

## Little Mermaid

"Come on Celia, come back into the water." Ara's plaintive voice cut through the gentle sound of the waves lapping at the breach, but Celia ignored her sister.

"Fine, then I'll tell father you are still coming here."

That got Celia's attention and she fixed Ara with a menacing glare. "You wouldn't dare tell father. Now go away and leave me in peace."

"You risk too much, you know you'll die if your tail dries out."

"I'm fine, I'm still in the water see?." To emphasize her words Celia swished her tail, sending a spray of water toward her sister.

Celia had heard the old warnings countless time, but she loved sitting on the beach, soaking in the warm rays of the sun and she was always careful to keep herself in the water. Lazily she ran her fingers through her hair, loving how the sun glistened on her coppery tresses. If she could just get her sister to shut up it would be perfect.

Ara's silence snagged her attention and Celia looked out toward the ocean. Her sister's face was set in a horrified expression, her eyes staring past Celia to something behind her. Heart pounding Celia turned, just as a net was flung over her.

"Celia!" Ara screamed, as Celia thrashed against the fine netting that rubbed and cut her skin. The net pulled taught and she felt herself being dragged up the beach, and away from the life giving water.

"No," she cried out, unable to see past the tangle of net and her hair. She hissed and cursed, but whoever was pulling the net did not let up until she was several feet away from the waters edge.

Suddenly the net was pulled from her. Looking up Celia saw a tall human male; his eyes bright with excitement as he dragged his gaze over her, his tousled dark hair and rugged features so alien to her.

"Who are you?" she gasped.

"Your new master." His voice was deep and raspy, and panic slammed into her at his words, at the harsh commanding tone of his voice.

"What?" She looked around frantically, looked down at her tail. "Please you have to let me go, if my tail goes dry I'll—" Celia never finished. At the moment her scales dried out and terrible pain shot through her, a fierce, a burning spasm that wrenched the air from her lungs.

This is it, I'm dying, just as father warned. Except death did not come, instead her tail split into two, forming legs...completely human, ordinary looking legs. As the pain subsided she looked down at her new limbs in awe, before turning her gaze back to her captor.

Without warning he bent down to her, scooping her up in arms and pulling her to her feet. Celia cried out, pushed against his broad chest, but as she tried to take her

weight her knees buckled and she was forced to grab hold of him for support. Before she could even protest, he took the back of her head and forced her lips to his.

The kiss was firm but not unpleasant, his lips hot against her cold skin, and a strange flutter started in her stomach; a flutter that moved through her whole body when his tongue caressed her lips.

With a groan he released her, his expression triumphant, his breathing heavy. "I've waited a long time for you beauty."

Her brows drew down. "I don't understand, why have you done this, why did you kiss me?"

"I saw you many moons ago, sitting on this beach, and I knew I had to make you mine. So I studied everything I could about mermaid lore. I learned that if you capture a mermaid from the sea and steal a kiss, she becomes yours for a year."

An icy chill ran up Celia's spine. "How did you know I wouldn't die?"

He shrugged, his expression turning hard. "I didn't, but it was worth risking it to possess you."

His callous answer made her insides twist. To risk her life just so he could own her? What kind of a man was he? Raising her chin she stared him in the eyes. "You must let me go."

Unexpectedly he released her and though she swayed for a moment, she did not fall. Celia eyed him suspiciously but he made no move to take hold of her.

Spinning on her heels she ran with unsteady strides toward the sea. I'm going to make it.

"Stop." His deep voice carried across the space between them and she stilled immediately, his command a compulsion she could not fight.

"Turn around." He ordered, and she did.

Smiling, he strode toward her. "The legends were true, you are mine." When he reached her, he picked her up in her arms, rendering her even more helpless against him.

"What are you going to do to me?" she asked in a trembling voice.

His eyes darkened with lust as he swept his gaze over her. "Everything my little mermaid, everything." And with that he turned and carried her back up the beach, away from the sea, away from her home.

As she was held tight in his strong arms Celia cast one longing glance back at the ocean. For a moment she saw the anguished face of her sister between the waves and she clung to the sight until she was gone..

Turning her face away from the sea Celia looked up at the man who held her. Who was he? And just what did he have planned for her? She shivered and he looked down at her, the heat in his gaze and the sensual twist of his lips making her heart race.

Whoever he was she was helpless against him, she was his for a whole year. A  
tear ran down her cheek as she was carried off to who knew what dark fate.