

The Selkie's Return



She had lived on land so long she had almost forgotten.

Almost.

But the body does not forget.

Some nights, when the moon rose full and heavy over the water, something in her chest would loosen, and she would find herself standing at the shore's edge without quite knowing how she had come to be there. Listening. The sound of the waves arriving like a language she once spoke fluently, now just beyond the reach of translation.

She had built a life on land. She had learned its rhythms, its requirements, its particular ways of belonging. She had been, by most measures, a good inhabitant of the world above the water. But there was always something held. Something that would not quite release into the life she was living. A part of her that remained just beneath the surface of everything, the way the deep remains beneath even the most ordinary looking sea.

The alchemists would have recognized this. What cannot be calcinated, what survives the fire intact and unchanged, must eventually meet the water. The soul has its own knowing about what is ready to dissolve, and what is not yet finished becoming.

One night, under a moon so full it seemed to be offering itself to the earth, she found it. Her seal skin. Folded and waiting in the place where she had long ago stopped looking. She stood very still. She had imagined this moment so many times that now that it had arrived it felt less like discovery and more like recognition. Of course. Here. This.

She did not hesitate. Not because she was unafraid, but because the longing was older and deeper than fear. She had spent so long holding the shape of someone who

lived on land. So long maintaining the edges of a form that had never been entirely hers. And now, with the seal skin in her hands, she could feel those edges beginning to soften. The boundaries between what she had been and what she was becoming already blurring, the way the shoreline blurs at the tide's turning.

She walked into the water.

Not running. Not fleeing. Walking the way you walk toward something you have always known was waiting for you. The cold of it moved up through her body like a question being answered. And when she finally let herself go beneath the surface, when the water received her fully, something she had been holding for a very long time simply released.

She did not disappear. She dissolved into something truer.

Beneath the moon's long light, in the place where the deep water begins, she moved. Fully herself at last. Form released. Flowing.