You can only peel potatoes for so long before you want to die.

Eric groaned, finished a potato, and reached for another. From a barrel, into another barrel. From a barrel, into the cleaning bucket, and once they were cleaned, into the pot. Day after day, night after night, it was potatoes. He’d served aboard a ship a few years back that didn’t do potatoes; they had salted meats, cheese, and biscuits. It’d been a delicious trip, but he’d come back to his family quite sick. A man needs potatoes!

But he doesn’t need to peel a thousand of them.

“Captain, I don’t like the waters. The sky is clear but the water churns like my wife when she’s angry. Something’s out there.” The sailing master pulled the Captain to the port railing and pointed down at the water. He was a paranoid man, the sailing master, and it made Eric laugh each time the fat fellow argued for their safety. He was missing a few fingers, an eye, and one of his feet though, so maybe his paranoia was warranted, peg leg and all.

“Just a week out from Haiti, Jacob. Keep your head on straight before you—”

“Captain, I swear it! I’ve seen these waters before. Something churns, something… unnatural!” Jacob grabbed the captain by the shoulders, and shook him. “I lost my leg to such waters, Captain, and the last captain — bless his poor soul — sits at the bottom of the sea for ignoring my warning!”

The captain rolled his eyes. His back was to Eric, but the cabin boy could read the older man well enough to tell he was annoyed. The captain was tall, thin, and starting to wear down with his age. His fancy long coat, his well-cared-for captain’s hat, his compass in his pocket by a chain, and his ever-calm demeanor all spoke of a true captain. The rest of the shipmates wore dirty trousers and dirtier shirts, but that only made the captain stand out more, like he should.

“Jacob,” the captain said, and he put a hand on Jacob’s shoulder before walking him back toward the center mast of the ship. “Breathe my boy, breathe. I’ve seen these waters myself, a thousand times. We’re in for a small storm tonight, nothing more than a touch of rain and wind. Can you handle that?”

“Captain I—”

“Can you handle that?”

“Aye, I can Captain. But it’s not the rain or the wind that I fear. It’s beneath the waves my worries come from.” Jacob looked over his shoulder back to the railing, to Eric, and then back to the captain. “It tore at the ship from beneath! And came at us with claws and teeth!”

“We’ll keep an eye on the water then.” The captain patted the man on the back, and escorted him up to the helm.

Eric watched after them. Jacob was a loud man, jolly when drunk, and superstitious. Half the crew was just like him. But, as much as Eric wanted to dismiss Jacob’s worries like usual, something about his words stuck out to him. Claws? Teeth?

One of the crewman spotted him. A shorter fellow, with a big back from a lifetime of hauling god knows what. Eric was a normal-sized boy, average height, a strong body from his duties, and much younger than these men. He was only just old enough to be considered a man, so, he expected some teasing.

“Cabin boy,” Marters said, and he sat down next to Eric and the barrel, butt on the step.

“Marters.”

“How’s it going Eric?”

“Same as always.” He threw a potato into the pot, stuck out his hand, and Marters filled it with a fresh one.

“Jacob having fits again?”

“Says something’s coming, something in the water.”

Marters shivered. “Jacob’s a strange man, but I trust him. Saved me from more than one drunken mistake.”

“Has he ever saved you from demons or devils or ghosts though?” Eric said, and he scratched at his sandy hair.

“Ha, rightly he hasn’t.” The crewman sighed, got up, and stretched himself out a bit. “What’s for supper?”

“Fish and potatoes.”

Eric glared at Marters, but before long, the two of them were laughing.

“Anything else?”

“Nope.”

“What if I told you I’d sneaked in some oranges?”

Tempting, but not likely. “That haven’t started growing limbs?”

“Bah, just adds to the flavor!”

Eric rolled his eyes as the crewman walked off, laughing and hollering at the other men to get back to work. It was a fun ship, a good ship, with a good crew and a good captain. He could do without the potato peeling though; such was the life of a cabin boy. Laughing, he got up, walked over to the railing, and looked out over the sea.

The crystal blue of the Caribbean sea spread out before him for all directions. The air smelled of salt — just a pinch — and the water rocked against the vessel with a quiet, gentle groan. The breeze was calm but consistent, the sun was hot, and the sky was clear. A perfect day for sailing.

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Jacob wasn’t so crazy after all.

“Captain!”

“Eric, get the cargo anchored! I’m not going to let one storm ruin this voyage!”

“Aye aye, captain!”

Eric pushed his way past the crew. Dozens of men were running back and forth with ropes in hand. They worked the sails, while the ship was steered into the waves. Better than capsizing, but it made each few seconds a dance with gravity. Up and down, up and down. Even Eric was starting to get a little sick, but he forced down his gut and got to work.

Rain poured over the deck, smacked against the skin with stinging water drops, washed everything away, and any man who didn’t watch where he stepped fell onto his side with the snap of wind pushing him. Eric pushed through the crowd of struggling shoulders and pulling ropes, and slipped several times as he squirmed past the bigger men. He had a job to do.

The cargo hold, deep below deck. The stairs were waterfalls, and try as he might, an upward shove from the vessel knocked his footing down a stair too fast. He slid down the rest of the stairs with the water pulling him down, and landed on his ass against the wood. Boxes and barrels were teetering, rolling over, and sending provisions onto the floor. He had to move faster, or they’d have have nothing to deliver!

Barrels, heavy and rolling. He got them back up, one painful squat at a time, and jammed them into the corner before tying them off. Water dripped down over his head, and more crashed into his ankles in waves. More than once he found himself on his ass with feet flinging up into the air. As the ship rocked back and forth, it sent him into the pillar of the main mast like a bad habit, until his hands were sore from the collisions.

Wasn’t like he could stop though. Through the groaning of wood and the rage of the sea, he could hear men screaming and wind screaming right along with them. The sea was angry, no doubt about that. But yesterday’s sky had said nothing, the winds had said nothing, only Jacob and his crazy prediction had seen this coming. You can’t predict a storm from bubbles in the water.

On his ass again. Water poured down the stairs, flooded over him until it was hard to breathe. He scampered for some hanging rope and hauled himself back up, but his breathing was racked and his body was shaking. He’d need help to get things secured. No chance of that. He just had to make do alone, even if it meant they lost their cargo. Better the cargo than the ship or their lives.

Of course, the moment he thought it, the wind softened, the howling of the sea, and the cry of the bulkhead waned. Water stopped pouring down the stairs, the ship stopped rocking like a wailing baby, and the hollering of the crew died down.

“Oh thank god, no more.” He dragged himself through the ankle-deep water and started to climb the stairs.

And then he heard a different moan. At first, he thought it was the bulkhead, still bending under the pressure of waves and wind, but it was different. It was deeper. Vibrations filled the water around him, made it dance like it was still raining. The sound was coming from all around him as the wood trembled and the men upstairs went quiet.

He climbed the steps onto the deck. Everyone was standing at the railings and looking down.

“What’s… going on?” he said.

Jacob motioned him over. Looking down over the railing and into the blue of the dark sea, lit only by what cracks of moonlight could get through the clouds, he could see nothing. At least at first. But in the blue of the Caribbean sea, something dark was moving. Something huge. Long, humongous trails of dark moved around in something of a circle, far beneath them where it was like watching an underwater, black cloud. And it was getting bigger.

Again, the moan poured out through the sea until the vibrations had the ship’s deck, the mast itself, even the water of the sea around them quivering. The sound was deep, loud, and the men raised their hands to cover their ears. But no one moved from the railings. Not Jacob, not Marters. Even the captain, with water dripping from his hat and fancy coat, stepped down to join them, mouth agape and eyes wide.

Whatever it was beneath them, it had eyes. It had teeth. And it was coming up to them.

The world froze. And all at once, it came back in thunderstorm of pain, exploding water, and a breaking ship.

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He awoke to the sound of seagulls, the rocking of gentle waves, and the salty air. For a moment, he thought he was on his fishing boat back home, and drifting around the bay with his line out. And then he remembered the ship.

He sat up, groaned with aching muscles, and looked around. The sun was up, the clouds were few and white, and any remnants of the storm were long gone.

“You ok boy?”

Eric almost jumped. “Marters! You’re alive.”

“Hell yes boy. Take more than some sea devil to kill me.” The man winked at him.

Eric smiled, looked down, and felt his smile fade. They were sitting on a chunk of the deck, big enough for him and Marters but no more. Around them, he could see bits and pieces of the ship floating in the water, scattered far and wide, and some barrels. No bodies, as if something had taken them down to Davy Jones’s Locker.

It was like God had come home drunk from a bad day at work, and decided he didn’t like his toy boat anymore.

“Oh god… oh god oh god.” Eric pulled his feet up, hugged his knees, and started to rock back and forth.

“Calm down boy. We’ll live through this.” Marters reached out and patted him on the shoulder.

Not likely. Not a ship to be seen, or land. No food. No water. The sun was getting higher and it was bringing scorching heat with it.

They’d be dead in three days.

Eric reached down and ran his fingers along the deck. It was sheer luck a chunk of it had managed to come off the ship that was flat enough, and wide enough for a couple of people. It was soaked with water, and it swayed softly on the sea’s surface. When he glanced over the edge of the few planks of wood his life depended on, all that greeted him was the deep, endless blue below.

His shoes were gone. He laughed when he noticed, and he shook his head as he reached down to grab his toes. All he had left was his brown trousers, and his white shirt. And there were red blotches on his white shirt.

Blinking, he started to pat himself down. No pain, no growing blood stains. He looked over at Marters to ask, but stopped himself.

Marters was laying down on the planks, and he had one arm over his eyes while the other pressed its hand hard against his side. His fingers were clutching his shirt, blood soaked his waist, and his breathing was shallow. The blood wasn’t just on his waist either, but had coated several feet of the wood beneath them until it was dripping into the blue.

“Shit! Marters, you’re bleeding.”

“Damn right I’m bleeding,” he said, and he coughed on a harsh, cold laugh. “But it’ll take more than that to kill me.”

No, it wouldn’t. The man was pale, shivering, and sweating all at once.

