

## THE FAIR SEA MAIDENS

BY DAN STANDING

BASED ON

### **THE SEA FAIRIES**

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## CHAPTER 1

### HAUTE AND CORPORAL CAL

"Nobody," said Cpl 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 her companion.

She uncrossed her long legs and recrossed them, her skirt shifting and her flower-print hosiery sliding across her tanned skin the way she always did when trying to distract her companion.

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.

Cpl Cal and Haute came often to this tree to sit and watch the ocean below them. The adventurous man had one "meat leg" and one "hickory leg," and he often said the wooden one was the best of the two that he would talk about in mixed company. Once Cpl Cal had commanded and owned the "Anemone," a trading schooner that plied along the coast; and in those days Chuck Leggs, who was Haute's father, had been the Corporal's superior. But ever since Cpl Cal's accident, when he lost his leg, Chuck Leggs had sent Cal to live comfortably ashore with the Leggs family.

This was about the time Haute returned from college, 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 Cpl 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, occasional 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, and she let some of her teeth show through her half-smile.

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

"But if anyone happens to see 'em, what then, Corporal?" Haute pressed, always getting a little flushed when she was being ignored.

"Then," he answered, slowly wagging his head, eyes cast out to the ocean even when his forward gaze would have landed upon Haute, "...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, Cpl Cal?" Haute's hand was on Cal's 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..." Cpl 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 Cpl 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-"

Cpl Cal could not ignore the eyebrow that went up sharply.

"...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, Cpl Cal?"

Cal wasn't certain when Haute had 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 Cpl 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, Cpl 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.

Cpl 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 Cpl 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, Cpl Cal," she declared positively. "Other fairies have been seen by mortals; why not mermaids?"

"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 Cpl Cal, latching onto the rope thrown out to him.

A nice man was Cpl 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. He wore 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 Cpl 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 the 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 Cpl Cal thrust a chubby 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 an nearby tree limb.

The young sailor's face was tanned brown as a berry. He 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 tanned 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. Cpl 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 Cpl 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 making tops and whistles and toys 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 though 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 certain as explorative as Cal's time on the sea.

"How do the mermaids live?" she asked. The hot coals of passion and shifted slightly to warm comfort, and she rested her head on Cpl 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 across a mermaid's nest yet, as I've heard of."

"If they're fairies," she said, "...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, Cpl 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 Cpl 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.

## 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 Cpl Cal pushing into her thigh and she smiled. She sat up, hair and sheets cascading down her fetching form. She stood up from the bed and stretched her nudity, running her hands through her hair to fluff it out.

She 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 over 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.

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. Cpl Cal's eyes bounced along with every sexy jiggle.

As soon as 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 fisherboats was speeding away out to sea, for well the fishermen knew this was an ideal day to catch rockbass, barracuda and yellowtail.

The lovers stood on the bluff and watched all this with interest. Here was their world. "It isn't a bit rough this morning. Let's have a boat ride, Cpl 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 Cpl 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 Cpl 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 Cpl 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. 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 the sun.

"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 Cpl 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, Cpl 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 Cpl 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 Cpl 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 dumb 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. Cpl 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, Cpl 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.

Cpl 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 Cpl 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 Cpl 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.

Cpl 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, 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 Cpl 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 Cpl 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 Cpl 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 Cpl 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 Cpl 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 Cpl Cal. "I jes' want 'em to let ME live."

"There's no danger," insisted Haute.

"I don't 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—" Cpl 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 pleasure.

"So would I," admitted Cpl 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 Cpl 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 except this inv'tation. If you don't care to come, Cpl Cal, you go home and think about me amidst all the mermaids."

"Well I can't miss that!" exclaimed Cpl Cal with a shudder. "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 her's," 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 Cpl 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 Cpl 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 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 up her legs continued their fusion of flesh, the changes very warm and pleasurable. For every inch of skin that merged with its counterpart Haute moaned 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 gasped at a *very* delicious pressure. Instead of sealing 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 gasped at the fresh tightness over her slit – it felt as if someone was pressing a head 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 classy dress down to expose the most tantalize amount of her rear.

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 could feel her breasts expanding, flesh and blood blossoming before her, although in mid-fall she could not judge their weight. Her skin was fighting it while also giving in to the growth. She exhaled with the tightness, and felt the underline of her breasts 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.

Cpl 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 encountered. 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, Cpl 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 transformed 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 legs was one of the items absorbed into his altering body.

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 sea devils ticked me!" Cpl 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, twisting around to try to see them.

"Green as em'ralsds, 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 Cpl 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 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 Cpl Cal had a very impressed woody growing out of his scaly tale – literally. He now understood what Clitia had meant – his wooden leg had been merged with his dick. It had been impressive before, but as he ducked below the surface he saw that it was easily three inches in diameter now, and was growing out nearly eight inches. It was a fine oak in the look of it, but polished 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. They had grown 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, and 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. She wasn't moving her tail at the moment, but her bedazzled crevice was unaccustomed to so much delectable naked female beauty.

