

The Road to Change, Part 12: Siren Song (Mermaids TFTG)

By FoxFaceStories

A Commission for Al

Melvin is a noble-born magic caster, stuffy and serious. Allison is a vibrant and confident fighter, charged with his protection. Despite their contrasting personalities, the two must set forth together on a grand mission when a foul demon lord rises and unleashes transformative domination magic across the land. As the two adventure and deal with their own series of bodily transformations, they are forced to grapple with their own growing feelings for one another.

Chapter 12: Siren Song

“Taiva,” Mel said. “The place we’ll learn about Primal Magic.”

He stared out across the Joining Sea that divided Yolep’s jungle terrain to Taiva’s eastern lands. Technically a path lay much further north along the Mountains of the Spine that connected them, but it would add weeks to their journey. Far better to cross on a ship than take on foot.

“This is where we need to go next,” Melvin said. “Don’t you agree, Aly?”

Aly was looking at Melvin, a smile on her pretty features. She realised too late that he was talking to her.

“What? Um, yes. Of course I will.”

Melvin frowned in annoyance. “I know the subject of magic isn’t your greatest area of expertise, but I would expect you to at least *know* why it’s so important.”

She blushed, pushing a few strands of her golden hair behind her ear. “Sorry, Mel. I was . . . thinking about other things.”

“Like what?”

She panicked, trying to think of something - *anything* - other than the truth that she was just bursting to tell her lord that she was *in love with him*, a fact that burned in her heart these past few days and was throwing her right off her martial focus. Thankfully, she managed to think of a quite pertinent point.

“What about your sister, Tiffany? Should we not be following her trail, trying to seek it out again?”

Melvin stood still, and she could see the emotion behind his eyes, kept in only by his nobleman’s stiff upper lip. “We followed the trail as far as we could - as far as you in all your skills could, Aly. And we could find no more than what the locals told us and the wreckage of

her caravan. We were simply too late; the weather had eroded the rest away. I haven't given up on my sister, but we can't go in circles looking for her either. We simply have to trust the Gods and the fates on this one. We must cross the Joining Sea and reach Taiva. Aenir lies that way besides, and the Demon Lord with it. It won't be long before his armies begin to spread out from his citadel as he amasses more power."

Allison nodded, understanding. She looked up the length of the beach, all the way to the docks of the halfling town of Reflection Cove. A ship was there, a trading vessel most likely, and others were coming in.

"I'll organise passage, Mel," she said, resisting the urge to hold this sweet man for the fears he carried about his sister. "And supplies. You just keep reading up on Primal Magic."

Mel nodded, thankful. "Perhaps that would be best," he said, and he let Allison lead him over to the town. It was difficult not to stare at the way she walked, soaking in the distraction of her lovely form in her new knight's regalia. She looked so damn . . . *regal*. Royal. *Noble*, in every sense of the word.

But she was not of his station, even if she could now be granted some lands.

"We just can't be together," he whispered to the wind as he kept his distance.

It ate away at him.

The ship set sail, and they were upon the water. The Joining Sea would only take two days to traverse, but the waters appeared calm and beautiful. Almost . . . romantic, even, much to Allison's wariness. The early afternoon's sun's rays fell upon the water, making it dance as if it were an ocean of light instead. It didn't help that a couple of halfling crewmen were clearly in a relationship, the pair sighing softly in one another's arms as they beheld this magnificent sight.

"A wonderful sight, isn't it?" Melvin asked.

Allison nearly replied 'Yes, you are,' before catching herself. Her mind was all over the place because of her feelings for Melvin. She loved him. She was certain of it now. She loved his handsome features, his bright green eyes, his damned annoying cynical manner, his ridiculous pomposity that flared at the worst of times, his neat-freak tendencies and completely flustered look when he had to do something distinctly un-noble. Even these frustrations were now charming qualities to her, and even worse were his other features: his kind heart, his endless determination, his honourable soul and endless care for her. His knowledge, his passion, his desire to always learn more. It was like a bucket had been

placed on her head all her life and only just now been removed so she could finally see him. Ironical, given the incident from their childhood.

"Allison? Aly? Don't tell me that becoming a Lady is still getting to your head? I thought you'd be - well, not *over* it - but at least taking the responsibility more seriously."

Allison blinked. "I'm sorry, my Lord. Mel. I'm just thinking. About, uh, *Taiva*. How we'll learn Primal Magic when we get there."

