



Ensnaring Him (Sirens #2)

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Category: Fantasy

Description: Serenia

When my two best friends and I learn that we have one chance to stop ourselves from becoming full-fledge sirens, we have to take it. We have seven days to find a man and make him fall in love with us—without using our powers to make it happen.

I finally have legs again, am out of the water and cold that attacks there. I'm shocked when I find a man almost immediately that makes me want to stay. This can't really be happening, can it? Finding exactly what I need like magic?

Hes the most incredible man ever and I want nothing more than to stay with him forever. But how will he react to learning my secret and is it even possible to get him to fall in love with me in just seven days? I pray to the gods that it is, because I don't want to leave him—or the peaceful space he's made at his home—but more so him.

Duncan

I was drawn to this seaside town ten years ago, not really understanding why, but the moment I got here, it felt like home, so I stayed. Met two guys who are my best friends now, and run my greenhouse and landscaping business, while ignoring all of the women that look my way. I don't want any of them, so what's the point in wasting my time even talking to them?

At least that's how I've felt until I see the most gorgeous girl at the park when I should be working, and I know in an instant that she's mine. Her desire to stay away from the beach and eagerness to see my greenhouse has my heart in her hands, unable to deny her anything. Serenia is the sweetest thing I've ever seen and all I want is to take her home with me and take care of her for life.

She's only here for seven days. Is it possible to get her to fall as deeply in love with me as I am with her in that short of a time? Is it too soon to ask her to stay and be mine forever? I don't know what others might think about it, but I for one, don't think it is. I just don't want to run her off—but not telling her I love her gets harder every night. I will make her mine entirely, find a way to keep her. I have to or I might die without her.

Page 1

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Serenia

My heart races a bit as we move into the park. It's still early out and there aren't many up and about right now, which I definitely don't mind. I'm still trying to make myself believe that this is really happening. I have legs and feet again. Something I haven't had since I was four and drug into the ocean by my mother to turn me into the very thing my father did his best to protect me from—sirens.

I was still so young that a lot of it didn't make sense back then. Only the pain of everything truly registered. Especially the physical pain that tore through my body when my feet and legs merged into a tail, and the ice cold of the water sliced through my lungs. I swore I was going to drown, but then, somehow, I was able to breathe through the water just as if I were above it. The only difference was with every breath, ice attacked the rest of me, making me fight to not scream at the pain of it.

Even now, it still hurts to breathe underwater. Maybe that's why I tend to stay near the surface as much as possible, and why despite being a morning person like Melodia, I missed her sneaking out to the ancient city to search for a way for us to avoid becoming killers—to stop from becoming full-fledged monsters.

Celestia on the other hand, is a night person completely, but that's when her powers are most prevalent, so it makes sense. It also makes sense why I'm more drawn to the morning as well though. After all, what weary sailor wouldn't love to find a beautiful sight in front of them after a long night on the open sea? And what better sight than them believing they've found land—or made it home to land?

That's my power whereas Celestia's are to manipulate the sky, the moon and stars,

and disrupt even the best of the human's tracking systems. Melodia's powers are those that most would associate with sirens—a siren song. But unlike most sirens, no man can resist Melodia's song, which is why our mothers and the elders in our Lycophron want us to use our powers so much.

Some men can resist the lure of other sirens, but none have ever been able to resist any of ours—mine, Celestia's, and Melodia's. That's also why we wanted to find a way out though, because none of us want to be the reason men die. We don't care about becoming more powerful, stronger. We're immortal beings whether we consume the lifeforce of our victims directly or not. When sirens consume their victims souls, it strengthens the entire Lycophron, not just that single siren because we all share blood, and a bond that lets us communicate with one another without a word spoken aloud.

Our voices sound distorted under water and some words that sound similar can't be distinguished easily there, so we communicate telepathically with one another.

For Melodia to have been able to keep her trips a secret, let alone keep anyone else from overhearing her thoughts regarding all of it took considerable strength. Something Celestia and I learnt the last few weeks since Melodia told us about the loophole that could potentially keep us from turning into full sirens.

On the surface it seems simple enough. Make a mortal man fall in love with us in a week and we get to stay a humanlike being. We'll get to keep our feet and legs. Live as a human on the land, but if we ever feel the urge to go for a swim, we'll be able to transform in the water into our siren forms, but the urge to kill shouldn't exist.

The problem with all of that? We can't use our powers to make them fall in love with us. Which means talking to a man. Something I haven't done since my father died—was murdered by the Lycophron as my mother drug me into the depths of the ocean to turn me into a siren like her.

I've always hated her for it, but even more, I hated myself for it too. It was my fault he died. For four years he kept me away from the ocean, but something about it called out to me and I snuck away from our new house one night to see what was so special about it. We'd only been in that seaside town for a week after spending most of our time on inland army bases. My father was a geologist with the Army Corp of Engineers. He started out as a soldier but discovered his passion for geology and engineering while with them. He got his degree and became one of their experts in knowing whether or not a spot was suitable for building.

He managed to get away from my mother the first time she attempted to kill him, shortly after knowing she was pregnant with me. He came back as it neared my due date, finding her giving birth with just one other siren there to act as her birther.

Sirens have to be born on land, or at least fully out of the water, so we can breathe out of it. Sirens that are born in the water don't receive the ability to breathe above the surface and they also don't receive the gift of beauty that Aphrodite blessed us with, because it can't penetrate the cold darkness of the water since it's Poseidon's territory.

My father managed to knock the birther out, then took me before my mother could reach the water with me and went as far inland as he possibly could. Since sirens don't transform when on land, she couldn't follow as there were no interconnected waterways.

Becoming a siren was my fault. I disobeyed my father. Got him killed and then became a monster in the making.

If this chance doesn't succeed. If I don't find someone to fall for me in the next week. I don't know what I'll do. The bloodlust is growing deeper. The urge of the cold to kill snakes through my body at all hours. It was the deepest I've ever felt last night and if it weren't for Celestia and Melodia being with me, I don't know if I could have

resisted.

“So, do we just wander around until we find some men we like?” Celestia asks, bringing me out of the depressing and sad thoughts.

“I’ve no idea. Do you think we’re far enough away from the ocean to keep the others from interfering or should we keep heading further inland?” Melodia asks in return.

“There isn’t any way for them to get near us here. There aren’t any waterways in town,” I assure them with a glance at the trees ahead of us. “As long as we don’t go to the beach, they shouldn’t be able to bother us.”

“Alright, so what do you do you think, stick together at least for now?” Celestia says and Melodia and I nod in agreement. “Then which way do you think we should go?”

“I’m thinking we go through those trees,” I tell them, and Melodia lifts a brow my way curiosity in her eyes because for once, my tone isn’t hesitant. “I don’t know, I just feel drawn to head that way for some strange reason.”

“Then let’s see why you feel that way,” Melodia suggests, as we move through the trees and out into a space with more open fields.

My feet stop short, my breathing tightening as I stare at a man next to a truck. There are dozens of trees and plants in the back of it, but that’s not what’s calling to me. It’s him somehow and I have to fight to stay still as Melodia lets out a little giggle.

“Are you okay?” Celestia asks me as she and Melodia move up next to me.

“I don’t know. I feel...strange,” I admit glancing their way. “It’s...it’s like a memory. This feeling. Like I’ve felt it before but it’s not possible to be something I felt at home.”