Eric wasted no time. He took off his shirt, tore it apart, and started to wrap it around Marter’s waist. The crewman groaned, even screamed a little, but Eric pushed through it. He knew it was a waste of time, but he wasn’t about to let the man bleed to death.

Took everything he had to not vomit. He wanted to curl into a ball and pretend none of this was happening. Maybe it was all some horrible nightmare and he’d wake up any moment.

Something moved in the water.

Eric fell back into the middle of the raft, got to a knee and foot, and watched out over the raft’s edge. “Something’s out there.”

“Probably a shark, sniffing for blood,” Marters said with another laugh.

Eric laughed too, a dead man’s laugh of certainty. What else could he do? He’d never see his mom or dad again. Never see his brother again. Never see—

More movement. Something blue poked up over from behind one of the barrels. Eric stared at it, hand raised to block out the sun, and he waited.

The barrel started to drift closer. Eric tilted his head to the side, and watched the strange barrel ignore the drifting currents the rest of the wreckage followed. Something blue was behind it, something that shimmered, and looked an awful lot like hair.

Once it was about ten feet away, it came to a stop.

“…h-hello?” he said to the magical barrel with blue hair.

As slow as the tide, a face emerged from behind the curved wood.

Eric braced a hand against the planks underneath him, and fell to his remaining knee. A mermaid. An actual, real, living mermaid, and so close. So close he could see the long, beautiful waves of blue hair, her alabaster skin, her fin-like ears of see-through blue, her small, pink lips, and her sparkling green eyes.

“God… a mermaid….”

“A mermaid!” Marters sat up. The motion rocked the floating wood, and knocked Eric over hard enough he rolled off the planks and fell straight into the sea.

A moment later, he pulled himself back up onto the unstable raft, spat out some sea water, and looked around in a panic when Marters grabbed him by the shoulders.

“Don’t let it get near!” the crewman said.

“Marters, calm down. She hasn’t done anything yet.” Eric looked over his shoulder toward the barrel. It was twenty feet away now, but he could see the blue hair and young face of the creature. Her green eyes were wide, like a startled kitten.

“Mermaids lure men to their deaths! Don’t let her get near.” Marters forced himself to his knees, leaned over the raft to grab a bit of debris from the water, and pointed the stick at the woman. “Back! Back foul creature!”

“Marters what in the hell? Sit down before you bleed to death! She hasn’t done anything!”

“I won’t be taken by demon! I won’t! I—” Marters’s right foot went out from under him, and he rolled forward over the collapsing leg until he smacked his head against the boards.

“Marters!”

The man went forward with his weight, and slipped half of his body into the ocean. The top half.

“Marters you dumb bastard! Get back on the raft!” Eric reached over the man and grabbed his bloodied shirt. Pulling on him wasn’t so easy with how it teetered the raft down, and he had to rock it back to keep it from flipping. “Get back on the damn—”

An array of jagged, serrated teeth broke through the water, splashing Eric’s face. Wide-eyed, the water hit his eyes, and he fell back with a holler.

“Marters! Marters!” He scampered forward, but it was only a few feet to the edge of the worthless raft, and the blue. No Marters. “Marters!”

Further out, a fin cut through the water. The nose of a shark raised, thrashed, and created a pool of growing red before it dipped under the surface yet again.

And then were was silence. Only a seagull, and the gentle breath of the sea made any noise.

Alone. All alone. Surrounded by the broken pieces of his captain’s vessel, their work, their livelihood, he sat and watched the pool of red sit on the water before fading away. Barrels, boxes, a potato or two, planks, and the shredded remains of the sails.

No matter how hard he tried to breathe, he couldn’t get oxygen into his lungs. He was starting to see spots. It wasn’t happening. It couldn’t be happening. It wasn’t it wasn’t it wasn’t. He hugged his knees close to his chest, and rocked back and forth. The salt of his tears joined the salt of the sea soaked into his trousers.

“… hello?”

Eric gasped, fell back, and braced himself against the bloody planks with both hands. The mermaid had swam up to him, though she still had the barrel between the two of them like a shield.

“Are you here to kill me? It… it would make sense. Everything in this damn sea wants us sailors dead. Gods, please, just… just get it over with.” He closed his eyes, and waited.

“Kill you? But… I’m not….”

Eric opened one eye, then the other. Not kill him? “But.. you’re a mermaid.”

“I am.” She swam closer, and she gave him a small smile from behind the barrel.

She really was beautiful. Her voice was enchanting too, just like the old tales said. Mermaids were sirens! They lured sailors with their charm, and then they dragged you to Davy Jones’s Locker!

He wasn’t in any position to argue it though. Dead anyway, with no ship in sight, no way to make a fire to signal for help, no land in sight, and no food or water.

“I thought mermaids killed men?”

“I never! I… that… that has happened. But not anymore! Not for a hundred years.”

“Oh… oh….” He sighed relief, and sat down Indian style. “I, um… thank you then… for not killing me.” But then, he looked down and found the blood stains on his legs and hands. Marters, you dumb bastard.

“I’m sorry,” the mermaid said, “for what Jormun did to your ship.”

“Jormun?”

“He is… he was nearby, and he hates men. He summoned the storm, and he attacked you.”

“I thought I was seeing things!” Memories of the massive wall of flesh, barnacles and dark skin were blurs in his mind. “That thing summoned a storm?”

“He did. And… sorry about… Marters.” She sighed and shook her head. “I can’t stop Gaznollien. He’s big, and mean, and old, and—”

“Gaznollien… the shark?”

She nodded.

Eric sighed, but returned the nod. “It’s ok… I guess. We’re dead anyway. Eaten by a shark is a better way to go than thirst and sun.”

The mermaid blinked at him, pushed her barrel to the side before swimming close, put her hands on the planks, and looked up at him.

She was so damn beautiful. Her hair was really long, now that he could see her from so close, like a river of its own. Her fingers were human. She had gills on her neck though, tinted the same beautiful blue like her fin ears. Her fish half was blue too — he’d expected green — and it was shining radiant under the sun. Her lips were such a delicious pink, tiny and cute.

Sirens indeed. He couldn’t help but stare, even when he realized how rude it was. Worse, with the creature so near, he could see her breasts through the water. She was a small woman, this mermaid, with a lean little frame and small, pert breasts.

He shook his head and forced himself to look up to her green, big, sparkling eyes.

“There’s a small island nearby! Only a… uh… I think you call it… miles? Only five or six miles!”

She had such a sweet, lovely voice. It made his insides melt.

“Five or six miles? I could… I might be able to swim that. I’m a pretty good swimmer.”

She laughed at him. “No no, it’ll take you all day. Come on, I’ll push you.”

“You’ll… push me? But you only just met me! And you’re a mermaid, and I’m a human, and—”

“I’m Alandrial,” she said.

Alandrial? It sounded… angelic.

“Um… Eric.”

“Eric.” She grinned her cute little smile at him. “Before sailors started thinking mermaids were bad luck, or mean, or killers, we helped them!”

And then she started pushing him. She started slow at first, though he still fell forward onto his palms when she did. A moment later, she was pushing hard and fast, hard enough that she was churning water, fast enough that he could feel the wind against his face and naked chest. So much for a little girl, this mermaid could swim! He got down on his hands and knees and faced into the oncoming wind, glanced to the passing bits of debris, and winced. Jacob, the captain, Marters, everyone, dead and gone in a single day.

You have to respect the sea. He just never thought the sea hated them so much.

He looked back over his shoulder at Alandrial, his sudden and only shining ray of hope. The beautiful creature had a stern look on her face, which made sense given how hard she was pushing him. It couldn’t have been easy. He got down low against the boards to try and get out of the wind for her.

Five or six miles meant just beyond the horizon, and sure enough, it wasn’t long before he could see the dots of trees, and a minute after that, the edge of sand. They were swimming so fast, the front edge of the planks were raised up and hitting the air, and he had to lean forward to keep the raft from catching like a sail. He could see the land ahead grow larger before his eyes. Very fast.

Not long later, they arrived at the beach of the island. A small thing, not big enough for any real animals other than birds and rodents. Not even a quarter mile long. But it had trees, and trees meant there could be fruit. Insects too, for grub. Wood for a fire! All at once, the reality of survival sank in, and his smile returned.

“Land, sweet land! Sweet, blessed, dry land.” When Alandrial came to a stop, a good thirty feet out from the shore where it was still a couple feet deep, he didn’t hesitate. Like he’d never seen land before, he jumped into the water and ran through as best he could. Dressed in only his trousers and waving his hands in the air, he must have seemed like a madman to anyone nearby. Good thing it was only the mermaid and him, and he didn’t care if she saw his joy. He threw himself down onto the shore, and laid down on the sand before rolling onto his back, and looked up at the sky. “Thank you! Oh thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

Her voice came from afar, so quiet he could barely hear it. When he sat up, he had to block out the sun again with his hand to see her; she was still out where she’d stopped the planks of wood.

“You — oh, right. Um… uh….” Of course, she had no legs, she couldn’t walk up onto the shore. So, he got up, and treaded back out to her.

“What’re you doing?”

“I have to thank you somehow! I was dead for sure.”

“Thank me? I… was just….”

“Come on, you helped a total stranger, and a human at that!” Energy flooded him, and his smile grew until he could feel his cheeks cramp. “I have to do something for the mermaid who saved my life.”

She smiled, and brought a hand up to her lips to cover her mouth when she giggled. Her voice was as light as air, and her skin hid nothing when she blushed.

“The island has a cove with some deeper water. Maybe you can… come with me? It’ll be easier to talk there, and I want to ask you something.”

“Sure! Sure, anything.”

Alandrial giggled. Like a tweeting little bird this girl, so cute it was making his chest hurt.

She motioned to the side with her head, dove into the water, and started to swim. Eric had to get back out of the water to move at a faster pace than his snail’s pace, but once he was, he kept along the shore at a jog. Glances to the left kept track of Alandrial, and glances to the right kept note of the island. He was right about the fruit, and rodents. There’d be crabs too, and maybe ways to fish. Even insects could be eaten if it came to it. Signal fires! He’d survive this, one way or another.

