

Comfort

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Came out of nowhere - didn't capture exactly what I wanted to say, though. Still like it.

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Comfort

I walked down the old, weathered dock; the wind blowing my golden brown hair around my face as the seawater was sucked into the air and was splashed on my face. I followed the man in front of me, high-heels clicking dully on the boards. I wore a brown, tweed jacket and a tight, short skirt; in my arms I cradled a folder marked ``confidential" in stamped, red letters.

The seagulls overhead cried ravenously as they took to the sky, long wings beating the air with great strength. A fisherman looked up from threading another worm on his hook, two-day shave and shabby hat making him look like a homeless man. His dull eyes looked me over up and down and a slimy hand grabbed the top of his hat and tipped it towards me, toothless grin making me look away in disgust.

I turned down the dock as the man in front beckoned me onwards. Eventually, we came to a stop at the end of the dock and he took the folder from my grip. I looked at the murky water before me and shivered. ``Reach into the water," the man said. I slipped my hand into the water and muffled a cry of surprise as the freezing water soaked into my long sleeves. I felt around for a while until my fingers collided with a wheel.

``Turn it." I did as the man said and a mud-colored pipe immersed from the water, much like the hatch on a submarine. ``There is a lock; the combination is `66'." I grabbed onto one of the supports on the down and knelt down, my free hand grasping the lock. My numb fingers began to turn the padlock wheel slowly. It felt like an hour passed before I finally got to ``66". I pulled down on the padlock and it slipped off, banging the side of the pipe before being swallowed by the water. The hatch opened, revealing black.

``Go in there," the man demanded quietly. I took another look at the water and slipped off my shoes before stepping into the water. The water quickly soaked my hose and saturated my skirt. I stepped into the pipe, not knowing what to expect and was astonished to find more water within but this water was warm tropical water. I lowered my body into the water, fear filling me as my feet found no place to hold myself up. ``I will be back," the man stated dryly before turning around. I looked up at him one last time, the wind whipping my hair in my face. I drew a breath and plunged into the water below.

Someone below grabbed my arm and pulled gently. ``Open your eyes," his voice said kindly. I followed his orders and my brown eyes flashed open revealing a small room, windows of glass on all sides. The water was aquamarine and light flooded the area. I turned to look at the person who held my arm and drew back at the sight of a man; he was handsome yet indescribable. I motioned towards my mouth and he pulled me through the water, handing me a clear tube; air bubbled from the end.

I filled my lungs with fresh air and just sat motionless, taking in the surroundings. I breathed again and the man took my arm again and guided me through a small opening in the room. Fish swam past me leisurely and other people were swimming around; mer-people; brightly colored vegetation waved gently in the light current. The expanse stretched for as far as I could see. The merman led me to an overhand just twenty feet from the entrance to this ``confidential" enclosure. He laid flat on the rock and pulled me close to him. I took another breath from the clear tube and everything went black.

I awoke. No tube was in my hand yet I was breathing easily; water still filled the great room. I felt the warmth of the merman as we laid there; I found a strange comfort and need and rested there

peacefully, like that was where I was supposed to be. "Go to the surface," the merman's voice said to me. He pushed me away lightly and I longed to go back to that niche beside the man.

I swam into the little room and opened the hatch above me. The man with the confidential folder was standing there waiting for me. "Time to go. It has been two days." I do not remember the conversation we had; I only remembered the longing to get back to the merman.

"No." I said, and slipped back into the water, but not before my eye caught my reflection. I was no longer dressed in that uncomfortable suit but was changed, smooth skin molding into beautiful, aqua scales right below my waist. It was strange and comforting completely relaxed.

I swam back to the man and curled up beside him. His arm rested over my middle but neither moved up nor down; neither too high nor too low. I rested here, minutes turning into hours, hours turning into days. I never grew hungry; my soul was satisfied.