“What about before that? When you were with your father?” Melodia asks, and I can’t stop the shocked gasp that comes as the man’s attention turns towards us.

“Oh yes, yes,” I whisper, as emotions and hunger flow through me. None of them are like the anger or bloodlust or cold that I feel in the ocean. It’s all warmth and hope and a hunger like I’ve never known that hits as the man drops the tree that he was pulling out of the truck down next to it, pulling gloves off his hands before he starts heading our way.

“What is it?” Celestia asks.

“What we’re here for,” I tell them, giving her and Melodia a grin before my feet moves me towards the man.

I stop just out of reach, almost afraid he’ll disappear if I get any closer. This pull towards him is more intense than anything I’ve ever felt. Even the bloodlust never touched me this deep.

“Hi there beautiful,” he says, his tone low and a bit gruff sounding, but there’s a tenderness beneath it that fills me with hope so deep I can barely contain myself. “You’re not from around here are you?”

“No,” I admit swaying towards him.

“Can I show you around then?” he asks, inching closer to me and my feet move me the last foot so I’m almost touching his chest.

“I…”

“I promise to take care of you, honey,” he states, his hand sliding around my waist, pulling me up against his chest entirely and I only hesitate for a fraction of a second

before I relax against it, letting him support my weight as my knees weaken, tremble a bit. “I always take care of the most delicate and precious things, and you are more special and beautiful than all of them, I know it. Come with me. Let me show you that.”

I glance back at my friends, wanting more than anything to go with this gorgeous, tall man with golden brown eyes—the same color as when the sun shines down on the earth making it sparkle with dimension. His hair is a deep earth brown, like the richest soil that grows the most amazing flowers. My head barely reaches the top of his shoulder, and I want to lay it on them and never let go.

“Go,” Melodia mouths and Celestia nods, giving me a grin in return letting me relax enough to look back at this amazing man I somehow can’t resist.

“Okay,” I tell him, earning a smile that makes my knees weak all over again, but before I have time to question anything, his hand is pressing gently against my back leading me over to his truck. Inside it smells even more like him and I let out a soft little moan as he moves to the back, putting the tree back into it before coming around to the driver’s side and gets in.

“I’m Duncan, by the way,” he says, giving me a grin that makes my breath stall, and then my heart race when he leans towards me, his eyes twinkling as they roam over my face. “Seat belt, honey. Can’t risk you getting hurt—not ever,” he adds, his hand reaching behind me and with a click, the buckle slips into place, bringing memories of my dad buckling me into a car seat to mind and warmth floods through me even more for some unknown reason.

“Thank you,” I get out on a soft whisper as he leans back into his seat.

“Where would you like to go first, beautiful?” Duncan asks as he puts the truck into gear. “You look like you’re dressed for the beach. I can show you around some of the

spots that only the locals know about,” he offers, and my heart tightens with absolute fear and dread at the idea of going anywhere near the water right now.

“No, not the beach,” I say quickly, hating the high pitch of my voice as the panic tries to overtake me. “I...we have beaches where I’m from. I’d rather see anything else but them.”

“I won’t argue about that, honey. Truth be told, I never liked the beach much myself. I honestly don’t know how or why I ended up in a seafront town. As soon as I got here it just felt like it was where I was meant to be. That was ten years ago, but the beach has never grown on me to the point that it’s where I want to go on a day off,” he says comforting me because if he doesn’t like the beach it means he won’t argue about staying away from it—even if he doesn’t realize it’s so he stays safe. “So where would you like to go? We have a lot of great little shops we can browse through.”

“Mmm,” I sigh not really interested in that, not compared to places like the park that we just left. “What about your plants?” I ask when his brow lifts at me, a grin on his lips that I want to taste, to feel against mine.

“I’ll drop them off at the greenhouse. We had a little storm come through a few nights ago that damaged one of the sections in the park, so I was going to put in the new tree and shrubs, but I can send one of my guys to do it instead.”

“One of your guys?” I ask, curious as to what that means.

“Yeah, I own the greenhouse and run a landscaping business. I have a contract with the city to maintain all of the parks. It’d be too much for just me, so I have employees that help out wherever I need them,” he says, his eyes even brighter and I swear, I fall completely for him in that moment.

“Could we look around the greenhouse then? I love parks and plants and fields of

flowers and the forest and mountains...” I rush out with stopping short when Duncan’s hand reaches over and takes mine, his fingers slipping between mine and I feel a shaky ache all throughout my body.

“Whatever you want, honey,” he states, lifting my hand to his lips and I squirm a bit as it makes me feel hot and heavy in my lower belly. “There’s no need to be nervous with me...”

His eyes turn my way, a little furl between his brows and I realize I never told him my name. “Serenia,” I eek out as waves of heat roll through my body the longer he holds my hand.

“Serenia, beautiful name for an incredibly beautiful girl,” he says with a hungry smile my way, and oh my gods, I want to see that look on his face every day for the rest of my life.

Page 2

Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 2:24 am

Duncan

I have no idea what I'm doing. I just knew the moment I laid eyes on this sweet girl that I wasn't letting her go. Deep down, I know I can't. That if I do, I'll regret it for the rest of my life.

I've never felt like this with anyone before. Shit, I'm thirty-six years old and still a virgin. I had no intention of that being the case but over the years, women just didn't speak to me. Neither did men so I figured I just wasn't interested in sex for some odd reason.

I put all my focus into my business once I finished college, wanting to be even further away from the major cities than I managed by going to school in Raleigh, North Carolina compared to Philadelphia where I grew up. Sure, Raleigh itself is smaller, but add in the surrounding metro area and it felt just as big. That wasn't what I wanted, so I headed even further south. I landed here, certain I wasn't going to stay for long, but somehow I could never force myself to leave. Now, ten years later, I know it's so I was here to meet Serenia.

I'm hoping based on the fact that she's sitting next to me right now, that it means she's feeling the same thing I am, because if not...I don't know how I'll get through the days without her. I want to wrap her up even tighter than I had her earlier and never let go. For once, business wasn't what was most important. Getting the new shrubs and trees planted wasn't my priority. Getting to her, to learn who she was and how to make her mine was the only thing on my mind.

I pull into the parking lot of the greenhouse, parking back behind the building where

the rest of the trucks we own are situated. The guys use them for jobs for our landscaping services or to make deliveries for larger orders or items, including the huge planters I let one of the local artists sell from my shop. Nina is the only woman that I've ever had regular contact with, but even with her, I've felt nothing. Unlike with Serenia.

Sure, Serenia has her own very unique type of beauty. Fuck her hair is something else. I've never imagined a woman with multicolored hair would be the one to sway me, but I want to delve my hands into that deep turquoise blue mass and see if the pops of burnt red that remind me of the sun shining through the fall leaves is just on the top or if that color is picked up elsewhere. I want to stare into her golden green eyes, see them light up the way they did when I mentioned the greenhouse to her.

"This is yours?" Serenia asks when I come around, helping her out of the truck, making sure there aren't any limbs strewn around the area. She's wearing little flip flops that won't keep her pretty little feet safe if she stepped on them. My workers are supposed to cut them blunt, but that doesn't always happen, and sometimes, they drop some when they're cleaning out the trucks to take them to the wood chipper to make mulch.

"This is mine," I tell her, motioning towards the greenhouse, fenced in yard that holds the plants that don't require the steady temps and sunlight regulation, along with the office building that's set up for the landscaping business.