The cove was like a fairytale. The mouth of the cove was two raised sections of rock thirty feet high, and he had to get back into the water to swim around them. Inside, he found Alandrial waiting, swimming in circles in the large pool of water. The cove opened up into more beach, but the slope of sand was much steeper, and the water must have gone at least six feet deep. A few protrusions of rock dotted the pool, and Alandrial swam up behind one, poked her head out from behind it, and smiled at him.

He swam up to her, hoisted himself up on the rock in the center of the cove, and sat down. Food and shelter should have been at the top of his list, but the island seemed a safe enough, simple enough place. He could worry about it later.

“Alright Alandrial, I am all yours. Ask away.” He tried his damnedest to not look at her naked breasts through the water. At least the tide and its gentle waves were distorting his vision enough to hide them a little.

“Alright, Eric. I… um… this is weird. You’re the first human I’ve ever talked with, and I was sure I’d have many questions! Many questions, but now I… I don’t know.”

He tilted his head to the side and raised a hand to rub at his stubble. “Can I ask one then?”

“Sure!”

“You’re a mermaid.”

“I am.”

“A real, live, genuine mermaid.”

“I am!”

“You’re the first I’ve seen. Other sailors say they’ve seen mermaids, but no one believes them. We’re a superstitious lot. And you said something about a hundred years?”

Alandrial nodded, looked down, and frowned. She lowered herself when she did, until only her head was over water. “A hundred years ago, some mermaids were killed by sailors, and it caused a battle. Ever since then, we’ve… stopped helping, and… and that’s made it difficult to….”

“To what?” He sat cross legged Indian style again, leaned forward, and blinked down at the tiny mermaid.

“Mermaids need to… mate with humans to have children.”

“What? I… what? What about the mermen?”

“Mermen? There is no such thing. Mermaids are daughters of the sea! We live a long time, but without humans to mate with, we’ll start to dwindle.”

“Girls only?”

“Girls only.”

“Oh, that’s… you have to rely on men?”

Alandrial nodded, and started to swim around his rock in a slow circle. And she did it on her back. He gulped, and stared. No matter how much his brain told him to look up, be a gentleman like your dad taught you, he couldn’t tear his eyes away from her naked body. Her fish half, gleaming in the sun with its blue scales, covered her hips, but the V crest of her hips, the Apollo’s Belt was still human down the bottom of the V. She had no legs, so instead of between thighs, her sex sat flat along the bottom of the V of the human half. It was smooth, small, with the tiniest pink lips.

He gulped again, and adjusted his pants to hide his erection. Not even a day since his shipmates had all died, and he was already lusting after a girl. He was eighteen! What was he supposed to do?

“It’s been a long time since we’ve talked with men openly, long before I was born. New mermaids are rare.”

“I can imagine, I—”

“Oh, oh! I thought of something.” Alandrial spun around atop the water and turned to face him, hands on the rock, eyes beaming. God she was cute.

“What?”

“What’s your normal day like?”

“Normal day?”

“Yeah!” She smiled and started swimming around him again. “I know sailors send stuff to your cities across the sea. And you fish. But I mean, I don’t know what you do when you’re not on a boat.”

“Oh. Well, I mean I just live in a fishing village near the city. What we do is pretty boring.”

“Tell me!” she said, and she swam a little further out from the rock to start turning over herself. Like an excited dog, except most definitely not a dog. Her fish scales covered up where a human’s butt would have been, but her human half was a young woman’s through and through.

“Ok, um. Well, I’ll wake up, and me and my dad will go out fishing. Mom spends the day at the mill, making clothes. My brother works in the nearby city in a factory.”

“What’s a factory? Or mill?”

“A factory? It’s… it’s a big building, where people go in and… and do very boring work putting things together for other people, for very little money. And a mill is… basically the same thing.” Wow, dull lives, now that he thought about it. He’d known his was dull, but in perspective, maybe not so dull?

Alandrial frowned up at him, swam up to his rock, and put her hands against its base. “I heard humans go out on boats like yours, but instead of just sailing across the sea, delivering stuff, you leave the sea! And into the ocean.” She shivered with the word, and blinked her big eyes up at him. “Is that true?”

“Ah, well, ocean trips are dangerous, and deadly. A lot of people die. We—”

“How big is it?”

“What, the ocean?”

She nodded, mouth open and eyes even wider.

“Ah, well.” He scratched at his sandy hair, and thought about it. “It can take weeks to sail across the Caribbean. It takes months to sail across the ocean.”

The mermaid gasped. “So huge! Caribbean… is that your word for the mother sea?” Nodding, she started to swim around him again. “The mother sea is where my mother and sisters and friends all live. The ocean is too big! Big and deep, deeper than we can swim. I’ve seen it! On the edge, deep endless blue that turns to black.” Again the mermaid shivered, and she disappeared under the water, only to appear behind him. “That’s where Jormun came from.”

It was his turn to shiver.

“Come on!” she said. “Come in the water!”

“Water? But—”

“Humans can swim, I’ve seen it! And I can’t really see your legs from down here. Humans have legs! My sisters talk about them, on some of the humans they’ve spied with them. And you wear clothes. Clothes is the right word, right? Clothes, to cover yourselves, which is just silly. That can’t feel good.”

Alandrial, he was starting to realize, was just a young girl, no older than he. Excitable too, but her bouncing energy was contagious, and it was making him forget about the shipwreck.

“Well, we wear clothes cause otherwise we’d be naked and staring at each other’s parts all day.” He didn’t plan to take off his pants, not in front of a beautiful girl at any rate. But a swim with her sounded like just the thing to keep himself distracted. And procrastinate on building a shelter and finding food.

Stepping down from the rock proved more difficult than climbing it. One small slip and a loud yelp later, he crashed ass first into the blue. He gargled on sea water, rolled around to get his bearings, and forced himself to stand. At least the water was only four feet deep in the center of the cove.

Alandrial giggled and swam around him in more circles. “I’ve only ever seen humans from a distance, and always men. Do women look much different? Do they look like us?”

“They, uh… don’t look quite like you, no.”

“What’s different? Tell me!” She squealed, ducked under the water, swam between his legs, and came out behind him.

“Um, well, they have less colorful hair. And their ears are like mine. And legs. And… well, they’re not as pretty as a mermaid.”

“Not as pretty?” She tilted her head to the side, blinked at him, and then squealed again. Giggles abound, she brought her hands up to her lips and blushed. “You think I’m pretty?”

He smacked himself in the forehead. “I’m sorry, I just—”

“I like that you think I’m pretty!” She giggled all the more, swam up to him and put her hands against his chest. “I… never get to see men this close. Your shoulders are bigger! And your arms are thicker.” Blushing, smiling, Alandrial roamed her hands over his body. Eric was of average height, but a lifetime of fisherman’s work had kept his body strong and lean. He never thought he’d be happy about fisherman’s work, ever.

“I, uh… um….”

“And your chest is broad.” She put her hands there too, and pushed against him. “And hard.” She couldn’t stand up without legs, and in the shallow water, she had to swim in place. But when she put her hands on him, she stabilized, and she smiled up at him with her little pink lips.

“Th-thanks.”

She was hitting on him. Was she? She had her hands on him, and she was feeling him up and down. For a human, that was a pretty straightforward sign. But she was a mermaid, and apparently mermen weren’t a thing. So maybe she did just want to touch him and see what a man felt like?

What would his brother do? Kiss her and sweep her off her feet — he chuckled. Good luck with that.

“What’s funny?” she said.

“Nothing! Nothing, just thought about… nothing. So, no men? What’s your day like?”

“My day?” She smiled up at him, swam around behind him, and put her hands on his shoulders to brace herself again. “We wander! The mother sea is a big place. We explore and find new, hidden things in the sand and depths. Then we come back to the great nest, and share and talk and stuff.”

“Sounds exciting.”

“It probably was, before we were banned from talking with humans.”

“Banned?” He turned around with a jump away from Alandrial, and she fell down into the water until it was up to her neck. “You’re banned from talking to me?”

She frowned again; which, on her face, looked more like a chipmunk frown. “It was a hundred years ago! It’s dumb. My mom said don’t talk to men, and my sisters only pretend to listen. One of my friends goes out to visit one all the time, and she always comes back smiling.” She shook her head until her blue hair was flowing like waves in the water. “I’m old enough! I wanted… to meet one too.”

“Oh.” He scratched at his head again, and shrugged. Who was he to argue with a beautiful young mermaid? Especially one that’d saved his life. “I owe you, and I certainly don’t mind the company.”

“Good! But we should really do something about you, you have no food or shelter.”

Ah drat.

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They spent the day working. Alandrial could only do so much, stuck in the water like she was, but she brought him things like rope and sharp rocks, jetsam from ships. Mostly, it was on him to build the shelter though. Hours went by, him lugging around sticks and branches and whatnot in large bundles. Without a shirt, he scraped skin more often than he wanted, but it didn’t stop him. Carrying around big, heavy things was drawing Alandrial’s eye, and being a stupid young fool, he wanted to impress her.

And they talked. They talked about his life as a fisherman, boring as it was. They talked about her life wandering the ‘mother sea,’ an interesting name for the Caribbean. Apparently, mermaids just wandered the sea, exploring and collecting. The sea was vast, deep, and filled with wonders he could not imagine; it would make for endless exploration. Wanderlust. He envied them.

The sun was setting. He’d managed to build something resembling a roof of sticks, leaves, and rocks. Nearby, he’d built a little fireplace, and found dry tinder for it. The hard part would be starting a fire.

“I’ve never seen fire,” Alandrial said. “My sisters have described it, but it sounds so… so unreal!”

“Never seen fire?”

“No! I mean, I heard water kills it? I don’t know what that means, or what it looks like, or… or anything.”

He laughed, and sat down in the sand. Alandrial had crawled up onto the shore to join him, with the gentle splashing of the tide reaching her elbows.

“That makes sense. I’ll try and show you, but without a proper bit of steel or flint, this will be tricky.”