"We'll figure it out," he said, a smile creeping across his features. "We always do."

She found herself smiling too. It was like her optimism had infected him, and now it was returning in a feedback loop of hope.

"I believe we will," she said, though she hoped *she* could figure out these feelings.

Melvin put a hand on her shoulder and then returned down to his cabin. It was just a moment of camaraderie, but it was . . . difficult, being out in such a beautiful, almost *romantic* scene with Allison. He kept flashing back to that kiss, and how he had failed to at least indulge, just a little, in it.

"Don't be stupid, Melvin," he muttered to himself. "Go and study. You've finally got some time to relax and think of things other than battle. Don't get stuck on . . . *her*."

It was night, and both Melvin and Allison slept in their respective cabins, which were adjacent to one another. Both dreamed of the ocean, and the light beneath it. Music began to stir within it, a siren song rising in a tone that was beautiful beyond words. It was a mournful dirge at first, and then it began to fill with hope, a yearning for companionship and family that was so very, very close. Both mage and warrior smiled in their dreams, listening to the woman's voice, and slowly they fell into a somnambulant haze.

Allison got up first, eyes still closed. She had always enjoyed music, the excitement of it, the dancing. But Melvin was not far behind either, drawn to the sweet song as if it were his protector herself singing it. Both were just in their sleeping shifts, but it did not matter. They left their cabins, Allison just ahead of her partner, and they rose up onto the deck of the vessel. The moon's rays fell upon them, but then a cloud mustered with supernatural speed to bring a deep darkness over the deck of the ship, all the better to prevent them from being noticed. There were only a few crew members on the deck now, and several were playing games, one steering the course of the vessel. The wind picked up, and that song rose, lulling them into a trance similar to the heroic pair.

It was enough for Allison and Melvin to work in unison, freeing up one of the rafts and lowering it down the side of the vessel with the pulleys, as if they had practised this motion many times. Aly dreamed that she was climbing down a great sea frond towards the sea's

bottom, moving ever closer to the singing woman who was bathed in a green glow. Melvin imagined a similar sight, scaling down a cliff-face towards this operatic beauty.

"Come to me, children," the words began to translate, though they did not lose their beauty. *"Come to me and know bliss."*

They released the raft, and together they rowed in perfect unison out to the waters, still caught in their dreams, still lured by this siren song.

"Melvin, noble proud, let me embrace you, my mage.

Allison, warrior true, it's time to let go of your rage.

The waters deep will call you true, to your final home.

Let go your burdens, your swords, your packs, yours tomes.

Atola's song welcomes you, to my domains everlasting,

And here you shall know such wealth, in which we shall all be basking . . . soon."

Both fluttered awake just for a moment, seeing one another. The ship was out of sight; they had travelled far.

"M-Mel, what's h-happening?"

"I don't kn-know, Aly. The song . . . it's in my m-mind."

But then it returned again.

"Don't be afraid my loves, there is nought to fear,

I have waited far too long, to call you home, my dears,

Atola was once a knight, who fought the Demon Lord,

But he failed to strike true, and was forced to leave his sword,

Now the Joining Sea is her domain, a glorious mermaid true,

Beautiful, glorious, enticing to all, with shimmering scales blue.

Wouldn't you like to know my bliss? To swim the ocean deep?

I wish to see my new daughters. It's time to take a leap . . . now."

The pair did so, removing their clothing together, unseeing one another as the singing took control yet again. The cool night air hit their bodies, but they did not shiver; the water seemed so warm and enticing.

"Do not hesitate my girls, I have waited so long.

To finally have daughters, to share my siren song."

It was too much. This was not Domination magic, or else Melvin could have resisted it. This was mermaid magic; the siren call that sailors warned about and he had not prepared to

resist against. The pair both stepped up to the opposite sides of the raft, eyes closed. The moon's rays fell upon them again, illuminating the beauty of their surroundings. But neither saw it. There was only the water, and the glowing figure deep within.

Allison and Melvin leapt, their movements perfectly timed, and they dove down into the warm embrace.

Melvin woke, as did Allison beside him. He was underwater, and there was a horrid panic in him as he realised he wasn't sure which way was up and which way was down. There had been a song . . . a beautiful calling that he could not resist, and now he was being drawn down by it to the ocean's depths. He looked to the side, and with crystal clarity saw Allison, her form as naked as his own, beautiful beyond imagining, but equally shocked.

