

## **A Silkie Story.**

I sat in the standard maroon guesthouse chair and watched from our perfectly positioned viewing window waves roll, skip and dance in and out while the moon and darkness come together to create a silvery scene. An illusion of serenity. The call of the Ocean had been growing for several months now. Its swish and hum music vibrating in every part of me, my heart beating and my blood flowing with the same rhythm.

On the circular breakfast table I have laid out two grayish pelts, one almost black, the other lighter, both dappled here and there. One soft yet strong, one wearing thin with scars and tears. I shall have to make some repairs soon. I can recall my mother sitting with needle and thread on moonlit nights like this. Her nimble fingers working from memory, her mind diving in to the frothy ocean.

In the double bed behind me lightly snoring lays my light and my joy. My son.

I was completely unprepared for the love this little person awoke in me when he was born. It is he who kept me tethered to this unnatural place. He who kept me coming back. His father was a chance meeting, an extraordinary peaceful and loving man in a place of chaos. I had made my decision to choose the sea having seen the conflicted life of my mother and the damaged one of my grandmother. And the longing each woman bore. The choices they made and the consequences of those choices

Ripples can create shockwaves...

We made each other's acquaintance by the water's edge on New Year's Eve. My mother long gone and my grandmother's body recently trapped under the earth, her spirit clinging on and all around me lamenting her choices. I had the skin hung on the crook of my arm. I had removed my shoes and left them sinking into the sand. The beach stretched on in a straight line in either direction. Then suddenly I heard a melodious, deeply resonating voice. "Penny for them... Is it about the sea, is it?"

He had dark hair and dancing deep grey eyes like the sea after being released from a storm. "It's lovely here, isn't it lovely? The sea's a bit choppy, mind I wouldn't recommend a swim. But it's better than the owl party, people are getting mouldy now, you'd think they'd know when to call it quits. "

"They're only human." I whisper. We walked together in companionable silence and it filled each of us up so neither wanted to part from the other's company. The beach stretched on. Finally, after clearing my throat, I etched out the words as though speech were foreign to my tongue.

"It is too open, I need some shelter, do you know of any where?"

He nodded only, and quickening his steps, he pulled me along. We reached the end of the

beach, or so I thought. Then it was his turn to speak. His words dripped easy as honey from a spoon “Just over these black rocks hidden at the bottom of the cliff face is a cave. It fills with water at high tide. It’s probably just ankle deep for now, but it will be filling up.” ... “It’s perfect” I stumbled over the syllables, the salt of the sea catching at the back of my throat. As I began to climb over the rocks, my skin slid from my arm. Down into a damp greenish crack. I was not quick enough. He picked it up. I'd been caught surely. But he handed it back to me lightly folded as though it was his best shirt. “You don't want to lose this now, would you...? “

“No. And thank you”

“My pleasure, but I can ask you one favour. Can I see you again?” I could not refuse his request. “Here tomorrow, when the sun goes down. Here by these rocks.” That's how we began. And it's why I kept coming back.... I told him once there will come a day when the sea will have me completely. But he could not be deterred. I asked would he not prefer a less wild n wet girl, a proper land girl who wore stockings and shoes and could go drinking a dancing. He had an uncomplicated easy manner that made me feel safe, compared to the sea in which safety was never a guarantee. I would come and go and sometimes I was convinced I could have it all. But when I was on land, I would yearn for the sea. When I was in the sea, I would forget, yet I would always come back to him. It was never the land life, it was always just him. Now here I am, and the choice I make will create ripples of heartbreak for all. But my survival is at stake. Any longer on land, living a land life even for love, it is killing me and I am dying inside. Does this make me selfish, a dreadful mother, and a horrible lover....?

Before my son drifted off to sleep, I relayed his favourite story, from when he was very little, the story of the silkie. With each telling I added more detail; tomorrow I will tell him that it is not a story that it is our family history. Time drip drip drips and I cannot sleep. Andy mummurs in his sleep, he is dreaming about swimming, he only ever dreams of swimming. He was born on the island among the colony, it was spring, and I let him be, right through the summer. He was a fat pup and inquisitive, but winter waters are unforgiving and unsafe. So I brought him to his father, to his house, on his land and to his people, it was never my intention to stay, but how could I not, for love, for love of them both.

(P.H, 2022)