“I’m sorry! I looked, but I couldn’t find any of your sailor knives, or anything shiny and hard like you said, and—”

“It’s ok!” He laughed again, and smiled at the beautiful girl. She was just so damn nice, and energetic, and fun. Her smile was too cute, and anytime it vanished, he found himself trying to bring it back. “I’ll get this working. It’ll just take a while.”

She’d found him some string, thank god, otherwise, this would be borderline impossible. He’d found a nice, hard, bending stick, and he’d tied the string to each end to create a bow. He’d also found a flat board, and he’d cut a small groove into the side of it with a sharp rock. After that, he got another stick, and a rock with a groove in it. The tools were assembled. All that was left was the hard part.

He wrapped the stick in the string of the bow sideways, then jammed one end of the stick into the groove of the board where it rested against the sand and a pile of tinder. He held the stick in place with his rock and left hand, while his right hand held the bow. The stick was stuck between the board and rock, and with the bow’s string wrapped around the stick, moving the bow side to side forced the stick to spin in place between the board and rock.

“We just need to make the stick here rub into the board at the bottom long and hard enough so that it produces some smoke and embers.”

“Embers?”

“You’ll see… hopefully.” And then he got to work.

And work it was. He had to press down on the rock hard enough to force the stick into the groove of the board with enough friction to make it hard to turn the stick. And then he had to turn the stick. The bow he moved side to side as fast as he could, so that it turned the stick it’d wrapped in its string. The harder he pushed down on the rock, the harder it was to turn the stick, but it was the only way to get the friction he needed. So he sawed, and sawed the bow back and forth for a minute, then another minute, and another, until his arm started to burn and he was sure the fire had started in his bicep instead.

He took a breath and paused for a moment. Alandrial was looking at him with a quirked brow, head tilted, and he smiled at her. Sweat was on his nose, and his chest, and unless his eyes were playing tricks on him, Alandrial was looking at more than the tools in his hands. She was looking at him, his body, and once again Eric started to warm. She was naked, and right in front of him! Propped up on her elbows, her small, pert, beautiful breasts were visible, and her pink little nipples looked so amazing.

Focus! Get the fire going, impress the girl, then you can stare at her more. With a loud humph, he got back to work, and started sawing again. Sure enough, a minute later, smoke.

Alandrial squealed, knuckles against her lips, eyes wide. Eric grinned, got down on his knees, moved the board away, and started to blow on the tiny flecks of burning black ash. Perfect!

Not so perfect. Eric, fool that he just realized he was, hadn’t put anything underneath the tinder that caught the ash and embers from the board. And it went up in flames.

“Shit! Shit shit shit.” He reached down, scooped up the pile of dead leaves and bark best as he could, and walked the fire a few feet up the beach to his circle of rocks. “Ow ow ow ow ow ow.” Pride singed, but still intact, he got the burning tinder up to the fireplace, and got it underneath the twigs that awaited it. On his knees again, a few more controlled breaths into the growing flames and smoke raised the fire to life.

“Wow. I almost screwed that up,” he said, and he stood up to wipe the sweat from his brow. With the sun setting, the fire looked radiant against the growing shadows and dark water.

When he looked at Alandrial, his heart almost jumped out of his mouth. The fire lit her face, and the sparkling green of her big eyes. Her blue scales shimmered, and her alabaster skin caught the fire as waves of red. Her eyes were wider than usual, gaze on the fire. He even waved a hand in front of her, but she didn’t look away from the licking flames.

“It’s… too far.”

“Sorry! I had to keep it higher on the beach, so the tide wouldn’t put it out.”

“Oh, right. Water… but….” She frowned at the fire, as if the flames had thwarted her plans.

“I, uh, I could carry you?”

“Out of the water?” Whatever he said, it was enough to make her gasp, and rip her gaze from fire to him. “B-but I’ve… never left the water before.”

“Come on, it’s only a few feet. And there’s no one here but us. You’re practically out of the water already.”

“… ok.” She nodded, steeled her face, and raised her arms.

He reached down, hooked one arm underneath hers, the other underneath her fish half near her hips, and scooped her up. Her scales really did shimmer in the firelight, and they were smooth to touch. Don’t stare at her breasts, don’t stare at her breasts.

She was breathing faster, eyes wide up at him, and she hugged him tight. “Out of the water. I… I… I can do this.”

“We’re only going a few feet. Worse comes to worse, you could drag yourself back in, right? And I’ll carry you again when you want to go back, for sure. It can’t imagine it feels good to drag those beautiful scales on sand.”

Alandrial giggled again, and put her cheek against his chest. “I don’t understand how humans and mermaids could ever fight. You’re nice.”

“Ah, well, not all humans are nice. Everyone’s different.” His own breathing got faster. Her blue hair, blue eyebrows, even her blue fin ears were mesmerizing. He had to look away as he laid her down on the sand next to the fire.

Adjusting his pants to hide his erection — again — he sat down beside her, his leg next to her fish body. She laid on her side on her hip, propped up on an elbow, and gazed at the fire. The flickering flames caught her big green eyes, and shades of orange casted over her pale skin, like sunset on white shores.

Just like a human, Alandrial’s eyes were trapped by the living flame, fascinated by it; he could tell she was drinking in its dancing form. The soft crackling of burning wood, the embers and their tide of red and orange, the ash that wisped away with a breeze, it was all new to her. Even the comforting smell. He could get lost staring into a fire for hours, and he’d been around it his whole life. What it must have been like for someone who’d never seen it before, and had spent their life in the waves.

He reached for a stick, put its tip in the fire, and when the end caught the flames, he pulled it out and held it a foot out in front of him. Alandrial gasped. Squirming a little, she turned over onto her other hip, put her shoulder against his, and looked at the small flame flickering on the end of the stick.

“Fire… it’s… warm.”

“It’s how we cook food.”

“Cook?”

“Yeah. Cook, I — ah I’ll show you later. I’ll cook up a fish and — wait, what do mermaids eat?”

“Fish, and seaweed, and little creatures that roam the reefs.” Even as she spoke, her eyes were trapped by the fire, and her mouth drifted open. “It… it moves, like it’s alive.”

“It is alive.”

“Really?”

“Well, not really. But, it does seem that way. It’s eating the wood. It needs to breathe. It destroys and spreads and…. I’m sure there’s a metaphor in there about how humans are just like it.” He sighed. His brother could smooth talk through anything. Too bad he couldn’t.

“You’ve been nothing but nice to me.” She scootched further along the sand, and pressed against him. The feel of her naked skin on his sent his heart racing. “It… cracks and pops!” She reached out and touched the edge of the fire. And brought her hand back with a gasp. “Ow!”

“Ah, don’t touch it! It’ll burn you.”

“Ow ow ow.” She held her hand up to his face, big kitten eyes wide and now lined with tears. “It hurts!”

“Yeah, that’s fire for you. Here, I’ll get you back in the water. Cool water will help.” Well, that was a short lived excursion onto land for his new friend. He scooped her up again, and walked her back. She was too busy clutching her hand and blowing air onto her fingertip to even notice.

A few feet back into the water, he walked a little further, and set her down where the water was a foot deep. She sighed with relief when she got her hand below the surface, and laid on her back. Again, poor Eric had to look away, and adjust his pants.

“You’re right, the water helps. It still hurts though! I didn’t think fire would be so… lively. And mean.”

“Here, let me see.” He sat down on his knees, water reaching his chest, and reached out for her hand through the blue to hold it up above the surface. The sun was starting to set though, and he couldn’t see it very well beyond the firelight, but it seemed fine. “Just a little burn. It’ll sting for a few days and then it’ll be fine.”

“That’s good…. Hey, can I ask you to do something for me? You’re not allowed to laugh!”

“Um, sure?”

“… close your eyes.”

He gulped, heart jumping again, but did it anyway. He knew the tales of mermaids killing people, he’d even heard a sailor or two tell such tales, not that anyone believed them. Still, with eyes closed and a mermaid only a foot away from him, a little fear crept up his spine.

Fingers found his shoulders. He gulped again. Alandrial was pulling herself closer to him, that much he could tell as more of her weight pressed down against him. Her scales pressed against his legs, and then onto them when she slipped up onto his knees. Her breath was on his skin, on his nose and lips; she smelled like a sea breeze. And then her body was pressed to him. He fell back, caught the sand with his hands so the water stopped at his elbows, and he gasped. But he kept his eyes closed.

“What… what are you—”

She wrapped her arms around his neck, pressed her small body to his chest, and kissed him.

He pulled his hands out from under him to try and push her away — reflexes, whether he wanted to or not — but doing so only made him fall back. Water poured over his face and buried him, and despite himself, he opened his eyes once his hands found her shoulders.

His head found the sand of the shore. A lifetime at sea had taught him to not breathe in or let his lungs loose their air, and when he saw Alandrial over him, he went still. Her hair flowed around and over them, blue against the sunset sky above, and her sparkling green eyes caught the firelight. The sea water stung his eyes, but only a little, and the mermaid’s smile struck him still.

Her mouth moved, speaking, but he couldn’t hear her. She laughed, and laid her body atop him while lowering herself against his torso. Her breasts found his chest, and she pressed her nipples into him as she brought her face to his once more, and kissed him again.

His first kiss was with a mermaid. A real, live, honest-to-god mermaid. Her lips were soft, and her breasts were just as soft against his chest. Her nipples rubbed against him, and her hands squeezed and massaged his shoulders where she was pinning him into the sand underneath the water. Her eyes were still half open, and he lost himself in them as the mermaid kissed him. For the moment, he forgot about his need to breathe, reached his hands around her, and hugged her.

After a few more seconds, she tapped his shoulder, and slid off of him to the side. He sat up, water to his stomach, and took a deep breathe as he wiped the sea from his eyes.

“Sorry,” she said, “but I really wanted to do that before I left.”

“Leave?”

“Yes, I… I wanted to kiss a man at least once before I went back to my sisters.”

“W-wait, why are you leaving?”

She blinked at him. “I can’t be here when your friends arrive to save you. It is forbidden for mermaids to be seen with humans.”

He blinked back. She thought someone was coming to rescue him. He brought a hand up to his face and laughed.

“Alandrial, I’m going to be stuck here for weeks. The only way someone is going to rescue me is if they happen to see a smoke fire I set up, and even then, only if they want to bother investigating.”