*"Do not fear as your minds restore, I had to drive your sail,
But now you may fully transform, my loves, embrace your mermaid tails!"*

Something glowed in the deep as the song resounded, a kind of green-blue light that illuminated a figure within it, a woman with long hair with her legs joined together like that of a sea fey. Her voice was beautiful and maternal, and it was almost impossible to resist. Melvin found himself swimming down, as did Allison, even as his lungs began to strain.

But then the Domination magic hit, surging through his form and Allison's, the siren song making it all but impossible to place defences against. As the burning in his lungs - less so in Allison, who was a practiced swimmer - reached their zenith, there was suddenly a release: he could instantly breathe in the water as easily as any fish. Allison gasped as well.

"Mel!" she cried, and her voice carried across the water as if there were no water at all. "What are we doing?"

"I don't know!" he replied. "The song! I can't resist it!"

"Who is it?"

"Atola! She was once the great knight Atellius, who tried to defeat the Demon Lord before Praemis and Cawthor. He was legendary, but succumbed to the Demon Lord's trickery, and was turned into an immortal mermaid. That's the legend, but I had no idea it was real. *She* is real . . . and wondrous."

"Her voice is so beautiful," Allison replied. "I know I shouldn't want to . . . but I have to see her."

"Me too," he replied, knowing that same dread contradiction.

They both swam down further, and as they did, their bodies began to change. It was subtle at first; Melvin found his hair thickening and extending, wafting behind him in the

water, and Allison's haircut extended to the length it had once possessed and then some. Her face changed as well. She had always been beautiful, but now something about her became almost ethereally so in some undefinable way. The same was true of Melvin - he knew that Atola's song had spoken of a desire for 'daughters', and already the tell-tale signs of feminine change were coming upon him. Allison's lips were already fuller, her eyelashes longer, and the same occurred to him, complete with a restructuring of his jaw and cheeks and nose that left him looking like quite the enticing beauty. He didn't need to see it; as a nascent mermaid, he could simply *feel* his own beauty in some supernatural way.

But then the changes truly took off as Atola's song continued.

*"Lose your mortal forms now, embrace the beauty of the sea,
With perfect skin, full breasts, and gorgeous hair, you will rival me.
I've been alone for far too long, I wish to embrace my own,
Please grow your tails, I beg this of you, and I'll never be alone."*

Melvin sighed in quiet ecstasy as swimming became easier. This was because fins had grown from his forearms, emerald green in colour to match his eyes, and thin webbing between his fingers to aid with every stroke. His body thinned, waist pulling in, all the signs of womanising flowing through him. But by the Gods, he welcomed it if it meant becoming a siren like the figure drawing them down deep. To have such a song; that was magic beyond his kin.

"Ohhhh," Allison moaned, her body trembling. "I feel like I'm becoming perfect . . ."

Her waist thinned just a little, and her various battle scars and marks faded from existence. For a brief moment, she hesitated as her hard-earned muscle, lithe and practised, melted away, but then she remembered that mermaids are creatures of pure feminine grace; their strength is present but invisible, their beauty prime above all. She sighed as her bosom expanded subtly. Her own pair were bigger than she often let on, but she no longer cared for such shy matters. Her fins had become golden to match her hair, and soon the scales were spreading along her legs.

"A tail," she said. "I want to have a tail, Mel. It's wrong, but I want it!"

"I as well!" Melvin cried, voice becoming a gorgeous soprano tone. "Gods, I wish to sing like her, to be like her. We have to . . . fight it."

But neither were trying particularly hard. Their legs fused together slowly, an alien sensation if there ever was one, but there was a deeply sensual pleasure about it. Why would anyone want two useless legs in such a place? The ocean needed fins and tails to propel oneself through water, to dance among the reeds and reefs, to move with grace and elegance that no surface dweller could ever truly know. Melvin found himself smiling despite

himself as his ankles turned to the sides and were pressed thin, his toes extending out and joining into a wide and powerful fin. Allison experienced the same, and she looked over at Mel with shock. The new woman she knew was now a beautiful mermaid, his manhood gone, his breasts surprisingly full, easily equal to her own in size, and her own were quite impressive. His - *her* - hair flowed behind her, a gorgeous brunette shade, while her own was even longer. She felt like - like a princess of the sea.

"This is amazing," she said. "I can't fight such wonder."

