

Honorable Mention
THE OCEANS STORM

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I wake at dawn and the sparkling yellow sky is peeking through my window. My lips feel dry and sealed shut. I walk to the window of my motel room and stare at the sea. The waves crash against the sparkling sand and I watch as the human children rush to the shore. I hear my stomach gurgle and I feel absolutely famished.

I haven't eaten in days, afraid to leave my room. I rummage through the net I brought covered in cloth so they wouldn't see my things. When I find my hat I bought at market weeks earlier I use it to cover up my pointy ears that have tinted green from the sea. Sirens don't usually have the ability to have legs but from the court my family came from we use it to lure pirates on land into sea.

I decide to brave the outside remembering how a sodium deficiency could become deadly if not taken care of within a week. I pull on the clothes I have designed to cover up my gills and spots of skin that have turned green from moss and seaweed. The motel hallway is cold against my skin and makes goosebumps go crawling up my legs.

I take the stairs skipping one each time as I notice other humans do. The lobby is bare and empty with a few paintings of the ocean and a large sign reading "Camden, Maine".

I study the shore to see if there are many people occupying it but the children from earlier have run away. I waddle down the path in my fluffy white slippers the room came with. The sand is warm as it blows in my face. I dive into an oncoming wave, the salt water filling my lungs. The sun rises more and it

becomes late morning. I put on my coverup and slippers and retreat to the motel.

The lobby is full with travelers and small children. I push past to the stairs where I see a girl around my human age who has dazzling cerulean eyes. She stares at me for a second before I realize one of my scales is showing. My cheeks turn a dark blueish color as I brush past her. I run to my room and put more of the pale dust on my skin as the blue turns back to a pale beige.

I feel exhausted from the lack of sleep I've had so I plop onto my white bed and start to fall into a vivid dream. In my dream I see the same girl with the cerulean eyes and I watch as she dives into the waters of an ocean storm. She looks beautiful in her light blue dress as she emerges from the water and I come back to my bed.

As I gather myself I realize I have to find the girl again or else I might not ever figure this out. As I make my way out of the lobby and into a morning breeze I decide to take the walk to the town. As I walk past the yellow tulips hung around lamp posts and the chatter coming from coffee shops, I make my way to the bookstore I remember clearly from when I first arrived.

It's warm as I walk through the door where a little bell rings over my head. The girl with the cerulean colored eyes comes to the front section with a smile on her face. Her name tag reads Augustine, it reminds me of summer and matches her light blonde hair.

She says "I remember you, you were in the hotel I work at. You had interesting clothes on that I liked."

I smile at her and ask "Do you want me to make you some?" I realized how out of the ordinary that sounded but just looked past it hoping I can figure out why she was in my dream.

She says in a sort of anxious way "Sure! Umm...Why though?"

I don't know how to respond and just sort of shrug and walk out of the bookstore while my face starts to turn blue from the embarrassment. I cover it up with a scarf and run to the coffee shop hoping I can just sit down and rewind there and try and think of what I could possibly say.

A few months later I have actually become quite good friends with Augustine. She has talked to me at the coffee shop and I have stopped in to buy books. She told me she quit her job at the motel because the owners are never there to manage things.

I haven't seen her in any of my dreams since that night but once she was showing me photos of her and her boyfriend (who I actually hate and is just so so so stupid) and she was wearing the same blue dress.

Weeks go by and I never figure out what the blue dress is all about but one night she was calling me sobbing because her and her boyfriend, Jake, had gotten into a fight and she decided to break up with him.

I rushed over to her house right near the bookstore and we ate something she called instant ramen and watched her favorite show "Gilmore Girls". When I was in her room grabbing more tissues I noticed the blue dress laid out on her bed.

I didn't mention it at the time but a week later I asked her about it on our daily coffee run. She said "It was my sisters, she was my favorite person in the world."

I try not to think too hard about the way she said "was" but gave in and looked on one of the bookstores computers to check her old social media. I scrolled through what seemed like over hundreds of pictures of beaches and of her reading but once

I finally made it back around 2 years ago I noticed another girl who looked like an older, more mature Augustine. I searched for a couple more minutes before I found who was tagged in the

photos. It led me to an old account of a girl named Betty LaRue with the same last name as Augustine. I quickly connected the dots and knew that was the sister. The account seemed untouched though and I found a linked article about the rise of shipwrecks.

All these shipwrecks are circled around the area I come from. It all just came to me like a crashing wave. Her sister was studying shipwrecks near my home-bay around the same time I switched my abilities with a human girl.

Oh my gosh...oh no. This can't be I..I wouldn't do this to her. My hands start shaking and all I can think of is how I am a monster. I killed her. I thought she would survive with my siren breaths. I turn the computer off and rush out of there.

Augustine looks at me in a weird way but I can't bear to look at her for too long. I wasn't seeing Augustine in my dreams, it was Betty, she was trying to tell me something. I run back to the motel where I drop my bag off in my room and change into my swim coverup.

I run into the crashing waves and try to stay under and imagine where Betty could be. The sky darkens as I swim farther out. I'm suddenly pulled under by some cold force. It feels like a dream under the waves and all I can see is blonde hair and a blue dress.

It's Betty. She takes my hand and pulls me to the center of the storm where the waves thrash against me and I struggle to stay over which makes me feel so weak.

I see Betty start to put her hands around my face but I can't push them away. She pulls my head to hers and all of a sudden I'm a siren again. My dark black hair turned back to a blueish green and my hands are now an aqua color.

I look at Betty who is fully human again and she nods to the shore. I realize I have to take her back. As she crawls on

the shore she thanks me and I just have to wave. I'll miss Augustine very much but I have loved the town but she needs her real sister back. I sometimes watch from the shore when Augustine and Betty visit and see the shells I have left them.

My favorite memory of seeing them was when there were tiny flurries falling from the sky and they danced that whole night. They were like the ocean and I was just a storm keeping them apart