“Oh! That’s so sad. But… that means I can come visit tomorrow?”

“It does… and I hope you do.” God I hope you do.

Smiling, she nodded. “I will.”

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A few hours later, and he was sitting by the fire, eating some fruit, a fish Alandrial had brought him was cooking on the fire, and he had a belly full of fresh water from nearby rocks that had collected pools of it. He’d have to find a better way to get water sooner or later, but for now it worked, assuming it wouldn’t get him sick. So far so good.

He stared at the fire, let it mesmerize him, and tried to focus on getting rescued. But no matter how hard he tried, a blue-haired mermaid swam through his thoughts. A naked one at that. She’d left, but he had a feeling he’d be seeing her again come the sunrise, and just the thought of it got him excited. Sleep would not come.

She’d kissed him. A naked mermaid in his arms was shocking enough, but when she’d kissed him, it was like a spell had hit him. He couldn’t get her out of his mind. He wanted to kiss her again. Hell, more than kiss her. He wanted to hold her, feel her, and get inside her. The sight of her little pussy had set his blood on fire. So much for laying eggs! It’d looked very human, if a little oddly angled since she had no legs. If mermaids had to mate with humans to have children like she said, then….

He laid back on the bed of leaves he’d made, and slid down his pants. His erection sprang up, and he wrapped his hand around it with practiced comfort. With one arm underneath his head, he looked up at the stars of the night sky, and stroked his shaft with a gentle rhythm. The sensation of her breasts, soft and pressed to his chest, her slim stomach, curvy little waist, he dwelled on them all and let them form into images in his mind. Her nipples were such a cute, bright pink, like her lips. What little he got to see of her sex was the same shade of pink. Her whole body was so colorful.

A few minutes later, he could feel his liquids moving. Warm, tingling waves of pleasure started to spread out from between his legs, building under his testicles, until the gentle waves rose up into the swollen tip of his member. But, not interested in a quick orgasm, he slowed his grip, squeezed the base of his girth, and let his fluids settle.

“Damn she was beautiful. I hope she gets back soon.”

A gasp. He sat upright like a crab had just pinched him, both hands to the sand.

It was hard to see much in the dark, even with the fire casting flickering red over the water. But he could see hair, and a pair of big eyes over the surface.

She’d caught him masturbating. Well, his life was over.

“Alandrial!” He pulled up his pants as quick as he could, but tried to stand up at the same time. And the two movements did not see eye to eye. He got to a knee and foot before falling down with a roll.

The mermaid giggled. “You were touching yourself.”

“I… I… yeah.” Back on his ass, he managed to get his pants up, but standing up was probably a bad idea. His trousers weren’t exactly a wall of protection, and his dick was hard against the fabric.

“Because of me?” She came a little closer up along the shore, though he could still only see her head. “I heard you.”

“… yeah.” He could feel his face about to explode from blushing. “I thought you’d be back tomorrow?”

“That was the plan! I got back to my friends, and they said I was a liar, and my mom found out and she yelled at me and… and stupid stuff.” She came closer and closer, until her slender shoulders were sticking out of the water, and the fins of her tail were poking up too. “Can… can I… touch it?”

His jaw dropped. Again. For who knows how many times that day.

“W-what?”

“I want to touch it!” She slapped her tail against the water. “My friends and I, we’ve all touched each other, and have done stuff with each other. Come on, it’ll be fun!”

Tales about mermaids had described them as sexual, but he had no idea. The beautiful creature fifteen feet away from him wanted to touch him. And again, the tales about them being murderous sirens crept into his brain; her adventurousness and sexual confidence were certainly working as a siren call on him. But then, she had ample opportunity to kill him. Hell, she could have just left him to die with Marters.

When in doubt, an eighteen-year-old boy has only one course of action left to him. Think with his dick.

He got up, took a deep breath, and took off his trousers. He’d seen her naked after all, a lot. It only seemed fair. And with another deep breath, he walked down to the shore. Alandrial giggled, but he could see she was fidgeting. Maybe even shaking a little. Good, at least he wasn’t the only nervous one.

“Sit here please?” she said, and she patted the water next to her where it was a foot and a half deep.

He nodded, hands restless at his side. First time naked in front of a woman other than his mother. Don’t think about your mother! Trembling, he sat down on his butt in the warm Caribbean sea, legs apart, and put his hands in the sand.

Alandrial, if she was nervous, didn’t show it nearly as much. She was smiling at him, blushing too in the moonlight, and she cozied up closer to him.

“My friends say a lot of humans are really prudish.”

“I… I’m not, it’s just—”

“Oh! It has hair.” She slipped under one of his arms, pressed her breasts to his chest while she snuggled into his side, and ran her fingers through his pubic hair. He froze under her touch. The water softened his hair, and she combed it while looking down through the moonlit surface.

“We uh… we’re kind of hairy, humans. Guys more so. You’re… smooth.”

Giggling, butterfly voice light as air, she rubbed her cheek against his collar bone. “Humans are strong though! Mermaids are fragile.”

God, her smile could melt ice. And it lit up when she slid her hand further down, and wrapped her fingers around the base of his length.

“Oh, it’s… hard,” she said, and she squeezed him. Her pinky finger was resting on his testicles though, and she squeezed them along with it.

“Ah, b-be careful with… the soft parts underneath. They’re easy to hurt. And… and the top is very sensitive.”

“Sorry!” Laughing, she splashed her tail fins against the water some more. “I’ve never touched a human before. Show me what feels good.”

“Show you? I, uh….” The sexual need was already enough to blur his mind. Now she wanted him to play with himself for her. He was going to cum in seconds if he wasn’t careful. “Well, um, it… it feels good, to squeeze and stroke this part.” Using his further hand, he gripped his cock at the base, and eased his hand up to the rim of his exposed glans, then back down to the balls. “And that’s… all you really need to do. Just stroke this part.”

She nodded, head still resting on his chest, and she put her fingers back around his shaft. It twitched in her hand, and he shivered as she started to stroke his length in slow, deep motions. If she went any faster, he’d have been in real trouble.

“You said the top part is sensitive? It’s dark, kind of purple-ish, and looks… swollen.”

“Y-yeah. It gets sensitive, I find. I uh… I mean—”

“Oh, like me, here.” She leaned a little harder against his chest, and sitting on the scales of her butt, she slid her other hand down her belly to her sex, and started to caress the tip of her clitoris in the same, slow, gentle motion she was handling him with. She mewled, and quivered against his chest and leg where her smooth fish scales were snuggled up to him.

“Yeah… like… that.” And just like that, he forgot she was touching him, eyes locked on the surface of the calm water where her hand was touching herself.

“My fingers are softer than yours,” she said, and she rubbed her cheek into his shoulder. “My friends and I like to use fingers on each other, and lips too.”

Oh good god.

“Do you… have sex with your friends… often?”

“All the time! A few of us will find a nice bed of sea grass, and we’ll lay around with each other, touching each other, everywhere.” She leaned in to his neck, and nudged her nose against his jawline. “I heard, long ago, mermaids would crawl up onto island beaches like this one, and wave over nearby men and women in… canoes, I think they were called. And they’d spend the day having sex. It’s a shame we don’t do that anymore.”

What sort of fantasy had he found himself in? Alandrial had seemed so cute when she found him — and still cute she was — but she was nothing like he thought. She had a larger appetite for sex than him, and he was a boy! It was like someone had seen the horrible life he’d been living, and randomly decided he deserved a slice of heaven. Karma for years hauling nets and peeling potatoes.

She pushed away from him, slid herself further back into the water, and planted her hands in the sand between his legs. Her blue hair stuck to her back and shoulders until the long, flowing waves of it spread out in the water around her like rivers.

“If it’s sensitive, then… I can do what I do with my friends. And one of them told me what to do too!”

“I—” He stopped himself when she went under the water.

The mermaid got down on her elbows between his legs, slid closer until her face was only a few inches from his pelvis, and she reached down to hold his shaft with one hand, the other on his leg. With the moonlight above, firelight behind him, it was a mixture of starlight along the shimmering water, her blue hair, and her green, sparkling eyes smiling up at him from beneath the surface. Then she leaned in, and kissed his member.

“Oh… god.” He fell back onto his hands, and started panting. Lips. There were lips on his cock, kissing the swollen head. Leaning back, he could see her face when she aimed his length toward her as she got comfortable. She was smiling at him.

Stroking him like he showed her, she continued to kiss his cock head. Warm, tingling waves of pleasure once again started to build along the underside of his shaft, underneath his testicles and between his legs, and he did everything in his power to suppress it. The longer he could last, the longer he could enjoy this heaven.

Her tongue was even more warm and wet, and she ran it up along his swollen head. After a while, she slid her kisses further down, and tested him with more licks; each earned quiet groans. He reached out, and slipped his fingers into her hair. It made her stop, but when she looked up at him, he managed a weak, shaky smile at her, and combed her hair with his fingers.

She smiled back, and put her lips on the swollen, ripe head of his shaft. Her gills, beautiful tints of blue running horizontal along her neck, opened and closed in tandem with the gentle tide, breathing the water. No reason to come up for her air, the mermaid turned her head into his combing fingers, leaned into his touch, and planted more kisses on his cock. Her lips found the side of his girth, and went down along its length to reach the base before she shifted his shaft to put it in front of her again, and kissed along the underside until her lips found the tip.

Then she slipped his cock into her mouth. Her lips found the edge around the base of his glans, and she looked up to him while her suckling worked along it. Her big, green eyes were asking him if he was enjoying it. His cock twitched in her mouth, fluids already pouring into his shaft, and he didn’t have to say a word. It all joined into a mixture of pleasure when she circled his swollen tip with her tongue, and caressed it with determined licks that made him shudder.

Thick, creamy cum gushed out of him. The sparks of pleasure made his legs flex around the mermaid, made his fingers dig into the sand, and his other hand’s fingers clutch Alandrial’s shoulders. Every time his pelvic floor flexed, more cum rose up through his length, and made his cock twitch in the beautiful creature’s mouth. Like lightning, her tongue and lips grew painful as his sensitivity jumped. But, smiling at him from underneath her waves of blue, she eased her suckling, kisses growing gentle and tongue caressing the tip of his cock with only the softest licks; each sent waves of bliss down his member.