"I'm struggling too," Melvin said, softly moaning as she cupped her breasts and began to use her tail. It was like she'd had it all her life, so easily did she swim down faster. "I need to see her, Aly. Just the once. Before we go back."

"Yes," she said, trance-like, convincing herself. "Just the . . . once."

It was the lie that seemed like truth. They moved their tails, the fins powerful and sleek, pushing against the water, their scales presenting no resistance. It was wondrous, to explore an entire realm that had been closed to them. They passed cliff-faces of multicoloured reefs, swam through schools of vibrant fish, passed sharks who swam with them briefly, as if entranced equally by their new beauty. Allison giggled and slid her fingers alongside them, while Melvin imagined finding some chalk on the ocean floor and some cave with an air bubble, that she might be able to draw these creatures.

But even those thoughts fled them, as the figure came into view.

*"Come my daughters, please embrace me,
I have waited for centuries long,
I will shower you with love, I promise,
Everlasting shall be our . . . song."*

It was a repeat of an earlier lyric, and clearly one dear to Atola, for her loving maternal voice took on a brief note of sorrow, as if she herself could barely believe they were coming to her. The glow faded slightly as they reached her, their speed slowing as they took in her aspect. Atola was not like the images from Melvin's tome: she did not have the great blonde hair of legend, but rather a gorgeous green-blue colouring that stood out from the ocean around her. Her scales were similarly coloured: a turquoise that seemed to shift slightly between different hues under the moon's rays. Her figure was resplendent and attractive, even more so than Melvin and Allison had just become. Her breasts were large yet pert upon her chest, and her hair was long, going down below her waist to coil around her tail. She had a maternal quality to her; a thicker waist than either new mermaid, and she appeared to be in her early-to-mid thirties or so, though in truth she was seemingly immortal after the Demon Lord had changed her. And her eyes . . . eyes like the ocean itself, glowing

slightly with all the colours of it, shifting like waves. She smiled as she took them in, her full lips parting to show her perfect teeth. For a moment, both new mermaids felt a sense of unease, precisely *because* there was no malice in the smile.

There was only love. Unbearable, impossible, hypnotic love. A mermaid could not cry below water, and yet the taste of salt filled the air ever so briefly, so great was Atola's clear relief.

"Finally," she said, her voice still carrying an undercurrent of music to it. "After so many years of solitary punishment. After so many years calling sailors to their doom, unable to find any who had the power to join me. After so many long nights imagining a family to call my own . . . finally, I have two daughters to call my own. My Melody. My Allison."

Her words were sweet as honey, so intoxicating to hear. Its maternity quality comforted as much as it praised, and both Allison and Melody found their tails swaying to the rhythm of it.

"You're - you're Atola," Melody whispered in her singsong siren voice. "Formerly Atellius. The Demon Lord cursed you."

Atola nodded. "Atellius, that name is so distant to me now. I was once a proud, bearded man. The very essence of manhood, two centuries past. But that was many lifetimes ago. Now I am the beautiful woman of the sea you witness before you, my children. I am a hunter of the ocean, a singer of the seas, a dweller of the deep, just as you shall be."

Allison smiled to hear this. "But why now?" she asked. "How have you been lonely so long . . . mother?"

Atola appeared as if she might have cried at these words, were she not surrounded by water already. "Mother . . . such a word that I have longed to hear. I was cursed by the Demon Lord to take this shape and tempt sailors to their doom, but now his succubus Narsa has blessed me with hope, that I may finally have daughters. The other mermaids are not sirens as I; their song does not draw death and drowning, nor are they cursed to be alone. But if I remade you into my children, I am to be freed of that loneliness, am I not? Just as I once had brothers-in-arms as a manly knight, and sons of battle too, I can now have sisters of the water, daughters of the blue. We will be together, eternal."

Melody smiled also. This woman's suffering was great; two centuries of loneliness, with a compulsion to sing her loneliness and draw in company, only to bring death? It was not fair! As much as her quest meant so much to her, was it not an injustice for this woman to be so solitary? Could they not be her daughters?

"Mother," she said, swimming forward, more practiced with her tail now, "you will never be lonely again. I promise."

“Agreed!” Allison said, shouting with exuberance, and even out-racing Melody to embrace her mother. Their nakedness did not matter, it was simply the way of the sirens, and so they all held one another, skin upon skin, embracing their new existences.

“Show us the ways of the ocean, mother,” Melody said.

