

Seafoam

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by [andlightplay](#)

Summary

“What are you?” she asks, and propels herself backwards, away. Anne follows her, respecting the distance between them, and behind her a tail sweeps lazily through the water, just under the surface. “My god, you’re-”

“Not going to hurt you. You’re not like them, fucking men, killing for sport. You’re different. The sea listens to you. You just don’t know how to speak to it properly.”

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

She can hear them moving around on the deck above, the heavy tread of boots on the boards. She curls herself tighter, tries to breathe quietly, muffles herself in her sleeve. She can feel Mrs Pemberton's hand shaking where it's cupped around the back of her head.

The door slams open.

The boots come down the stairs, slow and deliberate. Menacing. Hunting.

She screws her eyes shut and holds her breath in her chest, doesn't even breathe.

It doesn't matter.

They are ripped apart, and someone screams and then there is blood, so much blood. The swordblade is dripping with it, and then it turns on her, the man holding her gripping so tightly she will bruise as she struggles against him.

The pirate with the sword smiles, scarred face making the expression grotesque. The blade touches to her chest, smearing blood onto her bodice, and presses in until she can feel the point of it through her corset, seeking her skin.

The pirate is still watching her, avid, and whatever he sees there makes him grin. The blade twists, grinding into her chest, and then drops away.

"Bring her above," the pirate says, still smiling, and leads the way.

She can barely walk, hardly make her legs work up the steps, and the man behind her snickers and shoves her onwards, until she is out on deck and surrounded. The pirates are all looking at her, and she knows what they are seeing - a slip of a girl, in fine clothes and terrified for her life - and likely what they are thinking. Scattered about the ship at their feet are the bodies, the good men who brought her this far. She tries not to look at them, to recognise them, but she does.

The sky is darker then it was, ominous and wild, and the sea is restless, waves slapping at the hull and rocking the ship. Some of the men look uneasy, but the man with the sword is still focused on her, smiling his twisted smile.

"Some introductions, I think," he says cordially, as if they are meeting in a drawing room somewhere and not on a choppy sea. "My name is Ned Lowe, captain of the *Fancy*, and I believe that you, my dear, are Miss Ashe, yes? You must let us know if we have made a mistake."

Abigail does consider lying, even though she can well imagine the fate that would await her, but in the end she nods. Captain Lowe raises his eyebrows, mockingly lifts a hand to his ear. Her voice is a whisper. "Yes sir."

"Sir!" he repeats gleefully, turning to his men. Several of them grin, but many more of them are watching the sky now, which has become dark as night even though not an hour ago it

was high noon. Sea spray is thick in the air, and the ship is definitely pitching now, the sea heaving beneath it.

One of the men starts issuing orders, and a good portion of the men begin to cross back onto their own ship and climb up into the rigging, furling the sails and fastening lines. Captain Lowe turns his face up to the sky, closing his eyes.

“Take her over and put her in the hold,” he tells the man holding her, pitching his voice to be heard over the growing wind, the lash of the waves and the creak of the ship. “Let’s get out of here.”

The man holding her forces her forward, towards the rail. The pirate ship, the *Fancy*, lurches beside them, connected by crude rope anchors. She is shoved across, the man holding her keeping his grip on one arm so that she cannot get away. Captain Lowe follows them over and orders the lines cut, abandoning the ship and her dead crew to the gathering storm.

As the ships pull apart the *Fancy* pitches, caught by a particularly violent wave. Many of the men on deck stagger, and Abigail is certain she sees at least one man tumble from the rigging. Barely have they recovered when the ship bucks again, men swearing and shouting as they struggle to get everything properly stowed, the smile even wiped from Captain Lowe’s face.

Good, Abigail finds herself thinking. Let them be scared. Let them be terrified by something far beyond their control.

The rain comes suddenly and in torrents, mixing with the spray thrown up by the waves. The sea continues to churn, and though eventually she is dragged below, it provides only the most marginal relief. The cell she is thrown into is small, but truthfully that rather makes her feel safer, as if it were a small bolthole she might find some shelter in. She tucks herself into a ball, arms wrapped around her knees, and braces herself as best she can.

Whatever tempest is bearing down upon them arrives swiftly and mercilessly, the ship throwing itself about from side to side as if it too is trying to escape but has nowhere to go. She has no idea what is happening on deck, the ship groaning about her and the waves smashing against the hull loudly enough to drown any other sound. She finds herself hoping that Captain Lowe might be thrown overboard, and all his crew with him, and the ship blown conveniently the rest of the way to Carolina.

What happens instead is that the ship sinks.