We go in through the backdoor of the greenhouse, and I give Chris a nod when his brow lifts in surprise towards me and then with a bit of hunger towards my girl. He's likely eight or nine years younger than I am, and the women that come in flock to his side with his pretty boy face, but Serenia barely gives him a glance as she slips her hand into mine.

"Hey boss, thought you were going to be at the park all day," Chris says, giving

Serenia a welcoming smile, but instead of responding to it, she turns further my way. The green of her top blending in well with the leaves of plants surrounding us.

“I ran into Serenia and am going to show her around instead. Take Paul with you and get things handled for me,” I tell him, passing along the keys to the truck, a warning in my gaze as his eyes try to slip back to my girl.

“You’re the boss,” he says with a shrug before heading out to the front to grab the other guy and I move us through towards the register area to see Nina. She works part-time for me whenever she’s not home designing her new planters, and it’s worked well for both of us the last few years.

“Hey boss, who’s your friend?” Nina asks, giving Serenia a smile before looking at me in complete shock, her eyes widening even further when she notes my hand resting on Serenia’s hip. I get it. I never show interest in anyone, let alone let a woman into my personal space, or touch them in any way that could be construed as intimate.

“This is Serenia. I ran into her at the park, and she was excited to see the greenhouse. Chris and Paul are going to head back that way and do the repairs. If you need any help, call Joe. I know he’ll gladly accept the extra hours,” I explain, and she just nods, looking between me and Serenia still.

“We can do this later if it’s not...”

“Now’s perfect,” I tell my girl, stopping her offer before it’s fully out there. “My employees can handle things themselves.”

“We can,” Nina agrees, giving us another grin. “I’m sure I’ll be seeing you around, I’m Nina since it seems the boss isn’t going to do introductions. I work the register whenever I’m not working on my pottery, so if you have any questions when he’s not

here, just let me know. I may not know everything about plants, but I can give you all the details on Duncan he won't want you to know."

"Nina..." I warn as Serenia's brow lifts a hint my way at that. "She's teasing, honey. I'm a monk. Unless I'm working, going to a meeting for the Small Business Owners Association, or hanging out with my friends, I'm home taking care of the grounds and plants there."

"It's true," Nina says with a laugh. "Even at the meetings for the association, he never pays attention to the women. I guess they were all a little too basic for him. He needs some color in his life that's not from a plant though."

"Enough," I tell her, before glancing down into Serenia's sweet eyes, thankful they're still the same happy, content as they were earlier. "You ready for the tour, honey?"

"Please," Serenia says, giving Nina a nod with a sweet smile as we walk away from her, and for the next two hours, I show off every inch of what I've built for my business.

"I have more guys that work just for the landscaping part of the business. They do everything from laying grass or sod, to planting trees and shrubs and flowers, to mowing and trimming. That's actually the first part of the business I opened. We started with mowing services, then upped it to the actual landscaping work. I got tired of having to delay jobs because whatever I'd ordered hadn't arrived on time, so then I started cultivating and growing my own out on my property. When it became a more regular thing, I bought this space, added the greenhouse and yard."

"It's incredible. I've never seen so many varieties of flowers before. I love it," she added with a huge smile that made my heart completely hers. "Do you still grow things out at your place?"

“I do. I have my own greenhouse there too. I grow a lot of flowers there, delphiniums, orchids, and roses of all colors and varieties. Would you like to see them too?” I ask, holding my breath for her answer, because if she says no, I’ll definitely be disappointed, but I’ll also understand.

She just met me. She has to be visiting town, because I know I’d have seen her before now if she wasn’t. It’d be one thing for me to just go over to someone’s house when we just met, but I’m six-four and a half, work a physically demanding job, so I’m in shape. Serenia is tiny in every way, likely no more than five-five. She can’t weigh but a hundred or so pounds. Her not trusting a near stranger is smart—well, as long as it’s anyone other than me that is, because I’ll never hurt her.

Adore her the rest of my life—oh yeah. Protect her and that happy smile on her lips—fuck yeah. Hurt her—not a chance in hell.

“I’d love to,” she answers me, and I can’t hold back the smile that hits, a warmth spreading through me when hers grows in return, and I tuck her in next to me, heading for my car to take her home.

Her eyes widen a hint when I open the door of my SUV, and I lift her up into it since it sits higher than the pickup. “I use the truck for work, this is my personal vehicle.”

“It’s fancy,” she says looking at the screen on the dashboard that lit up when the door opened, the car picking up the signal from the key fob.

“It’s more comfortable than the truck,” I tell her before heading around to ensure it’s not too hot inside the car. I don’t want her sweating because the leather seats stay warm with the sun shining into the car.

We talk as we head to the house, me trying to get a feel of how long she’ll be in town for, “Do you have plans for while you’re here?”

“Not really. My friends and I were able to get away from home for the week,” she says, and I hope that week isn’t almost over.

“Did you all go anywhere before here?” I question when she doesn’t elaborate.

“No, this was our first stop. We didn’t know what we were going to do yet. We were just celebrating the fact that we weren’t there,” she adds and the way she says it, makes it seem like she doesn’t want to go back—ever—and I’m more than okay with that.

“What made you choose our little town? We get a pretty decent turnout from tourists through here but it’s not one of the main spots for the younger crowd to visit.”

“We were just drawn here I guess. It wasn’t too far to get to, but far enough away from home that we’d be able to do what we wanted,” Serenia says, her tone once again telling me even more than her words, although they’re pretty telling themselves.

“I get that,” I offer, giving her hand a little squeeze as I turn onto my driveway. Serenia lets out a little gasp as she takes in the house. It’s not quite as large as my friend Dylan’s is, but I don’t have quite the fortune he does. He’s owned several restaurants over the years, settled here about eight years ago and we became friends quickly when we met. Our other good friend is Dane, who moved here about seven years ago. He owns a café where he sells his own coffee brand, but his real passion is roasting coffee beans to create specialty brews. He has his own place that’s similar in size to mine, but with less extra land.

My property is large. I’ve expanded it a couple times since I first bought the house. That was just before Dylan moved to town, and I renovated it, plus added on the greenhouse, and built a large dock for the lake as well as an entertainment area that houses a grill, a separate seating space, tables, and even has a little gazebo for when

the sun's a bit too much.

I don't really know why I built that part so large since it's usually just Dylan, Dane, and me here when we can manage it. Then again, seeing the awe on Serenia's face as we pull around the side of the house to park, I think it's another of those things that was for her. If her friends stick around town, and then meet someone, they'll likely come over, which means another two to four others here. I won't hold my breath for Dylan or Dane meeting women—then again, I'm sure they'd be thinking the same thing about me and here I am with Serenia, so who knows.

"This is all yours?" Serenia asks when I walk us up onto the back porch to show off the outside and greenhouse before I do something crazy like pulling her inside and up to my bedroom right this moment.

"Just waiting for the woman of my dreams to share it with," I tell her, looking straight into her eyes so she knows I mean her.

"What if the woman of your dreams was a little...different?" she says, making my brow tick up a bit not understanding what she means, or the slight seriousness of her tone.

"Different how? Doesn't want to conform to society standards by getting a job, or having 'normal' hair, or wearing makeup?" I suggest, not really sure what else there could possibly be.