“Yes!” Allison agreed. “We should know it all! I want to learn how to jump and dance over the surface waves!”

Atola chuckled; it was the soft, warm amusement of a mother with excited children.

“Follow me, daughters, and I will show you all.”

They did so eagerly, their tails powerful, their forms sleek and beautiful, their scales sparkling. They were mermaids now, and unless they could fight the magic upon them, they might well always be so.

Atola had clearly planned so very many sights, experiences, and challenges for this eventual moment. She had personally made a beautiful garden of orange and yellow kelp over the last hundred years, and maintained a splendid reef filled with life.

“There is Gnaius,” she said, referring to a particular octopus. “He is a kind soul, the most intelligent thing that I have been able to commune with since my curse.”

He came out to meet them, and Allison giggled as she played with the creature, while Melody took in the sight of the reef. Oh, if only she had some paper to sketch on! Such life the surface dwellers never knew existed!

But paper was wrong, wasn't it? There was no point in books beneath the sea, or study of that kind. Of course there wasn't, and yet . . . it seemed to chip at something deep within him.

They moved on, Allison waving goodbye to Gnaius joyfully. Atola showed them how to swim through the current channels, and how to recognise the sound of sharks and dolphins from afar. She brought them to the warm ‘springs’ deep below, where fissures in the ground showed bubbling magma that heated the water all around them, creating a most luxurious space that Atola had carved and worked upon for several decades. She darted around her daughters, fussing over their hair and detailing how to swim in such a way that it would not get in the way, and yet look inviting to any sailor.

Allison frowned at this. Her hair *was* lovely, but hadn't she cut it short for a reason? Atola spoke of luring men when needed to gain equipment, a compulsion she could never avoid and so tried to use sparingly as she could. She had a whole graveyard beneath the sea dedicated to the men she had drowned with her song, each marker giving honour to them.

But was this honourable? Allison had always considered herself brave and true, willing to face danger head on. Guile was important, of course, but she was a protector foremost, and this seemed to be almost like spying. Assassination. It rankled at her, and within the core of her enhanced breast there grew a kernel of doubt.

“Come, my daughters! Swim freely with me! I will show you such splendours!”

Melody followed Atola, heading away from the Joining Sea. Allison swam alongside her sister, but the two held hands as they did so. The touch . . . didn't feel sisterly. Moreover, Atola kept looking back at them, an almost desperate hope upon her face. She was beautiful, full-bosomed and with her incredibly long turquoise hair flowing around her figure almost magically. But there was definitely doubt on her features at times, as if she were terrified she might look back and find them gone.

But weren't they always going to be there for her?

Melody's mind raced. The water was getting colder. It meant little to a mermaid, who could deal with such chill without truly feeling it, but it signalled that they were getting deeper, further away from land.

“Allison, sister,” she said, though looking at the beautiful golden-haired mermaid to her left, calling her ‘sister’ seemed all wrong. “Are we not meant to be on another path?”

“Don't be silly, Mel!” she cried. “We're mermaids, we go as we please, though . . . it would be nicer to go to the coast. Around Taiva. Mother, could we go there?”

Atola paused her swimming, turning on the spot with pure grace and elegance, though her eyes were wide. “No, absolutely not! I mean . . . why would you want to go there, my daughter? There are wonders and secrets to show you! Behemoths of the deep that are the closest things to friends I had before you came along. Volcanos that erupt beneath the sea, and sparkling sandbanks of gemstones, beautiful for jewellery. I will make you some!”

But in her desperation, both Allison and Melody were feeling . . . odd. Hours had passed as mermaids, but little incongruities were adding up. Why was their mother desperate to get them away from the Joining Sea? Why was it just plain *strange* to think of each other as ‘sister’? Why was Melody finding herself looking at Allison's perfect breasts and slim stomach with unhealthy thoughts that bordered on lust. She wanted a book to distract herself, just as Allison needed to clear her head by trying out stonestance in a duelling ring. But how could she do that without legs?

“Daughters, let us go. We have such sweet songs to sing. I know! There is a rock jutting out from the surface nearby. We can join together, and I can show you my art. The curse is upon me, and I must lure at least one sailor, but with the three of us, we can ensure there is no suffering, only utmost bliss as the ocean takes its due.”