One moment it is rolling violently to one side, and then there is a horrible moment when it overreaches, and another wave hits, and then it falls. The wall is abruptly the floor, and the sea is suddenly much louder, and so too is the dying gurgle of the ship as the water rushes in. The door at least is mercifully thrown open, and Abigail crawls and flounders her way to it and through, and somehow finds her way to the hatchway and out as the water laps at her waist, her chest.

The sea is cold, and full of pirates and sailcloth and snaking ropes. She shuts her eyes against the spray and wind and just swims, praying that no hand catches her ankle or her skirts, and

somehow she is heard. The waves are not as mountainous as they seemed from the motion of the ship, or perhaps they have calmed, but she is able to swim with some ease, and her heavy skirts do not particularly impede her. The water is not cold enough to leech her strength either, and she is able to make good progress from the wreck, although where she will go she doesn't know. There are supposed to be islands in the Bahamas, but many of them are infested with pirates and she has only just escaped them and then by divine providence, so-

Something touches her leg.

She freezes, stifling a scream. Surely any sea creature would be much more interested in the casualties of the wreck, of which there must be many, as uncharitable as that feels, so there should be no reason for one to approach her-

A woman surfaces before her. Even wet, her red hair shows up clearly against the dark sea and grey sky, and her expression is displeased. She also does not appear to be wearing any clothes, although she has several necklaces.

"Um. Hello?" Abigail offers, after a moment of silent staring. "Did you come from the Fancy too? I'm sorry, I didn't see you. Are you...alright?"

"Did you do this?" the woman asks, her voice a rasp.

"Did I do...what?"

"*This*." One pale arm rises from the sea, apparently encompassing the entire world. "Did you make the storm?"

"No? How could I? People don't-"

The woman's lip curls, and she vanishes beneath the waves again.

"No! Don't!" Abigail shouts despite herself, reaching desperately out, but there's no trace of her, no swiftly sinking shape under the restless waves.

She lingers around the site of the woman's disappearance for a little while, but in the end she forces herself to be practical and try to find some land. The sky seems lighter now, the storm passing, a brief and furious squall that extinguished itself as soon as it was made. But it allowed her her freedom, so Abigail is almost inclined to credit it with some divine intent.

The rain has stopped entirely and the sun is trying to break through the clouds when the woman reappears, frightening Abigail so badly she fears she might have drowned but for the sea buoying her up. "Oh, you're not dead! I thought-"

"That," the woman says, ignoring her utterly and stabbing a long finger at the sky, "ain't natural. It must've been you."

"I beg your pardon? You think that I...created that storm?"

The woman swims closer, scrutinising her intently. Her eyes are dark, and her face is narrow and sharp-boned. Abigail determinedly does not look below her chin.

“Look, I think that perhaps you might have hit your head when the ship sank, and it has given you some odd notions. What’s your name? Mine’s Abigail.”

The woman snorts. “Anne, if you must.”

“Well, then it’s a pleasure to meet you, Anne. Um, do you happen to know if there’s any islands nearby? Only I’m rather tired, and-”

“The sea’ll take you anywhere you wanna go,” Anne says, as though Abigail is stupid.

“Well yes, eventually, but on a ship, not by swimming.” Abigail tries to keep her tone even; it’s not Anne’s fault she’s addled, though it is becoming rather irritating.

Anne stares at her for some time. Just when it’s beginning to become unnerving, she says, “You should probably go back to the wreck.”

“What? No! The pirates will be there! I only just escaped from them, if they see me again-”

“They won’t,” Anne says.

“How do you know?”

“They’re all dead,” Anne says, and smiles. Her teeth are triangular and jagged and *wrong*, and some of them are red.

Abigail screams. It’s small and quiet, and the endless sea and sky swallow it.

“What *are* you?” she asks, and propels herself backwards, away. Anne follows her, respecting the distance between them, and behind her a tail sweeps lazily through the water, just under the surface. “My god, you’re-”

“Not going to hurt you. You’re not like them, fucking men, killing for sport. You’re different. The sea listens to you. You just don’t know how to speak to it properly.”

“You keep saying that, but I’m- I’m no one! I’m just Abigail Ashe, the governor’s daughter! I was going to live with him in Carolina when those- when the pirates found us, and then a storm blew up and-”

“*You* blew the storm up,” Anne corrects. “Nothing natural brews as fast as that.”

Abigail is tired, and hungry, and heartsick, and talking to a- a *mermaid*, and honestly, what’s one more thing to believe? “Fine, I conjured a storm. Now what am I to do?”

Anne smiles again, this time with her mouth closed. “I know someone who can help you learn to speak to the sea properly, and how to listen to it talk back. Her name’s Miranda, and she’s a sea witch.”

End Notes

So I maaay have been going through the Pirate Prompts, and I *may* have seen you talk about how much you wanted mermaid! Anne, and so...this happened. I fully intent to write more, but I hope you enjoy this!

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