A couple spurts of cum later, his thick fluid started to ease out of his pulsing length with slower, gentler waves. To his surprise, Alandrial started to squeeze the base of his shaft, and worked her hand upward in tight strokes. Her mouth never let go of his swollen glans, and she kept the ripe head of his cock in her mouth, resting on her tongue while her lips coddled it. She wasn’t letting a drop of him escape, to the point she was licking off each drop of his cum as it rose to the tip of him, and only sank her mouth deeper onto his length. For another whole minute, she massaged and milked the last of his liquids. Lips, tight around the edges of his glans, suckled and kissed, while her hand stroked him from balls to lips, and managed to pull from him another drop.

When no more came out, and his twitching muscles started to calm down, he let go of her shoulder and put his fingers into the sand behind him. His breath was a mess of pants, and his chest was rising and falling in exhausted fashion. He could still feel tingling waves on his cock’s head, and he shivered when Alandrial pulled her lips up its contours with tight suckling.

At last, she released him, put her hands on his knees, and poked the top of her head out of the water. With only her eyes above the surface, she grinned at him, and walked up his legs with her hands until they were on his hips.

“Good god,” he said.

She raised her head out of the water enough for her lips to break the surface. “Was that good?”

“Oh my god it was good.” He sat up straight and put his hands on his head. “So… just… wow. Your uh, your friend taught you that?”

“She did! I mean, we do similar stuff with each other, on each other’s breasts, and our softest parts. But something warm came out of you!” Like a happy kitten, she slid in closer and planted some kisses on his chest. “Mariala told me about cum, and stuff, but I didn’t expect it to be thick. And warm.”

“You swallowed it?”

“Of course. She told me the man she sneaks out to visit likes that.”

Oh sweet god. “I uh… that was really, very good, and really… very hot.” Yeap, died and went to heaven. No way any of this was happening to him unless he was in the afterlife. Or maybe it was an amazing dream, and he was going to kill whoever woke him up.

She giggled, and leaned up into him. “I like you! You’re sweet. My sisters, my friends, we can all be pretty mean to each other. Pick on each other, and tease each other.”

“Ah, well, that’s not good.” Nodding, he smiled at the young girl nuzzling into his chest. He was very conscious about his hands. What to do with his hands? Hug her? Touch her?

“Hey. My turn.” She grabbed his hands, and rolled over.

A moment later, he was on his knees, facing down toward the water. The sand held his hands, and the mermaid held his wrists beside her waist. She was under the water again, and was smiling up at him from beneath the surface. When her gills opened, the sand moved with the influx of water, and when the gills closed, her body raised up, floating up until her lips and nose poked up through the surface.

“Play with me! Have fun! Come on… please? You’re nice, and nothing like my friends thought a man would be. And… and you can do whatever you want to me.” The air left her lungs with a playful sigh, and she lowered back beneath a foot of water where her head settled on the glittering sand. Under the surface, she raised her hands up to meet his chest, and she stroked his muscles with teasing fingertips.

Even a shy guy like himself was just a guy, after all. Just a boy. A boy who was already hard again, and had a beautiful, naked girl at his knees, telling him to touch her.

He gulped. The sand, smooth under his skin, fell away as he lifted his hand. And when he placed it on her breasts, he groaned. Soft skin molded to his fingers, hard nipple pushed into his palm, and Alandrial giggled under his touch; he could feel her laughter, even if he couldn’t hear it. He shifted his weight onto both knees so he could kneel beside her properly, and while one hand rested against her breast, the other pressed to her flat stomach.

God, she was such a beautiful thing, the little mermaid. A tight, tiny waist, a flat, smooth stomach, curvy but small hips, and her pert breasts felt like pillows in his hand. He massaged it, buried it whole in his grip, and squeezed it. The first breast to ever fill his palm. Her petite pink nipples stood up, and when he pinched one between finger and thumb, Alandrial shivered in his grip.

He looked down her smooth little body to the equally petite, pink lips of her sex. Like it had a mind of its own, his other hand drifted down along her belly, across the smooth, bare skin of her pelvis, and stopped along the top of her budding clitoris. With a gulp, he placed the tips of two fingers on it, and started to—

“She likes it soft on her clit, but rough on her insides.”

A voice behind him! He rolled forward, but water smacked him in the face and he fell through it onto Alandrial. Sand and fish scales greeted him, along with a mess of limbs, some his own and at least one Alandrial’s, while he tried to get back above the water. A moment later, his hands and knees managed to get their bearings in the sand, and he jumped up, coughing and sputtering. Salt water splashed everywhere, and he had to spend a second wiping his bangs out of his eyes.

There was another mermaid. She was laying down on the beach, on her hip and propped up on one arm. Like an imp, she wiggled her fingers at him, and smiled.

“Mariala! What are you—”

“Your mom told us to find you. And we heard your typical little clicks. I had no idea you’d found a man to play with!”

Clicks? Eric blinked, wiped his eyes again, and blinked a few more times. Alandrial joined Mariala further up on the shore, and stuck her tongue out at her friend.

“I did! Eric survived a Jormun attack, and I rescued him. Took him here.” The smaller mermaid giggled, and motioned for Eric to come near. “He’s so sweet! And he’s pretty.”

“He is pretty, I’ll give him that.”

Mariala was perhaps Alandrial’s total opposite, physically. Her hair and fish scales were bright red, like hot embers, and her fin ears and tail fins were warm pink. Blue eyes gazed at him with an air of confidence that made Eric squirm. She didn’t look nearly as cute or fun as Alandrial, but the taller mermaid’s curvy figure and heavy, hanging breasts painted the picture of a mature seductress. The grin she carried sealed the image.

She thought he was pretty. He smiled, and blushed… and realized he was still naked. But with the two of them just as naked, he forced himself to keep his hands at his side.

“He is! He’s young, but he’s got muscles, and—”

Mariala rolled her eyes, laughed, and slid along the sand to press her side against her smaller, blue friend’s body.

“James isn’t pretty. He’s handsome though, bigger than your Eric.”

Your Eric. Again he smiled, but tried to hide it with a wipe of his wrist across his mouth.

“Are you going to tell Mom?” Alandrial said.

“Ha, you kidding me? She still doesn’t know about James. And I’m not going to ruin this for you. Neither will you, right Cloey?”

“Cloey’s here too!?”

Cloey? Eric turned around and scanned the cove. By the rocks in the center of the deeper water, almost invisible in the moonlight, a sparkle of green ran along its edge and melded with the surface of the sea.

Mariala slapped her tail fins against the water. “Come here Cloey, you big baby.”

“I-I’m not a baby! You’re… the baby.”

Cloey pushed away from the cove rock, and swam out to join them. The newcomer, a small mermaid like Alandrial, came up onto the sand with Mariala, and kept the red mermaid between her and Eric. Green hair, green scales, and purple eyes. Purple! The trio of mermaids were such wonderful, shining arrays of color, it was like a rainbow, all with long hair and sparkling scales.

“Your mom is way too old fashioned and naive, Alandrial, trusting me. It’s a wonder she ever found a man to have you!” Rolling her eyes, Mariala pointed at Eric, and then pointed at the water next to Alandrial. “You! Get back here. I didn’t offer you advice so you could just stand there and gawk. I offered advice cause it’s clear you’re a virgin and you could use a few tips.”

Ouch. He’d known rabbits he’d clubbed to death, skinned, and eaten that he’d rather be than himself right then.

“That’s not nice! Eric was doing fine, and I was loving every moment of it. Come here Eric, we’re finishing what we started.” Alandrial raised both her hands, pointed them at him, and maybe grabby fingers at the air.

Well, at least he had one player on his team in this sudden group affair. He did his best to stand proud and tall, but he wasn’t very tall, and he wasn’t proud after the dig Mariala had just thrown his way. But Alandrial’s words soothed his ego, and he sat down in the water beside her, with the blue mermaid between him and Mariala.

“I, uh… we’re finishing?”

“Of course. Can they watch? Only if it’s ok with you though.”

Oh sweet merciful god in heaven. After staring at Alandrial for a few silent moments with his jaw hanging open, not sure if she was teasing him or not, he managed a slow nod. Alandrial giggled at him, Mariala laughed, and Cloey frowned.

“You two are the most horny things in the sea!” the green mermaid said. “I’ve met dolphins less horny!”

The red one rolled her eyes again. “Yeah well, you say that, but who came fives times last night?”

Gasps and giggles abound. Despite how young Cloey and Alandrial looked, Eric was feeling younger and younger by the minute, until he felt like a boy among women. The thought had his member standing at attention, and he did his best to hide it with a bent knee.

“That’s different. That’s with friends, not a stranger.”

“Well, Alandrial says this Eric human is sweet. I believe her. I say, we all get to know each other,” Mariala said.

Eric checked his pulse.

“No! He’s mine!” Alandrial threw herself at Eric, and the boy raised his arms as best he could to catch her. She spun around on his body, laid her back against his chest, and grabbed his hands. Entwining their fingers with her hands atop his, she brought his palm to her breasts, and kept them there.

“Aw, come on.” Mariala pulled herself across the sand, and slid in next to the two of them. “James and I aren’t a couple, we just like to have fun. And I’ve learned a lot about a man’s body from him. I can show you.” Eric tried to ignore the curvaceous mermaid, but the redhead grinned at him, then Alandrial, before she leaned in and pressed her breasts into the two of them.

“Get your big boobs off of my man! He’s—”

The words stopped when Mariala leaned further down to Alandrial, and covered her lips with hers. Eric expected the blue mermaid in his lap to push her friend away, but within moments, Alandrial’s fingers on his hand loosened like weakened string, until they fell away.

When they did, Mariala took one of Eric’s hands, and guided them down Alandrial’s body. He was too stunned to do anything, mesmerized by the sight of the two girls kissing.

“You don’t mind if I give you some pointers, do you Mr. Eric?” She batted her long eyelashes at him, grinned like the devil, and winked.