Reluctantly, they followed, rising up to the surface to find a large rock just as Atola had promised. With small effort, they hefted themselves upon it, and being mermaids, found

ways to easily display incredible beauty and pose themselves in enticing ways. Allison found it a bit odd to do so; it came less naturally to her in particular, but Melody found it almost *too* easy to exaggerate; as if she were recreating poses from books and from women she'd seen, not necessarily done herself.

"Come daughters, a ship soon passes," Atola said. She raised her hands above to the night sky, full of stars, and began to sing.

*"Join us, dearest sailor, join us right now,
Come to the waters, come rest your brow.
There is no pain here, no burden to bear,
Come see the splendour of the mermaid three's lair."*

They could feel it, the calling of the song. As one, Melody and Allison joined her, raising their sweet, melodic voices to form a chorus with their siren mother. The ship was small, barely a three-person trader, and so its course began to change, heading closer towards them. Closer towards another set of jagged rocks. Allison's conscious twigged at this: mother wanted them to follow along, but her voice became discordant. Was this the right thing to do?

*"I sense your pain, I sense your loss,
The trials of the surface you'll find are the cause.
But here there is beauty, here there is song,
A pretty mermaid shall do you no wrong."*

Melody fell out of tune along with Allison. The two shared a glance. No, they *were* doing wrong. They were being tasked to *kill* someone, a total innocent neither had ever met! And Atola: her eyes were glowing, no longer turquoise but instead a terrifying red, as if still dominated by the very Demon Lord that had changed her. She continued to sing, drawing the ship near.

"We can't do this, mother!" Allison cried.

"We must child, don't interrupt the song."

Melody looked to her false 'sister.' "Aly, something's wrong! The domination magic, it's on her as well as us! We have to fight it!"

"You can't!" Atola screeched. "Please, daughters, listen to your mother! The ship will get away - I - I must bring it down! There are three of us now, and three lives of theirs! This is what we must do! It is - it is what I have done for two hundred years!"

She moved to sing again, but Allison beat her to the punch, singing her own tune even more loudly, her youthful voice rising above her mother's.

*“Look but don’t touch, now, good sailor strangers,
For a mermaid’s song heralds great danger!”*

Melody realised what she was doing, and quickly joined in, their siren instincts matching up immediately.

*“Watch out for the rocks, you must overcome,
Or the siren song, will leave you undone!
Daughters of the waters, that which we are,
Beautiful, enticing, but you must star afar,
Mother was cursed, and her curse continues still,
She is not to blame for the Demon who gave her gills.”*

Atola screeched, shifting on the rock and quickly pulling them into the water. But they continued singing, even as the mother mermaid tried to silence them with her hands.

“Please, Allison! Melody! Don’t take this from me! Please, we must follow the curse! I cannot lose you! You will die, otherwise! This was the bargain - your lives are safe so long as the drownings continue!”

But Melody and Allison held hands. They knew who they were now. They were adventurers, heroes, champions of goodness. They *would* save those sailors. And more than that, they would save Atola too.

*“Atola, great siren, you have suffered such loss,
You have borne a burden with such a steep cost.
Forced to kill, to take life through your tune.
We promise you’ll be free of this curse very soon.
Atola, great siren, embrace us, you must!
We may not be your daughters, but you must place your trust!
All three may beat back, the foul curse unkind,
Embrace us, great siren, let us the ties that bind.”*

Their voices were in perfect harmony, pushing away the sailors and drawing in Atola. The maternal siren’s eyes widened, her face filled with pure hope. It was like witnessing the dawning sun after years of darkness, the expression of one ready to take a final, desperate risk. The mermaid embraced them, and they held one another, the trio producing one final

note without words, a harmonising tune so sweet that it erupted across the Joining Sea entirely, filling the air with splendorous wonder.

And in that moment, one of the Demon Lord's most personal curses *shattered*, tearing apart inside Atola and fleeing her form. She clearly felt the corruption go, for she cried out in release, like a prisoner whose chains had finally been removed after a centuries-long torment, which, in many ways, was exactly what had just happened.

"By the Gods," Atola exclaimed, her tears now properly mingling in the water, shining brightly by magic. "I'm free. You have set me free! Even after so much darkness? After so much pain?"

"It wasn't truly your fault," Melvin said, recovering her sense of self even as she remained a mermaid. "But you were trying your best to avoid the most terrible fates, and we have seen a beauty in your soul as well, Atola. If you are willing, you can redeem yourself."

Atola swallowed. "I will. I promise. But . . . would you stay as my daughters? I know I can finally meet other mermaids, but I have desired children for so long, and these past few hours . . ."