Haute turned to her own expanded chest. She wondered if she'd grown to better match the natural assets of the mermaid form she asked to assume, or if it was the magic acting on a never-spoken desire of hers to be curvier. Nipples nearly the size of her thumbs floated before her, 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, Cpl 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 grapefruits 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. Cpl 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 Cpl 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 nearly as powerful as we are, and that is the devilfish."



"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 ones are bad enough, though," declared Cpl 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 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 Cpl Cal. "Devils of any sort ought to be give a wide berth, an' devilfish is worsener 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. "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.

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

"How old is he?" inquired Cpl 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 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 new companions. Her belly was starting to warm 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 Cpl 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 and Haute had long established an unofficial routine of intimacy, and the parade of beautiful flesh around him was making it difficult for Cal to maintain his nethers in a decent state. A chance to relieve his desires would be most helpful.

"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.

## 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 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 horniness, Haute also recognized some of it was coming from the supernatural passage of water around her breasts – although she would never forget the sensation of their growth. Each moment 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 the stiffened tips.

"I don't believe I weigh anything at all," she said to Cpl 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 Cpl Cal.

"Studied them in detail, have you?" Haute tried to tease, but her breathiness betrayed her own attraction. 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 as 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.

"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 Cpl 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 Cpl 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 we are all 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 Cpl 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."

"No indeed," said Cpl Cal. And then he asked, "Does your queen live here?"

"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 girl through still another arch, while Moira followed just behind them, escorting Cpl 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 Cpl 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 connected them.

One other difference 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 slit, which bloomed out from her tale 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 we 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, Cpl 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 Cpl 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."

"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 realization of what the Queen was offering, as well as Cal's concern, faded away as the Queen raised her arm and waved it slowly to and fro. Suddenly the lingering desires to return in any timely fashion to the surface were no longer important to Haute. 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 hers 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, encased in tight pants or shirt skirts and very much-so the reason that her nickname had gone from "Franny" to "Fanny" in one lusty night.

But Cpl Cal was averse to voyeurism or any unpermitted lusty attention and put his gaze to one of the lovely mermaids who were only too happy to have his eyes upon them.

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, she *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 and accepted manner. Haute looked for any changes and spotted them on the rubs 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 what she was doing to her own breasts.

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

"I..." 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. 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 moist glisten very 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 Cpl 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 fin that stood upright on Cpl Cal's back.

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

"They make us more finished," said Cpl 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 rule 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 Cpl Cal."

While the sea serpent looked at the visitors, they ventured to look at him. He certainly was a queer 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 Cpl 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 Julius Sneezer was on earth."

"You mean Julius Caesar," said Haute, correcting him.

"No, I mean Julius Sneezer," insisted the Sea Serpent. "That was his real name—Sneezer. They called him Caesar sometimes just because he took everything he could lay hands on. I ought to know, because I saw him when he was alive. Did you see him when he was alive, Cpl Cal?"

"I reckon not," admitted the sailor.

"That time 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 way back in the time of Nevercouldnever."

"Oh, I s'pose you mean Nebuchadnezzar," said Haute, bothering out of a sense of commitment to the conversation.

"Do you call him that now?" asked the Sea Serpent as if surprised. "He used to be called Nevercouldnever when he was alive, but this new way of spelling seems to get everything mixed up. Nebuchadnezzar doesn't mean anything at all, it seems to me."

"It means he ate grass," said the young woman.

"Oh no, he didn't," declared the Sea Serpent. "He was the first to discover that lettuce was good to eat, and he became very fond of it. The people may have called it grass, but they were wrong. I ought to know, because I was alive when Nevercouldnever lived. Were you alive, then?"

"No," said Haute succinctly.

"The pain I had then," remarked Petrius, "...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 Cpl Cal, genuinely amused – and the conversation kept him safe from any revealing misthoughts.

"Well, first I transformed the octopus into a jellyfish, 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 Cpl 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. Adam measured me when Cain was a baby."

"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 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 Cpl 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 Cpl 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 for them 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. However, reclined as she was, Haute was certain that the dribble of her juices down her tale 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 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 Cpl 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. Aquilamia turned to beckon their 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 private space behind the Queens thrown, 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 talents – 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 and pushing as he pushed and pulled his rod in and out of Haute. Their breasts were smashed together, 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 into search. She was 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 plunging her fingers into herself, and instead pulled a nipple to her mouth and sucked on it while she watched the visitor's hands grab at each other's asses.

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 should 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 was nothing like 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 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 tale.

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.

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 Cpl 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 Cpl 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 Aquamia, "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 blonde mermaid led Haute and Cpl 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 was 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 Cpl 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.

"Well, I find I can smoke, all right," remarked Cpl 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 people 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 Cpl 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 able to float in any direction they wished to go. 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 Aqulamia 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?" Cpl 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. 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 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 Cpl 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 Cpl 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 stiffen you up again with Petrius' oil, 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 Cpl Cal with their little black eyes.

"I thought one was a man," said one of them.

"I'm a man!" answered Cpl Cal angrily. "I'm a respect'ble 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 Cpl 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 Cpl Cal, "...they ain't respect'ful."