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2º Medio

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Writing makes me feel like I can build something beautiful. I think that being able to transfer entire universes of fantasy from your brain to a piece of paper is just magical. So maybe that's why I write, because I am creating something beautiful out of myself.

## **You cannot silence a woman**

Men were always afraid.

From the earliest years, they had created monsters, gods and stories of doom that haunted their every slumber. Superstitions, some people call them. These rules for life were considered sacred amongst our kind, and anyone who dared to overlook them was certain to be punished by destiny.

Perhaps these myths were simple ways to make men feel safer. If they knew what would bring them bad luck, then it would be easy to escape those scenarios and continue their successful lives. Or maybe they were just trying to find a connection to their own surroundings, or explanations for their own suffering.

Maybe, men were just stupid cowards.

You see, a woman can only take so much foolery. The day her husband comes back from the sea because he hit an albatross, or refuses to go fishing on a perfect Friday; she will sigh and do as she's told, as that is what proper wives do. But take my word when I say every single woman on this island was tired of these fairytales.

The sad part? We couldn't do anything about it. We didn't have voices, we couldn't think for ourselves, we were mere objects- the property of our husbands. That was the unspoken law. And as every unspoken law goes, everyone who failed to follow it was certain to suffer the consequences. My husband Gerald always made sure I knew that. Every day, he made sure I was making his breakfast, cleaning the house, and not going out unless I went with him. Oh, and if we went out, I wasn't allowed to talk. Oh no. Women were meant to sit still, look pretty.

Needless to say, I was sick of it.

Until one day, Gerald announced he was going to sail across the ocean with his comrades, on an adventurous trip to the continent of Africa. He told me he wanted to take me with him.

"I don't want anyone to touch my property."

And so we left, me and the 27 men boarding the Jewel, a small brigantine with gigantic sails and a sculpture of a mermaid as the figurehead. On the 20th of June we sailed away, away from our old island, the tiny mismatched houses, the strong smell of sheep and fish, the sun rays peeking through unmovable clouds and the mountains that wrapped their arms around our town, around our home.

The small houses, the little people, the tiny mountains, the minuscule fishing boats, the disappearing speck of land.

And then, immensity.

The journey was long, but my days went by quickly. I was free. I could do things. I had some short duty and guard time. I could roam around as much as I wanted. I could even dress more comfortably. Goodbye corsets and fancy dresses. Hello warm pants and jackets.

Gerald didn't like it, of course.

"You are a lady, act like one!"

"This is why I can never take you sailing."

I learned not to listen, not to let his oppressive words get to me. Gerald didn't own me. I was my own spirit, my own guide, and even if I left this world, I would persist to be, me.

I blame those thoughts of freedom for distracting me from what was going on. I didn't notice the whispers, the sudden disappearances from the crew. I didn't

think twice when Gerald asked me to do his guard turn, that same night. Yes, I thought it was strange of him to do so. But somehow, I did not question it. My mind was so settled in the idea of finally being free, that I fell into their trap. And by the time I noticed, it was far too late.

They surrounded me, all with swords and torches, during the night shift. Gerald held my head against the mast and threatened me with his dagger.

“So you thought you could live like a man... how foolish of you.”

He smiled with all his dirty yellow teeth.

“You filthy scum. Filthy! All of you!” I was silenced by the cold metal of the knife against my throat.

“Quiet, woman! You are dishonoring everyone in this crew with your actions, you know that? Yes... women cannot be sailors.” He started twitching with madness. “Women cannot be anything!”

I was terrified. The whole crew started shouting and hollering.

“It is time for you to walk the plank!”

Gerald grabbed me by the shirt and started to push me towards the deathly wooden path.

“Walk the plank! Walk the plank! Walk the plank!” The men chanted, over and over again, as I shouted at them to stop, and I stomped at Gerald’s feet, but he didn’t even flinch.

I found myself standing by the plank, walking, step by step, the men shouting, Gerald chuckling, and my clothes swirling around with the salty wind. Three feet, two feet, one foot away from the abyss.

“Walk the plank! Walk the plank!”

And so I did.

But I didn't die, you know? No... some people say souls that seek revenge shall never die. That their hatred is so powerful, they escape their bodies to become monsters and ghosts that chase their vengeance through eternity.

I didn't become a monster, or a ghost.

As my body fell into the dark seas, I started to feel something. My legs felt an incandescent heat take over them, as an ominous force started pulling me down under, further and further down into the deep blue. My chest was aching for air, and right as my last breath left my body, I felt something take over the corpse that once was mine.

I had become what I was meant to be all along. I had become a force that could kill even the most powerful of men with a deadly tune.

I had become a mermaid.