Allison embraced the woman. "I'm sorry, we have to get back to the surface. We have to be human again, Atola. We are not your daughters, but we can be *allies*."

Atola blinked away more of her crystalline tears. She looked as if she would try to embrace the pair and bring them down to the deepest part of the ocean in order to keep them, but some semblance of her original, honourable self managed to hold her back.

"Allies . . . it is not daughters. It is not family. But perhaps now . . . I can find a family of my own. A true family."

"Exactly!" Allison said. "You can-"

Atola held up a hand, glaring at a point behind the pair. Her expression turned to one of horror. "By the Gods, his curse, it is still present! It has taken its own form separate from me. You must get to the surface, NOW!"

She moved her hands in an elaborate fashion, and suddenly a surge of water thrust them upwards and away from her, as if they were riding a tidal wave *beneath* the surface. Atola became a single, sad figure once more. But she was soon eclipsed by a pulsing darkness lit by embers and sparks of hateful crimson red. It raced towards them, tendrils of evil writhing around their tails.

"What's it doing!?" Allison cried.

Melvin gasped. "It's undoing the transformation! Allison, faster!"

But their tails were disintegrating quickly, feet and ankles forming from the flattening tails, their legs beginning to separate. The surface seemed so far away, and the darkness was making it difficult to see. Melvin felt his magical ability to hold onto air begin to evaporate.

“Hold your breath!” Allison screamed, and he did so, though he knew he wouldn’t have nearly her stamina.

Their legs became human again, and still they swam, adapting to human swimming. The light of the rising sun was just beginning to hit the water above. They were close, so damn close. The fins on their arms withdrew, and their forms changed back. Allison regained some of her human muscle, but Melvin’s efforts were thwarted by taking on his less athletic male body. He kicked and flailed - swimming had never once been his speciality. His lungs were pure pain, agony waiting to explode. And the surface was *right there*.

He could hold no longer, alas. The air burst from his lungs, forming a long stream of bubbles that filled his vision. He immediately began to choke. In his panic, water filled the place where air had been, and he swallowed it, not knowing what else to do. He clutched his throat, coughing and taking in even more water. His limbs were failing to work. His vision was blurry, and the living curse now enveloped him, making it impossible to see where anything was. The young noble thrashed in the water, naked as the day he was born. It was a fitting end to the young man. His life would close as it had begun; naked and writhing, floating in water, not knowing which way was up and which way was down.

The darkness closed in and Melvin’s final thought was of-

Alternate Ending: Mermaid’s Call

Atola was so very proud of her daughters. After so many, many decades of desiring just one child to give her company, she had been blessed with two. Yes, she knew that the Demon Lord’s forces ran rampant upon the surface, and that the succubus Narsa had only given her this boon in order to prevent her daughters from threatening said forces, and yet . . . none of that mattered. She was truly joyous to share her song with the beautiful maidens.

Allison, golden-haired and golden-scaled, sang with a high soprano, her melodic tunes drawing sailors from afar. After her change, she had revelled in becoming a mermaid, to the point where Atola could barely keep up with her! She was always exploring some new reef or crevice, sampling some new fishy delight or hunting darker creatures in the murky depths.

Melody, on the other hand, was a creature of culture and grace, her movements elegant as she had settled into her new form and sex. No doubt this was the noble blood in her, for her lower tone made for mournful dirges and tempting songs alike, either of which could bring forth entire ships of sailors who were either weeping with sorrow or desperate for a woman’s touch. She practiced the musical instruments recovered from these ships,

restoring them in the cave that held a prominent bubble of air, but far more important to her was her collection of tomes, her magic maintaining them.

“Mother, what are you thinking of?” Allison asked, flitting from the deep with a new collection of fancy shells to add to her endlessly growing collection.

Atola smiled, holding her daughter against her full bosom, enjoying the feel of another after many years of isolation.

“Just how happy I am to no longer be alone, my dear,” she said.

“Of course, mother! We would never leave you, well, except for really quick jaunts, ha! I battled a sea serpent today.”

Atola sighed, slapping her own forehead lightly. “Yes, of course you did, Aly. Where is your sister to give you a better example?”

“Right here, mother!” came a voice, a little huskier than Allison’s, but no less beautiful. She had wavy brunette hair and gorgeous emerald eyes, and her tail was that same emerald colour. Her movements were sleek and perfect, and she darted to Allison’s side. The golden-scaled mermaid rolled her eyes at the drama of her entrance.