“Uh, if Alandrial doesn’t mind.”

“I don’t mind, I guess.” The blue mermaid relaxed into his chest, and rested her hands on his wrists. “But don’t steal my man! Mine.”

Rolling her eyes, Mariala pressed her shoulder into his, and made sure to rub her chest up and down a couple inches. Probably thinking she was a busty, beautiful woman who could have any man. Well, she was right, but Eric wasn’t going to admit he was such a weak fool. Besides, he really liked the girl in his arms.

He had a girl in his arms. The thought made him smile. One of his hands was still on her breast, and he offered the soft skin a gentle squeeze. Alandrial mewled, leaned back to nudge her hair into his neck, and let out a long, pleasant sigh. His touch was making her sigh! One of those womanly, delightful sighs that set his blood boiling and had his cock hard and poking up against the small of her back. He caressed her breast some more, and earned similar, enticing sounds from the small girl. God, how could such a simple sound be so amazing?

Her quiet moans turned into pants and squeaks when Mariala placed the finger of Eric’s other hand on the blue mermaid’s clitoris, and guided him with slow strokes. The flesh was so soft.

“Every woman is different,” Mariala said. “Alandrial, she likes it when you start with her clit to warm her up, but doesn’t like to finish there.”

“Think you know eeeeverything,” Alandrial said. But despite her words, she was wiggling against Eric, and her grip on his wrists tightened in rhythm with his caresses.

Cloey popped up behind her redhead friend again, and she peeked over her shoulder to watch. Shy, skittish, Cloey frowned at Eric when he looked to her, but then she hid behind Mariala’s shoulder, and blinked her purple eyes at him. They drifted over him, up and down his body, or at least what little she could see of it with Mariala pressed against him and Alandrial laying on top of him.

Three pairs of eyes, three pairs of breasts, three pairs of everything! Part of him felt guilty for indulging his sexual urges, glancing at all three girls and staring at their bodies, but every time Alandrial moaned and nuzzled into him, guilt washed away in the gentle tide, replaced with pure awe.

Mariala slid his hand further down, took the tips of his middle and ring finger, and pushed them down into the sex of the blue mermaid in his lap.

“Curl your fingers toward her belly. Find that rough spot, press up against it.”

Sexual education from a mermaid. But, he supposed it was far better than the alternative, not knowing what he was doing and being an utter disappointment.

Sliding his two fingers into Alandrial’s tight, gripping insides earned moans from the trembling mermaid, and some groans from him too. So tight, so very tight. He looked down the valley of her naked body, to her smooth mons, and her spread-open lips that revealed the tiniest slivers of pink flesh between softs mounds of alabastar skin, before everything turned into shining blue scales below. Inside the mewling mermaid, it was all warm, human flesh though, squeezing and milking at his fingers, and gripping his knuckles.

“Oh… god,” he said.

Mariala smiled at him, but said nothing. Instead, she helped push his fingers deeper into Alandrial, and once he was in to the last knuckle, she let go, and rested her hand along her friend’s blue scales. Eric did as she’d ordered, and curled his fingers up toward Alandrial’s belly. The reaction was immediate, and the blue mermaid started to squirm and mewl all the more. Her voice grew loud, heightened into squeaks, and her grip on Eric’s wrists tightened.

“There. More.” She pressed her shoulders into his chest, wriggled, pushed her hips up to join his hand. She was wet. Not with the sea water though, something warm and slick and wet coated her pussy and lips. It made moving his fingers into her easy, despite the vice grip her muscles had on him. He knew women could get wet, but this was different, this resisted the salt water of the cove.

Hearing her beg was the most arousing thing he’d ever heard. He started to press his fingers up toward her g-spot harder, and harder. Maybe he was getting too carried away, going too fast, but the noises Alandrial were making told him different. She met his fingers with her hips, pushed up to meet him, and held onto him tight with her hands.

He forgot about Mariala, and Cloey too. All he could think about was the wriggling little woman in his arms. She was moaning. God she was moaning, and groaning, and making all sorts of sounds he’d never expected to hear. And every time she made a sound, he pressed up on her insides a little more, a little further. Anything to make her make more of those sounds.

She clenched down, hard, hard enough he could barely move his fingers. Her moans turned into squeals, and her body started to vibrate. Her tail fins moved up and down in the water, pushing her against him, and her head leaned back until it was over his shoulder. She was cumming. The sound of her mewls, her panting and whines, were intoxicating. Before he knew what he was doing, he was fingering her again.

Mariala, still leaning against him, groaned too. Her hand slid up from his, up along Alandrial’s bare stomach, until it found one of the small woman’s breasts. Eric couldn’t help but see it all, with how he was looking over Alandrial’s shoulder over her body. It gave him an eyeful of feminine beauty and sexuality all on display as Mariala massaged and squeezed her friend’s body, while Eric fingered the blue mermaid harder. He thought he might hurt her, but even as his hand started to slap upward against Alandrial’s quivering insides, it only sparked more squeals from her.

After a minute of Alandrial’s mewling, Eric stopped. His arm was starting to burn with exhaustion.

“S… stop…,” she said.

He froze. “W-was that… did I—”

“Poor girl came her brains out.” Mariala patted his shoulder, reached down to his hand, and pushed down on his knuckles. “Do it again.”

He gulped. The little creature in his arms was shivering, panting. Her grip on his wrists was weak, and her blue tail was flowing with the gentle tide, relaxed and trembling.

“Need… break….”

“No you don’t.” The red mermaid squeezed Alandrial’s breast, and pinched her nipple with a finger and thumb. More squeals. Even Cloey chuckled.

He could understand what Alandrial meant by ‘mean’ friends. But, when he pressed his fingers up toward her belly, and felt her quivering insides clench on him, coat him in more of her fluids, he understood. To hear her and feel her cum was addicting. He felt bad for only a second before her cries washed away his guilt again, and he fingered her harder than before, hard enough that her body bounced against his in the water, and the sea churned bubbles around them.

He lasted another minute before he stopped. The poor woman was stuck between a whimper and a squeal, but her lungs weren’t working anymore. Panting and exhausted, Alandrial let go of his hands, and hers drifted off into the sand at her sides. Her head rolled into his neck, while the rest of her convulsed in waves of orgasm that made her shudder into his chest every few seconds.

“That was pretty rough,” Mariala said, and she ran her fingers through the bubbles he’d created. “Don’t think any of us have ever been that rough with her.”

“Sorry! Sorry, just, I—”

“Don’t be. Look at her. She’s swimming!”

Swimming? Mermaid expression? Alandrial was liable to float away if he let her go, let alone swim anywhere. Even her eyes were closed.

“Hey… are you going to… have sex with her?” Cloey said.

“God I want to. I really do. But I don’t want to get her pregnant, and—”

“Mermaids can only get pregnant for a couple weeks in the fall,” Mariala said with a shrug. “James says your women have this monthly thing? We don’t. It’s yearly.”

Oh. Maybe they were more like a fish than he thought? He wiped away the smile before they caught it.

“I want to see.” Cloey slipped off of Mariala, and swam around before laying down beside Eric on his other side. “Ali has seen, Mari has seen, but I’ve never seen!”

“Uh… o-ok. Yeah… yeah, I’ll have… sex with her. Just, um… what position?”

“Whatever you want,” Mariala said. She laughed, and danced her fingers on his shoulder. “It’s your right as the one who made her like this.”

They all took a moment to look at Alandrial. Instead of leaning against his chest, she’d collapsed against it. Her hands were no longer grabbing his wrists, but laying beside her hips on the sand. Her mouth was parted, her breasts rose and fell with panted breathing, and her eyes were half-closed in a daze.

“… whatever I want.” The fire in his veins and thighs was palpable. He wanted to fuck her. Hearing her cum, feeling her cum, seeing it all happen with her laying across him, it all culminated with his cock pressing against her back hard enough he felt like he’d burst any second.

“James likes lay on top of me, straddle me, gets on his knees. Aims down, kind of? Then he can pound into me as hard as he wants,” Mariala said. “You can lay her down here if you want to try that.”

He almost said ‘won’t she drown’ before he stopped himself. Chuckling, he put his hands on Alandrial’s shoulder and hip, and slid out from under her. He laid her down, and watched her face as she sank through the water. She was smiling at him, exhausted, but smiling, and she raised her hands to touch his chest while the sea surface pooled up over her neck, breasts, and finally her face. The shore held her like a bed of softness with how the sand shifted and pooled in the water, but stayed nestled underneath her. Blue hair joined it, and laced the sand like navy veins. Blue gills opened and breathed the water with the same panting her mouth had done moments before. And her green eyes, now lit directly by the moonlight, gazed up at him.

And he was mesmerized. He straddled her, body over her waist, and his knees in the sand by her ribs. He shifted down further, took his length into one hand, and started to align himself with her. The softness of her pussy’s lips on his glans sent more, powerful sparks of tingling bliss down into his length. He had to be careful if he wanted this to last.

Cloey slipped under the water, put her head near Alandrial’s shoulder, and watched, wide-eyed, while touching herself. Mariala did the same. So many eyes, looking at him, staring at his cock and what he was about to do.

He pushed his length’s tip against her folds, her tight, clenching muscles squeezing in spurts and milking at his swollen cock head. Soft, tight, the feel of her muscles massaging his glans knocked the air out of him.

Once he was a couple inches into her clenching walls, he let go of his member. Smiling down at the girl in the water, he reached for her hands, and took them into his before pinning them to the sand. Palm to palm, fingers entwined, he gazed down at the beautiful creature through the calm, crystal clear water of the cove shore. The water was less than a foot deep where he was, he had the depth and room to slide his knees back, and lay down on top of her with weight on his knees, and then his elbows.

Alandrial was stuck between smiles and exhaustion. Fingers squeezed tighter, her pussy clenched around him, and between the quivering spasms of her insides, she pushed her hips forward up to meet him, and devoured him to the hilt.

His eyes closed while he moaned. He pushed his hips down, pinned Alandrial’s body to the sand, and held himself balls deep inside her. She trembled underneath him, he could feel it through her body, her walls, and her grip on his digits. The two mermaids rose above the water, propped on an elbow, both with a hand touching their own bodies.