"There's that, yeah," she states, and I draw her up against me tighter, sliding my hand under the edge of the bag she's been carrying, and I'm a bit surprised by its weight as I set it down on the table next to us on the covered back porch.

"You are absolutely stunning, honey. If you want to dye your hair every color in the rainbow, I won't care as long as it makes you happy. What Nina said earlier is true.

I've never met a woman that's interested me before you. Your hair color isn't going to bother me one little bit. If you hate wearing makeup, I'm not going to argue over it, or if you love it and buy tons of it and just aren't wearing any today, then hey, I'll make sure you have my card to go buy it."

"Card?" Serenia says, her brows scrunching a bit more as I brush the red pieces of hair from her face.

"My debit card," I expand but her brows are still furled and that makes mine lift a bit in return. "It's a card with a strip or chip that contains the bank account information that you use instead of checks." Her expression still doesn't relax, and it makes me second guess her meaning of different now. "Fuck...how old are you, honey?" I question, swearing she has to be over eighteen but needing to hear it, confirm it.

"Twenty-one," she answers calming the immense worry running through me, but the questions still remain. Who doesn't know what a debit card is, let alone a bank account?

"You don't have a bank account though?" I guess it's possible she's from some sort of secular type group that don't believe in banks, but I thought even the stricter Amish and Mennonites used them these days. Her outfit definitely doesn't shout religious follower—as in the ones that cover themselves head to toe—to me. Not with the tank top and shorts showing off her long legs to me at least.

Page 3

Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 2:24 am

Serenia

I can see the questions swirling behind Duncan's eyes and it's so hard not to tell him the truth. The whole truth, because I'm dying to just tell him, admit everything, but I don't want him to push me away before he could fall for me. Really fall for me, because everything else he's said to me so far makes me think that's exactly where we're heading. I hope it is—desperately.

I never want to go back to the ocean. To live in that coldness, the darkness pressing in from every angle. I want to live here, with Duncan, in this beautiful place, with the warm sun shining on us.

"We don't have them at home," I hedge, with a little shrug. "We only have paper money."

"Cash?" he says, and I nod. "US cash?" he clarifies, and I nod again because that's what we have here from that bag. "Is that some sort of...rule?"

"You could say that," I hedge again. There's no use for money of any sort in the ocean. We don't consume food. We don't buy things the way humans do. We might trade things that were salvaged from shipwrecks but that's as far as it goes, but none of that would make sense to this man. It would just cause more questions I don't want to answer yet.

"Okay, you and your friends have enough with you though, right? Most hotels require a cash deposit if you don't have a credit card to put the stay on...you do have a hotel where you're staying at, don't you?" he adds, his eyes widening and a little extra

warmth rushes through me at the concern I can see in his gaze. His hands pull me a bit tighter against him, and I never want him to let me go.

“Umm...” I get out as his eyes widen even more.

“You don’t. Where were you and your friends going to sleep tonight? Were you only here for the day?” he asks, and I can feel his heart race faster beneath my hands as I settle them on his chest.

“We didn’t really know. We just wanted to get away from home. See what else there was out there...if there was somewhere we belonged more,” I admit, and his head comes down, his forehead touching mine and it feels so good, but makes me want more as well.

“Tell me you at least have a phone so you can get in touch with them,” he pleads, and I glance up at him with a little smile.

“We can get in touch with each other,” I offer, not telling him it’s telepathically. We’ve all seen human phones, know they talk on them, drop them into the water more than they should.

“So, you can make sure they have somewhere to stay tonight, that they’re safe?”

“Yeah, we can make sure of all that,” I promise as his lips press against my temple and I want to drown in the sweetness of it. I can remember my dad holding me, kissing the top of my head, and I miss it more than ever now that I’ve remembered what sweetness feels like.

“Good. If your friends need somewhere to stay tonight, they can come here. I’ve got guest rooms they can use...you can use it too if you’d rather,” he adds and I lift my face to his, seeing a heat in his eyes that sends hunger straight through me. It’s not the

hunger to kill. Oh no, it's so different from anything I've ever felt.

"Rather use it than what?" I ask, as wetness builds between my legs. That's something completely new and different to me, but the way it feels is far from being unpleasant.

"Rather than stay with me in mine. If you need me to slow down, just tell me, honey, but I need to taste your lips now," Duncan says on a low groan. It only takes a moment to understand what he means, before his lips cover mine, his tongue slipping between them, and the instant it touches mine, my body explodes with heat, filling every last bit of me, erasing all of the coldness, and I never want it to end.

His hands slide over my body, caressing it as his tongue caresses mine, and I moan when he pulls back, breathing hard as his eyes meet mine.

"More..." I plead, never wanting this feeling to end. It's incredible, everything that the ocean isn't, and I can't begin to turn away from it—from him.

"If I give you anymore, it'll take us straight upstairs to my bed, with me buried inside you, Serenia. I've never felt like this...never wanted...needed anyone the way I need you, honey. If you don't want that, you have to tell me now," he states, his hand holding my face, his thumb tracing over my swollen lips, and I know exactly what he means this time. He's talking about mating, and it's something I never imagined wanting but with him...I want to feel his body against mine more than anything.

"I want that, Duncan. I want you," I assure him, letting out a little gasp when he lifts me into his arms, grabbing my bag, before he moves us into the house and through it quickly.

I only get glimpses of the space, but it's all beautiful. There are plants everywhere, and I smile seeing more in the bedroom he takes us into. The bed is huge, but so is he,

and I laugh when he lays me down on it, tossing my bag onto a chair.

“Your laugh is gorgeous, honey,” he whispers as he leans over me, his lips barely touching mine.

“I don’t usually have much to laugh about at home,” I half-lie. I have nothing to laugh about back home. Sure, Celestia, Melodia and I laugh occasionally when we’re away from the others, but it was usually over one of the others failing to pull a man under their spell.

Here with him, with these warm feelings rushing through me, I definitely think I can laugh a lot more. It’s all reminiscent of when I had my dad, but so much more, deeper, and I know without a doubt, this feeling that’s rushing through me is the one we were brought here to find. Surely if I love him, he can come to love me within the week.

“Then I’ll just have to make sure you have plenty to laugh and smile about from here forward,” he replies, filling me with warmth once more and I want him. All of him—now.

Duncan’s hand slid down my body, brushing across the tight peak of my breast through my top, and I couldn’t stop the gasp that fell. It felt amazing, made my body tighten, and I watch as he reaches up undoing the buttons of his shirt’s collar before pulling it off over his head, smiling at the sight of his bare chest. He’s big and strong, and my hand lifts from the bed a few inches, beginning to reach for him before I stop, unsure if he’ll want me to touch his skin. I’ve seen men push away touches before when they’ve been shirtless, so I don’t know if it’s something that’s only acceptable when dressed, and I don’t want him to stop. My tongue darts out, moistening my bottom lip that feels completely dry, and I moan as he lowers his to them, taking them gently, before lifting my hand to his chest, letting me feel him all over as the kiss goes on and on.

He pulls back, half lying over me as we both breathe in hard, my mind completely unsure of just how we got this close, but wanting more of it. All of it—of him. I can't stop now, and I press a soft kiss to his chest, pulling a moan from him. His eyes shut for a second then pop open as I slide my tongue over his nipple.

“That can drive a man crazy, honey, make him want to return every touch, every lick,” he warns, cradling me against him, my leg pressing up against his engorged length. It just makes every bit of hunger washing through me deepen and I lift against him tighter, smiling at the hunger in his eyes.

