsciousness, I don't know what happens then, he dies? I come forth from the bottom where he lay as through a membrane of gauze, it's the green sea, now it's his eyes, I flash off again, on again; is this misery, is that his word? When one who could float feels weighted down with a tail made of stone, this is not good, struggle to come to light. He would have a word for this; a word for everything.

I want to be with you... I want it to be different than it is.

It happened because there was something he lacked, with all his talking and images implanted in my mind, I never saw him take part in the one thing he missed which was the deep peace of below, floating on your back with the infinite ocean above and below as a brilliant school of fish swims around you like a blessing in a tickling swarm. These things of peace, he missed. Peace, I wanted to give peace. It was the largest thing besides being born twice that I had and I wanted to give it to him. And when things don't work (he said that, "things don't work,") it is a bitter pain I got from him but only seeing it apart from myself, not in me as it was in him, not twisting and torturing and making me lose my head. He said that too, "lose my head" how do I lose my head? Is this losing my head... this bottom game I tried to play which does not work? I did not know of life and death more than the animals which live, get

eaten, make young, die, and are born, again and again. Is he one like that, in a cycle? Will he come again, one just like him again or is he the only one of his kind?

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