“That is… so that’s what it looks like.” Marialia slipped deeper into the water before swimming back up onto the shore and behind Cloey. “I can never see when James does it with me. Can’t see… what it’s like, two bodies just… one in the other like that.”

Cloey managed a tiny groan, but said nothing. Eric could see Mariala had slipped a hand over her friend’s hips, and was stroking Cloey’s folds under the water. But both their eyes were on him, and Alandrial.

His thrusts were as slow as he could make them. He had to go slow to make it last. When he pulled out, her warm insides clenched to him so tight he could see the shape of her change, and change again when he pushed back into her shivering muscles and sank himself to the hilt.

Cloey’s whimpers were getting higher pitched. They were doing more things to each other, but Eric’s gaze had become trapped by Alandrial. She was gazing up at him, big green eyes wide and mouth parted. It wasn’t him thrusting into her anymore, it was them thrusting into each other. She wanted him to go faster.

He managed to break her magic gaze to see what the other two were doing, if only for a second. They had both slipped underneath the surface of the water, but they were feeling each other, kissing and rubbing and fingering. Alandrial pushed her hips against him, hard, and frowned at him. But when he looked back to her, she rolled her eyes, grinned, and mouthed ‘faster.’

Already teetering on the edge, warmth dancing up and down the underside of his length and down into his testicles, he gave in. He drove his hips down, and grunted. Alandrial trembled beneath him, eyes rolling up and her fingers squeezing, but for the moment, all he could focus on was her insides. Buried balls deep, her tight, convulsing muscles were heaven, and he had to have more. He drove his hips down again, and again, pounded down into the little woman between his knees and pinned under his hands.

Alandrial squirmed, wriggled, and bounced against the soft sand between each thrust. Her mouth opened, and her eyes disappeared as their lids closed. She was cumming, he could feel it in the spasms of her pussy, how the muscles almost vibrated with their convulsions and vice grip. If not for the slick lubricant her muscles and lips were coated with, it’d have been too hard to penetrate her; damn she was tight. And as she came on his cock, more of her fluids coated him.

He worked up to a frenzy of hip thrusts that blurred together, until he could feel the telltale signs of his fluids building. Sparks of pleasure rose from underneath his testicles, made his muscles clench taught as the fluid built. He pumped his hips down harder as the pressure rose, as the waves of pleasure pulsing down from his swollen glans increased. The second orgasm took a minute longer to build than the first, and the poor mermaid beneath him writhed all the more as he built up the pressure at the base of his cock.

Until at last he let it go. His thrusts came to a stop, and instead turned into weak little shivers as the waves of hot cum poured up his shaft. Each time his inner muscles clenched, a spurt of his seed flooded the small woman’s insides, coated his cock, and sent powerful sparks of bliss into his pelvis. He had to hold still, each gush of cum made him so sensitive, moving was almost painful; and Alandrial’s quivering muscles only heightened it. She continued to shudder underneath him, grip on his fingers now weak and limp, and her body drifted into relaxation against the sand while he came inside her.

After a minute of enjoying the milking clenches of her walls, he eased his softening length out of her. Milky white leaked from her tiny lips, and washed away with the sea. He’d done that to her, filled her up, the first time he’d ever done that to a woman. A mermaid too.

And it’d been amazing.

He sat down beside her, butt to the sand, one hand still in her grip. She squeezed his fingers again, and pulled herself to sit up as well.

“I’m shaking,” she said, and she pointed at her tail fins with her free hand.

“Sorry! Sorry, I got pretty rough there, and—”

“No, it was great! I’m just… wow… you were so timid before.” She hooked her arm underneath his, and rested her cheek on his shoulder. “You were inside me.”

“I… I was.” Good god he couldn’t wait to be again.

“Did I feel good?”

He turned and looked down at the blue nest of long hair against his shoulder. “You have no idea.”

She giggled. Such a wonderful sound!

“Cloey and Mariala seem to be having fun.” Alandrial gestured to the two mermaids, who’d drifted a little ways down in the cove. It was hard to see them in the darkened water, and only moonlight on their colorful scales gave them away.

“They really liked seeing you being… opened up, by me,” he said, and he could definitely understand why.

More giggles. She hugged his arm tighter, and gave his shoulder a kiss. “I did too.”

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Putting on his trousers seemed pointless, but he did it anyway. Habits die hard, he supposed. Dressing while three girls watched was erotic in a way he had never anticipated, and they giggled at him as he did.

“I’m tired,” Alandrial said. The blue mermaid had crawled further up the beach again, and had laid out on her back where the shore and water met.

“We’ve been up all night.” Cloey pulled herself up the sand, and laid down beside her friend. Mariala did the same.

“Do mermaids sleep at night?” Eric said. Back at the fire, he got down on his knees and breathed air onto the embers. The sun would be up in a couple hours, but he could sleep the morning away if he wanted to. Not like his parents were on the island with him to yell at him.

“We do,” Mariala said. She was on her elbows in the sand, and whenever Eric glanced her way, she made sure her large breasts were squished together and on display. A seductress, the red mermaid.

Alandrial slapped her tail against the shore. “Mom is going to be so mad! But, it was worth it.”

“When… when’s Eric going back?” Cloey said.

“Well, I’m stuck here until a nearby ship decides to investigate my signals. So, weeks probably? Months?”

Cloey frowned. “We could risk telling some humans?”

“No no, don’t do that. Alandrial said it’s forbidden. And besides, I know humans are afraid of mermaids. Don’t risk it.” He blew a few more breaths onto the fire, and with time, the embers awoke. Glowing reds and oranges danced over the sticks and ash, and once he threw in a few more sticks, the fire grew until it lit up the cove again. “I showed Alandrial, but did you two want to see fire up close?”

Mariala and Cloey both shrugged. “No thanks, I’m good.”

He quirked a brow. They didn’t want to see the fire?

“Hey Alandrial, I’m going to head back. I’ll tell your mom we found you but you wanted to be left alone.”

“Thanks.”

“I’ll go too. Bye… Eric.” Cloey gave Eric something between a frown and a smile, before disappearing into the sea with Mariala behind her.

And then they were gone. A couple seconds was all it took for the two other mermaids to vanish into the moonlit sea, leaving him with Alandrial. She rolled onto her elbows, and waved one of her hands at him with curling fingers before setting her chin on her upturned palms.

“I really enjoyed that,” she said. “I want to go again!”

“N-now?”

“No, but later. Maybe tomorrow. I’ll bring more friends! I’ve heard that humans — men in particular — like having multiple women? I kinda wanna see that.”

He didn’t know where she was hearing such things! It was true, but still.

Shrugging, he walked down to the shore, and sat down beside her. “I mean, you can, but… well, honestly, I….”

“What?”

“I… like you. Like… like you.” He gestured to her with his hands. It was wholly inadequate. He really had no idea how to flirt, especially after having sex. Both were new! What was he supposed to do? “Your friends are nice, and beautiful, but you’re….” You’re the one who was curious enough to check out a ship wreckage. You’re the one that wanted to see the fire.

She propped herself up on her palms, tilted her head to the side, and blushed so much her alabaster skin turned red from head to… fin.

“But we only just met.”

“Yeah, well, you’re the funnest girl I’ve ever talked to. You’re beautiful too, and you… you… you’re curious about stuff, and—”

Hands grabbed his shoulder, pushed him down onto his side, and rolled him over onto his back. Before he could say anything, Alandrial was on top of him, breasts to his chest, and lips on his. Fingers entwined with his, pinned his hands to the sand, and her lips moved down to his chin to give him a kiss before she put her cheek on his chest and left it there.

“I’m going to miss you when you’re rescued,” she said.

“Miss me?”

“Yeah. You’re the first man I’ve talked to, and… I never thought it’d go this well.”

He tightened his grip on her fingers. “I want to you see even after I get rescued!”

“What? But… it’ll be dangerous! It’s forbidden, and you said men don’t trust mermaids.”

“How does Mariala do it?”

“She swims to… Cuba, I think it’s called? She says it takes a few days, but there are currents to make it an easy swim. Mermaids like to explore, and she goes out for a long time!”

The constriction on his heart released. Thank god.

“Then… I hope to you see there some day? Maybe… regularly?”

Alandrial squealed and hugged him. “You live there?”

“I do! We were making a delivery to Haiti when all this mess happened. A short trip. So… I want to see you again. I’ll sneak out too! And we can be silly teenagers together.”

“Teenager?”

“A young adult. Someone thirteen to nineteen years old.”

She blinked at him, let go of one of his hands, and ran her finger down his chest. “But I’m forty-one.”

Oh good god.

“Mermaids live a long time,” she said, and she kissed his neck. “And we’re lonely. So, um… I uh, I want to see you again too! And I’ll come visit all the time while you’re here, and I’ll figure out a way to visit when you’re back home. But, in the mean time… can I bring my friends again? Other than Mariala, most never get to see men.”

“Sure! I mean, it’s you I want to see, but I’m not going to lie, you were right. Men do love women.”

Her giggles were like candy. “So do mermaids.”

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The next day was a strange blur of amazing and horrible. He only managed a few hours of sleep, caught between ecstatic about his new girlfriend, and unable to sleep with the sun on the horizon. He found some more ways to collect water, some fruits, and some hard branches he could use to make traps. Catching fish was a lost cause, but Alandrial could help him with that when she returned.

His shelter was growing! Weaving sticks, branches, and vines together allowed him to create a better shelter. A stack of rocks behind his new camp blocked off the area behind him and turned the whole cove into a closed-off area, unless one was willing to swim. All in all, it was turning into a comfy home away from home.

“Eric!”

And just like that, his energy returned. He walked down from his camp to the shore, and waved to the blue hair poking up from the sea. Alandrial had the biggest grin on her face, like a cat who’d gotten away with the fish.

A moment later, green hair poked up too. Then red. Then more green. Then more blue. And red, orange, violet, teal, aqua, and colors he did not know the names for. They moved in like a rainbow tide, waving and splashing, giggling and laughing, and smiling.

 He gulped.