“You taste salty,” I tease, knowing he has no clue just how much that makes me want more. Salt is like heaven to sirens. Many of them force their victims to run, or swim, before they go in for kill because it brings the salt from their bodies to the top. I never believed it would make them taste better, but now, I can somewhat understand it. As crazy as it is.

The last thing I want is to kill him though. Taste all of him, yes, but never kill him.

“That's something you'll have to get used to, honey. I work outside most days, physical work which makes me sweat, so it's bound to be on my skin more often than not,” he teases in return, before taking my lips in a silky soft kiss that has my hand clinging to his shoulder, my body pressing into his.

He pulls back again, smiling as my head tips back, my breathing slowing as his hand slips under the edge of my shorts, touching the bare skin there, trailing up towards my center. “Duncan...”

“Are you going to let me have you now, honey?” he asks, rubbing his finger against the spot that aches wildly.

“Yes...oh gods, yes,” I gasp as his fingers slip under the material of the bikini

bottoms I put on earlier, teasing against a spot that feels even more incredible, making me moan when he pulls away.

“I’m not going anywhere, honey,” he promises, smiling as he lifts up from me. It’s only for a moment so he can get my shirt off me, then his hands slip beneath me, taking away the bikini top, and I shiver as his eyes roam over my top half, as his fingers trail down my stomach until they reach the button on the shorts. I lift my hips, helping him pull them off me, his fingers quickly undoing the ties of the bikini bottoms, leaving me bare before his gaze.

It filled every last bit of me with hope when I saw the intensity inside that gaze. The heat and need and hunger there was incredible, so much more than I’ve ever seen from a man gazing at any siren, and I can’t help but shiver as something strange pulses through my entire body.

“Fuck, you are so beautiful, honey,” he groans not taking his eyes off my body as I move against the sheets, wanting him closer again. “You ache, don’t you, Serenia?” he asks with a smile as I nod. “Here,” he guesses, touching my breasts with the lightest graze, making me whimper slightly and it simply makes him smile more.

“How about here, honey?” he adds as his fingers trail down to my center, teasing against a tight nub that pulses in response to it, before his touch slips down to my slick slit, bringing my hips up off the bed.

“Please Duncan,” I moan when he takes his hand away from me once more.

He gives me a soft kiss before he lifts up from me again, but I don’t argue this time when I see his hands moving to the buttons of his jeans. He slides them down his hips, taking his shorts along with them at the same time.

My jaw drops slightly as I take in his body, seeing how large all of him is. I’ve seen

other men before, but nothing as incredible as Duncan and I can't fight the deep urge to reach out for his cock. It stands straight up, and I want it inside me. I want all of him inside me. I reach out for him, my hands sliding along his waist, urging him back my way, until we're chest to chest, his warm body pressing fully against mine, and that hard cock tight against my stomach.

"Fuck you feel so damn good," he groans against my ear before lifting my face to his, taking my lips in a deep kiss. His fingers slide down to my wet slit again and he moans into my mouth feeling just how wet and ready for him I am.

My arms tighten around his neck as he pushes the kiss deeper, further, and I let out a little gasp as he guides his cock down, teasing my slit with it. Its thick head slid into my tight sheath, and I moan, lifting my hips further, pulling him in deeper. My lips press against him harder as he came across a barrier, claiming it before I had to beg him to do it.

His hips push forward as his hands on my waist pull me down against him, and I felt it tear as his huge cock flashed through it, destroying it in a second. My breathing tightens for a moment, but right behind it, wetness began to flow heavier. In a flash, he rolls us, putting me on top of him, his eyes roaming over my entire body, a smile on his lips that touch me deep inside—even deeper than his body is inside me somehow.

"Shit, honey, you're going to make me come way too fast. I've been dreaming of what it'd be like to have a woman under me, above me, but until now, that's all it's been," he says, his hand cupping my face as my heart races with hope.

"You've never..." I can't get the rest of the question out, not wanting to be disappointed if that's not what he meant.

"I was just as much a virgin as you were, Serenia. You're my only just as from here

forward, I'll be your only," he promises, and his hands lift me up and down his rigid length as I cling to him, my lips fusing with his with a smile.

A moan slips out, forcing my mouth from his when he hits even deeper inside me, and Duncan's lips slide down my neck, biting the soft flesh there as he continues to thrust up into me. Nothing ever felt that good and I swear, I'm never going to let it go, let him go. Let anything take this from me. Let anything hurt Duncan—not ever. I swear I won't.

My body pulses with the deepest waves, and I let out a gasp as one of his hands slips down to where our bodies meet, stroking that hard, pulsing point. His other hand lifts to my face, bringing my eyes back to his.

"Come for me, honey. Come for me, Serenia," he urges, confusing me a bit. "You feel it, don't you?" he asks, making me shiver as he strums against that pulsing point harder. "Let it come, fall into me, honey. Come on my hard cock while it fucks your sweet, soaking wet pussy. I want to feel you orgasm as my cock fills you. Give it to me, honey. Give me what belongs to me the way you belong to me."

I gasp, his words flooding me with the sweetest sensations, while my body bows tightly upwards. He thumbs that hard spot once more and I seize, my back arches further, my hips pressing harder into his, pulling him deep into me, and my body clutches him tight.

"Duncan...oh gods," falls from me as waves of it wash through me, over and over, better and better.

"Serenia!" he shouts a few moments later and something hot floods me, streams of it, that just makes my body cling tighter to his. I can't stay upright any longer and fall onto his chest, his hands and lips pressing all over my face and body, which simply makes me want even more of it.

His heart races wildly beneath my ear and I press a kiss to his chest, pulling a hum from him, and I smile as his big hand holds my head gently, his lips pressing into my forehead, and I can't believe anything could be better than this. That any siren could ever want to kill when this is what could really be out there waiting for us.

Page 4

Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 2:24 am

Duncan

I let out a silent curse as I step into the store, seeing not only Dane inside it, but also Dylan with a girl that looks surprisingly familiar. I know I've never met her before, but yet, I know I've seen her before. I just don't know where.

It's been two full days and three amazing fucking nights since I found Serenia, and my entire world is different. I can't explain it. Meeting her has been incredible. Being with her...that's something else entirely. I can't begin to let her go now. Two entire days of her week are gone, and I know there's not a chance in hell that I'll let her go when the week's up. I won't survive without her, which is why I'm here, looking to get a ring for her to show her how serious I am when I ask her to stay, to marry me, be mine for always.

I just didn't expect to run into my two best friends inside the jewelry store. Not when neither of them has said a word about seeing someone, let alone that they were seeing someone seriously enough to warrant a trip to the jeweler.

Dylan's head dips down, saying something to the girl with him, and her giggle reminds me of Serenia's from yesterday when I finally got around to showing her the greenhouse at home. I teasingly was comparing the colors from the orchid to her hair, telling her I just might have to scatter their petals all over our bed to see if they could become even half as gorgeous as she was, and it made her giggle in ways that touched every last bit of me.

I knew at that moment I was going to get her to marry me, so she'd be with me, as mine, forever. Which is why I'm here now, running into my best friends.

“Duncan, fancy running into you here,” Dylan says, turning further towards me with her.

“Yeah, I...” I stop talking as my gaze slips to the girl in his hold. “Do I know you?”

