

The Seal Wife

Come with me, daughter,
down to the water.
Listen with me
to the song of the sea.

This is where I met my love. Laughing and kind, with eyes as blue as the sky. He held my hand as we splashed through the shallows, and we kissed on the rocks as the sun was setting. We were happy for a time, in his little house by the shore, looking over where the boats lay on the beach. He would go out on the boat to fish and I would cook the fish over the hearth for us. And we had you, my darling child.

But then they started whispering to him "You cannot trust a seal wife. The only way to keep her is to steal her skin and hide it so she cannot leave you and return to the water."

And one day I looked, and my skin was missing. I asked him where it was, and he was silent. Before that I had stayed with him because I chose to, because of love. I don't understand why he took away my choosing. I don't understand why all that mattered to him was that I stayed, even if I no longer wanted to. After that day when he reached for me, I would turn away. When he talked of love I did not answer. He still brought home fish and I still cooked it by the hearth.

And he loved you, as I loved you.

And that love did not turn to poison.

And I searched and searched and eventually I found where he had hidden my skin.

But I can't take you into the sea with me, my darling. A human child can't live there.

So until you are older I will stay here, in the little house by the shore that was once where I chose to make my home.

I took my skin from his hiding place and moved it to one of my own. When the time comes I will put it back on and return to the water.

But for now, every day I walk with you along the shoreline. We gather mussels and green weed for the cooking pot, and when the tide is low at sunset we sit on a special rock at the edge of the sea to watch the waves, and I tell you: this is our rock, this is our place, this is where you should come to find me.

And you look at me with eyes as blue as the sky, too young to understand yet. But I know you will remember.