“Ever the noble, even without a title!” she declared.

“You’re just jealous that even under the surface, I bring a level of class with me.”

Allison stuck out her tongue, but instead of growing frustrated, Melody gave a light smirk in response, causing the other sister to giggle.

“I apologise for taking so long,” Melody said. “I was caught up reading a fascinating surface book. Part of me wishes it was easier to find books, mother. Some of them are utter dregs compared to the library I once had.”

“In time, dear, we immortal sirens will have entire libraries.”

That was enough to make Melody sigh, and even Allison seemed impressed. Atola held her daughters close, kissing them both on the forehead.

“But first, we have a job to do. Do you feel the power thrumming within you?”

Allison nodded nervously. She and Melody could certainly feel it; a strong compulsion to follow the conditions of their curse. They would need to sing their song and draw forth nearby sailors as part of their existence.

“Is it a trading ship, mother?” Melody asked.

Atola smiled. “I believe so. From *D’Arbour*.”

“It could be loaded with books!”

“Or swords!” Allison said. “With waxes to prevent their rust! By the Gods, why aren’t we singing already?”

“Because, my dears, tonight is a special occasion, granted by the Demon Lord himself. We have done so well with one another, and his victory is assured, that we may not just be sirens soon. I may be a queen of a new civilisation, and you my dearest princesses.”

Allison gasped. "What? Really!?"

"Indeed. We simply need to sing a new song. Come!"

They followed their mother, rising to the surface and finding a place upon their favoured rock. The ship was on the horizon, but that would change. The three women began to hum, their voices carrying supernaturally across the water's surface. Soon, their voices carried with the wind.

*"Come now, good traders, follow our tone,
Turn your ship starboard to bring yourselves home.
The sea has been awaiting for you all to arrive,
Beneath the water's surface is where you shall thrive!"*

The song continued, and the ship did indeed turn. The mermaids withdrew into the water, still singing even as the trading barge slammed into the rocks and began to take on water. Some of the sailors panicked and jumped in, others tried to cling to driftwood or remain on the vessel. But Atola already felt her power growing: this crew would not be offerings for the Demon Lord, but something else entirely.

"Sing with me, my perfect daughters!" she announced.

*"Fear not, my darlings, fear not the waves,
Like a surface dweller, you need not behave.
Feel your legs merging, feel the growth of your chest,
Embrace the pride of a mermaid within your sweet breast!"*

Allison and Melody marvelled at what they witnessed, at what they *felt* with their song. All the sailors that fell beneath the surface began to change into mermaids just like them, though they would not possess the power of the siren call as they did. Each was beautiful, with hair of many colours and tails of different sparkling tones. One was pink haired and willowy in form, with an octopoid set of tentacles as her 'tail.' Another had black scales and silvery hair, and an electric current ran down her eel-like lower half. More were usual mermaids, with hues of yellow and red, though another had the appearance of a Taivan tang or koi.

"They're beautiful, mother!" Melody declared.

"Godsdamn, they are!" Allison cried, swimming around them as they panicked initially, then became drawn to their new existence. "More sisters for us to have! We'll have a proper village soon!"

"Then a town, then a city," Atola said, nearly overwhelmed by the ocean of emotion she felt like she was swimming in. "Truly, we mermaids will have our utopia."

It was at this point that Melody noticed that a few sailors - the ones clinging to driftwood on the surface - had not yet changed.

"Mother," she said. "What of those men?"

Atola smirked. She could feel a longing in her large breasts, and even more in her loins. A fish-half she might have, but she could attest that her womanhood concealed within the scales was still very much . . . human. Human, and *hungry*.

"Those men," she said with anticipation to her daughters, "are for us to sing to, to please, and then to *enjoy* before we turn them."

Allison squeaked in joy, then *raced* off to the man furthest away; she could sense his youth and vitality. Melody chased her, hoping for the same man. He would easily be aroused with promises of safety and a song that could inspire any man to become full of lust.

Atola watched them go, happy at her daughters' shared enthusiasm. She herself preferred the older type, and was pleased to note that the captain was adrift on a piece of broken deck. He would likely be an experienced lover, and she had good cause to celebrate with such carnal need.

"What a sweet song we shall make together," she said, moving towards him. "Even before I make you a mermaid."