“I’m Melodia. Celestia and I were with Serenia when you kind of left with her,” the girl says, and a little look crosses Dane’s face at the other girl’s name, telling me precisely who he’s here to buy something for, and I don’t hate it at all. If he and Dylan are serious about Serenia’s friends, that’s another reason she might say yes, or at least agree to stay if she doesn’t immediately say yes, although I hope she will. “They’re like my sisters, so if you’re here looking for something for them...” she adds looking between us.

“I...uh...yeah...well...” Dane and I mumble, making Dylan chuckle as he drops a kiss onto Melodia’s head.

“If you’re worried I’ll ruin the surprise don’t be. I can keep a secret and well, since they are my best friends I would know what they like and don’t like. You know, if you needed help with something. Say a ring?” Melodia says and more hope hits hard that Serenia will say yes if her friend’s this eager to help us pick out rings. It means it’s something they do. Sure, engagement rings and marriage are sort of universal, but this thankfully confirms it.

“I mean, I wouldn’t turn down the help,” Dane says, and I nod glancing from them to Hank and back again as he looks amongst all of us in silent shock.

“Well then, why don’t you point out what your friends might like, and I’ll let Hank know what I was thinking about for the necklace?” Dylan suggests to her, giving her a soft kiss when she grins.

Melodia moves Dane and me away from the diamond rings despite our arguing that

diamonds are traditional. She shakes her head, pointing Dane towards a unique oval design set with black and blue sapphires. Then points at an emerald ring with a look up at me, and my brow lifts, a hint of a smile on my lips seeing it. The design has little chips of white glittering stones surrounding it, making it feel like a rose opening to reveal an emerald center.

It's perfect for my girl. I don't know why I ever thought traditional would be the right fit for Serenia. She's not traditional. Neither is Melodia, nor Celestia from what I recall, and their names have me thinking more and more that they're from some crazy religious sect.

"Is there anything you'd like to look at?" Hank asks, joining our group at the counter, and both Dane and I point out the rings Melodia suggested. "What size would you need them? These are both sized six and a half now. They can be taken up two sizes easily."

"Uh...I don't know," Dane admits first, keeping me from having to admit I don't know either, and Melodia giggles softly, looking to Hank.

"We all wear the same size," she says taking the one from Dane and Dylan lets out a low growl stopping her from slipping it on, glad she didn't try to take the one for Serenia because it should only be on her hand.

"The only ring you're going to wear on that finger will be from me," Dylan states, nearly echoing my exact thoughts, passing the ring back to Dane. "Close your eyes," he tells her, before motioning to a pink ring lifting a brow towards Hank who nods.

"It's six and a half as well," he says, handing it over, and Dylan slips it onto Melodia's finger, fitting perfectly.

"We'll take them," Dane and I state and Dylan nods as well, slipping the ring off

Melodia's finger for now so Hank can box them up.

"Eyes," Dylan tells Melodia, smiling when she instantly opens them, a grin on her lips, and he gives her a kiss pointing her towards the earrings and bracelets on display. "Go on and look around. I still need to put down a deposit for the necklace."

Dane and I both shake our heads at him as the three of us pay for our rings, but I'm pretty sure they're feeling the same thing as me. These girls were meant to be ours. They're best friends. We're best friends. They can all be close still, safe from whatever life they're coming from. We'll figure it out and go on from here. Right now, I have plans to see to for my girl.

I know deep down that she'll say yes. Last night as we were falling asleep, she had this perfectly content little look on her face, and I wanted to tell her just how much I loved her. I held back the actual words—barely—and instead, just told her that the moment I saw her, I knew she was supposed to be mine. The way her hold on me tightened, I was ready to tell her I loved her, but she fell asleep on my chest before I could get them out.

This morning, I woke her up with a kiss that sent us straight back into the heavens I never imagined were real, and then I asked if she wanted to stay home while I got a couple things done at work that I couldn't put off. I could see her eagerness to come with me, so I had to add that it was just boring paperwork that had to be done so the others got paid and she agreed to stay home. I want her with me, but I also want to make this special and bringing her to the store with me wouldn't necessarily accomplish that.

Now, I'm hoping that Dylan will keep Melodia preoccupied so she can't call and let Serenia know about the ring before I can get it on her finger. Yes, she said she could keep a secret, but as much as I'm bursting to get a ring on her finger, if these girls are feeling even the tiniest bit the same, I can't imagine containing it for long. From the

look in Dylan's eyes, he was just as ready to get his onto Melodia's hand, so hopefully, he'll ensure both her friends get to enjoy the surprise as well.

I head straight for the office to get a few things handled, ensure everything for next week is set and ready to go so I can spend the rest of the weekend with Serenia. My head's full of different ways to propose, but I don't know what's really best. If I should hold off and do something elaborate or just ask her tonight.

My phone buzzes and I let out a chuckle, telling Dylan that I'll see he has flowers delivered if he arranges for a variety of items from his restaurant be ready for me to pick up in return. He agrees easily, suggesting several things that he's learnt Melodia's never had but loved, and I breathe out in relief that I'm not the only one thinking these girls grew up somewhere stifling.

Serenia's had no problem eating any of the meat that I've made the last couple nights, so I don't think they grew up vegetarian or vegan. But something as basic as fettucine alfredo being new, definitely makes me wonder exactly where they're from—what they're trying to get away from and why. It's important, but not as important as getting her to agree to stay.

I don't care why she wants out. There's no way her feelings are a lie. She's mine now. Just mine and I intend to keep it that way for life.

Well, keep me as the only man she's ever known for life that is. Something inside me wants to see her carrying my baby in the worst way. Actually, she might already be carrying it. Our little girl.

Don't know why I keep imaging her with our little girl, but it's the only thing I see when I watch her unnoticed. It's like the future playing through my mind. Seeing her body growing with our baby, then seeing her holding our sweet little girl as they look out the window while I get them something to eat.

It's crazy, especially when you consider I'm not normally the guy that wants to cook. Sure, I make myself food when needed but I'm not like Dylan who loves to cook so much he made a career out of it. I just like the idea of taking care of my wife and our little girl more than I ever imagined to really consider the fact that I more often than not, just grab something from Dylan's or another restaurant before heading home to chill.

I head through the greenhouse, catching Nina and Joe, asking them to get the order together for Dylan and have Joe deliver it, which just makes the woman's brow lift curiously at me.

"Wait, why does Dylan who dates as little as you do need flowers, roses especially and decorations, boss?" Nina asks when I don't say a word. "I mean, if you were setting something up for that pretty girl you brought through here the other day, you'd just take it yourself. Well, really, you probably wouldn't need anything from here to start with your greenhouse. So, are you seriously saying that both you and Dylan have fallen for girls in the two weeks since our last meeting?"

I can't quite stop the chuckle that falls because it's true. All of us simply rolled our eyes at Nina when she asked if we'd brought a date to the dinner, confirming our single status without a word spoken. I can only imagine what the next one will be like when we take our girls with us. If I recall correctly, Celestia had grayish-blue hair that had pops of golden sage within it. Combine that with Melodia's pink hair and Serenia's turquoise and red mass, and I'm sure we'll definitely get some questions. I mean, the three of us are pretty boring all around, whereas our girls are anything but.

"Don't be shocked if you see Dane in here at some point either," I state with a shrug as Nina's eyes bulge.

"Hold up, what do you mean don't be shocked if Dane shows up too?" Nina demands. "What the hell did you three do...get some mail-order brides or some

craziness?”

“Not mail-order. More like met three best friends that came to town to get away from home and celebrate their birthdays, which happen to all have been on Monday,” I add, still shocked about that news that Serenia gave me Wednesday. “I met Serenia that morning, then Dane met Celestia that afternoon, and Melodia met Dylan that night. We all knew what we’d found was special, so why would we let that go?”

“Wait, their names are Serenia, Celestia and Melodia?” Nina asks, her eyes even wider still. “Were their moms from some hippie community or something?”

“I’d say it was something similar yeah,” I admit. “Serenia doesn’t like to talk about it much but none of them liked where they’re from, and since they didn’t leave until after their birthday, I’m thinking they were raised in some religious cult or something similar. They only had cash on them, didn’t know what a debit card was, so definitely some backwoods crazy shit.”

“I mean, I guess it’s possible, but be careful, okay?” Nina states and I lift a brow her way silently asking why. “It’s no secret that you, Dylan and Dane all have money. These girls could just be looking for a meal ticket to get away or they may be trying to get pregnant to then get child support to take back to their...whatever they are.”

“I think you’ve been reading too many books, Nina, but even if they did come to town just to try and not go back, that’s definitely not what this is now. Serenia can’t hide her feelings and if it’s of any comfort, I know for a fact she hasn’t been with anyone before me, so just be nice to them until you’ve all met, okay?” I hold Nina’s gaze, and she nods, letting me finish up before I head by the restaurant to grab the food.

It smells amazing and I move into the house, giving Serenia a soft kiss of hello when she comes into the kitchen quickly. The smile on her face, the relief in her eyes when

she sees me, makes me feel a million times bigger, but it's the hunger that has nothing to do with her stomach that reaches inside me entirely, filling me with reassurance that what's happening here is fully reciprocated by her.

"I hope you're hungry," I muse setting the bag with the food onto the table, the ring I bought in my pocket, and all I want is to see it on her finger—now.

"It smells so good," she sighs, her head resting on my chest as I pull her into my arms entirely.

"You smell good," I tease dipping my face down to kiss the top of her head. "I might have to be a little jealous that you took a bath without me."

"I couldn't resist your tub," she returns, lifting her eyes to mine, and I cup her face gently, kissing her soft and sweet until I know I have to stop, or we won't eat a thing today. We skipped breakfast and I'm sure that she didn't eat lunch with me not here. I want to take care of her just as much as I want her, and I pull back loving the look on her face.

"I can't resist you, honey. I knew you were special when we met. I just didn't know how special you really were. How much I'd be unable to think of life without you now, Serenia," I add, watching her eyes widen in shock and hope. "My life was boring until you walked into it and now, I don't ever want to give that up. Give you up. I can't. I know this may be fast, but I can't begin to claim this is just an attraction. I know it's not just that. That it's so much more than that."

"Dunc..." she breathes out, the shortening of my name making my body wake entirely, her body trembling a bit against me, and I hold her even closer, letting her feel how fast my heart's racing too.

"I fell in love with you the moment we met...maybe even before that. I know I was

brought here for this, for you, to find you, hold you, love you this much, honey. I know you said you only had a week here but I'm asking you, begging you, Serenia. Don't go," I say softly, her eyes still wide orbs of golden moss sparkling in the sunlight, moisture clinging to it, and it's something that I know is unique to her and I love it too. "Stay here, with me. Marry me. Be my wife, the mother of our kids—a little girl that's as beautiful and bright as you."

"Duncan," she gasps, her body pressing fully against me, a tremble rushing through her, but I know it's not fear. I can practically feel it, her need, her utter joy of the idea, and I want it even more now.

"Serenia, will you be mine forever?" I ask, pulling out the ring box, unable to wait. "Will you marry me?"

"Yes, yes, a million times yes. I love you too, so much," she cries, her jaw dropping when she sees the ring I slip onto her finger. It's a truly perfect fit. Just like she is with me, and I'll make certain she always feels like this. Always.

Page 5

Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 2:24 am

Serenia

A full smile slips across my lips as the fading sunshine reflects off the ring on my finger. Duncan's inside cleaning up after our meal and I'm enjoying the quiet evening. There's the tiniest hint of water flowing, but it's so minor compared to when we would surface in the ocean. This is soothing, unlike the roar of the waves out there.

I still can't quite believe that this worked—at least for me. It seemed almost anticlimactic. I guess I was expecting to feel something...more, deeper, when Duncan said he loved me last night. It was pure perfection in the moment. My heart felt like it could burst with happiness, and I gladly said yes.

It wasn't until I was almost asleep that it hit me that he'd said it, but I didn't feel any different. Well, I was even happier, yes. I felt safe and secure enough to fall asleep in his arms without a single worry, but that was it.

When my tail transformed into legs I'd felt it, the tingling sensation that wrapped around me, but it wasn't there last night. Which now has me a little worried that maybe he didn't really mean it, but yet, I can't believe he doesn't. Not with the way he looks at me, what he's said about the way he was pulled here. And especially not with him saying he wanted a little girl with me.

Sirens can only have one child and it's always a girl. Which makes him saying he wants kids with me a little sad because we'll only ever have the one, but the fact that he wants a girl tells me he won't be disappointed with that at least. It's just crazy to think this is it. That we're really free of the curse—well, at least I am. Hopefully that

is.

I can't hold off another minute now and reach out towards Celestia and Melodia, hoping I'm not interrupting anything with them. I don't even know if they've managed to meet anyone.

We shut out the rest of the Lycophron when we headed to the lagoon, then agreed to give each other space while we were here. To only contact one another if something was wrong, but the week's almost over and I need to know if the others have experienced anything different if they've met someone. Gods, I hope they've met someone that is even half as good to them as Duncan is to me, because even that would still be amazing.

Can you talk? I send out to them telepathically, breaking our silence.

'I can,' Melodia immediately responds, her tone happier than what's normal for even her.

'I can for now,' Celestia adds calming me.

Checking in to see if everything's going okay.

'It's been great,' Celestia assures us.

'It's so awesome,' Melodia responds, and I can't stop the grin that hits at the softness of her tone.

Do you want to get together tomorrow to talk more? We only have two days left.

'Sounds great. I'm good to do the morning,' Celestia replies surprising me because she's not usually a morning person.

‘Me too, ooohh...why don’t we meet back at that place where we had breakfast? Their pancakes were soooooooo good,’ Melodia suggests, and I laugh silently, because that is our Melodia through and through.

‘Sounds good,” Celestia agrees.

I’ll see you all there, I add before turning my attention to Duncan as he comes out the door, his arms wrapping around me, pulling me into his hold, and all I can think about is this right here. The worries over the deadline fade and I snuggle deep into his arms, smiling happily.

It stays throughout the night as Duncan holds me close and I get to the place last, seeing the others in the same booth that we had last time. Duncan was fine with us meeting up, but insisted on driving me here when I told him I could walk here from the greenhouse if he needed to do anything for work. The way he kissed me when he said that wasn’t happening, that he wouldn’t let anything begin to harm me by not taking me, had me more than agreeable to him dropping me off.

“I take it things are going well with the guy from the park?” Celestia asks, as I slip onto the seat across from her.

“Better than that,” I state, unable to keep the smile from my lips. “You found someone?”

“Yeah, he’s great,” she sighs, a little hint of color in her cheeks before I glance at Melodia who is practically glowing.

“You look happier than even normal,” I muse. “I take it you met someone too?”

“After worrying that I wouldn’t for the better part of that first day, yeah,” Melodia says making Celestia’s eyes widen in a bit of surprise. “You found...” she stops,

looking to Celestia curiously.

“Dane, his name’s Dane,” Celestia says.

“Dane,” Melodia says with a nod, “well, you found him just a couple hours after Serenia found...”

“Duncan,” I tell them as Melodia grins, giggling a bit when Celestia gives her a curious look.

“Does he own a greenhouse?” Celestia asks and I nod, looking shocked. “Dane said his best friends were Duncan who runs a greenhouse and...”

“Dylan who owns a restaurant,” Melodia blurts out excitedly.

“Wait, what?” I gasp, and Melodia nods bouncing giddily. “So, the guys we met all know each other?”

“Seems so,” Celestia states, shaking her head a bit still. “So how did you meet Dylan?”

Melodia fills us in making me grin as she adds, “One look at him and I was hooked. He made me the most incredible food ever and then took me home. He told me Friday night he loved me, fell in love the moment he saw me, which was before I ever saw him...”

“Duncan said the same thing when we were falling asleep Thursday night. That the second he saw me, he knew I was supposed to be his,” I admit with a sigh, my eyes glowing with happiness and the same look is in Celestia’s as well, relieving me even further.

“Dane told me last night he never believed in love at first sight until he saw me. I just...can it really be this simple?” Celestia adds. “I mean, I didn’t tell him I’m...”

“Neither did I,” Melodia admits glancing my way.

“Are you kidding? I didn’t want him to think I needed to be locked up by telling him that, especially not when he’d just...”

“What?” Melodia asks when I pause, a knowing glint in her eyes before I even say.

“Asked me to marry him,” I state, showing off the beautiful ring that’s incredible and somehow just perfect.

“Dylan asked me Friday night,” Melodia tells us, showing off her ring and it fits her entirely.

“Dane asked me last night,” Celestia adds, and Melodia squeals seeing it on her finger.

“Oh, they’re even more perfect than when I saw them...”

“Saw them? What?” I say stopping Melodia’s words and she claps a hand over her mouth, giggling.

“Melodia...what’s going on? You don’t have visions,” Celestia whispers giving her a little glare.

“Dylan found a pearl in an oyster mistakenly sent to the restaurant, took me to the jewelry store to get them to make it into a necklace and we ran into Dane and Duncan when they came in to find rings for you,” she says with one long rush of breath. “I promised I wouldn’t tell. They both were looking at boring diamonds to begin but

once I pointed them in the right direction, they didn't hesitate on which to buy. Dylan wouldn't let me try on any of them to see if they'd fit. He had me close my eyes and then slipped this one on me, then bought it without me knowing."

"Well then, thank you for your help. I love my ring," I assure her, giving her a hug.

"So do I," Celestia agrees with a grin at us. "But honestly, is this all it took? I mean, I don't really feel any different. I guess I was just expecting something more like when we got our...legs," she adds on a whisper as someone approaches our table, thankfully confirming my worries making me feel a million times better about having them to start.

"And you will, the next time you're in water," a voice says from the end of the space, and a gasp falls from each of us seeing the woman there. The undeniable glow surrounding her combined with the adoring looks from all of the men in the diner telling us exactly who she is.

"I've been in water since Dylan told me. I was in water with him Friday night when he told me he loved me again," Melodia responds, and Aphrodite simply smiles at us.

"Natural body of water—a lake, river, or the ocean," she expands. "It'd be more of a curse than a gift if you transformed anytime you were in water, or if it rained. To not be able to swim in a pool, especially in a place like this."

"So, the next time we go into the water what? We'll regrow our tails?" Celestia asks and she nods. "And what about the cold?"

"Have you felt even an inkling of it since you met your men, who by the way, are all outside waiting for you to come out, and who all ignored me on my way in here. If I didn't know their hearts were only ever meant for you, I might feel slighted," Aphrodite says with a tinkle of a laugh that brings more male attention to her.

“What does that mean?” I question her, completely shocked and yet thrilled with the idea that Duncan could only ever love me.

“Exactly what I said. You were worried it was too easy, that they fell too quickly,” she adds to Celestia who nods, her eyes flowing over to me as well even though I never voiced the question aloud. “It was never the men that didn’t fall in love, my dears. Even when the ancient sirens were given their chance, the men fell in love with them, but the sirens only focused on their need for revenge. Only allowed the coldness of their hearts to rule. Only when a siren allows herself to want love over anything else can she find it. Each of you opened yourselves up to its possibility and listened when it spoke. You could have ignored the pull to go through the park, but you didn’t, Serenia, allowing you to find Duncan. Celestia, you ignored the rest of the crowd pushing you forward, winding your way down a strange path to find Dane. And my dear sweet, Melodia, you ignored all of the men that would have gladly fallen in love with you but opened yourself up when Dylan appeared.

“No other siren has ever allowed herself that, but I always hoped you three would be different. No matter how many temptations were put in front of you, you never once used your powers to harm. I wouldn’t have been so forgiving of the man you saw on the beach that night that killed his girlfriend. I would have still offered you the chance if you had used your powers and lured him to a watery death,” Aphrodite adds to Celestia who is even more shocked now, but then again, I think we all are. “So now that you know, go get your men. Tell them what you really are so they can love all of you. Oh, and in case you’re worried, there’s one—or two, last gifts for you. The first is perhaps more for your men than you,” she says making us curious. “They won’t have to worry about anyone seeing what’s theirs when you’re in water. You’ll still feel as you did, but your body will be covered entirely like your tail, think more mermaid than siren.”

“Duncan will be happy to know that,” I say with a laugh making the other’s eye brows lift a bit my way and I just shrug.

They don't need to know that Duncan almost punched some guy that was leering at me Thursday when we were walking through town. They might worry that he's a brute like others we've seen, but it was actually the opposite.

I was wearing a flowy top that had just tiny little strings over the shoulders. I didn't bother with a bikini top under it, not expecting a gush of wind to lift it almost completely up. Thanks to Duncan's quick reflexes it stopped just below my breasts, but some jerk started catcalling—as Duncan put it—and almost took his head off when he wouldn't stop. It definitely made me feel special, because he pulled me in close and just held me, reassuring us both that I was safe. It was truly perfect in that moment.

“And the last gift?” Melodia asks Aphrodite pulling my attention back up to them.

“You won't have to worry about your daughters' hearts ever being cold. Their fathers' hearts will protect them even more than your fathers' did with you. You were each born of the man who truly loved the woman your mothers should have been, which is why your powers were greater, your ability to resist the cold deeper. None of it will ever touch your daughters and you will get to spend lifetimes with your mates because once your child is born, that is when my last gift to you will come. A shared lifespan created through your shared blood,” she says nodding at the questions in our eyes.

“They'll share our immortality?” Celestia questions when I can barely breathe, the thought of Duncan never being taken from me like my father was...calmed my soul entirely.

“And every time the others claim another mortal life, it will strength them the same as you. My own little payback for them ignoring my gracious gift so many centuries ago,” Aphrodite says getting up, giving us smiles before she heads out the door, leaving a trail of drool in her wake.

“Should we tell them together?” Melodia asks and at the nod from us, we make our way out of the diner to find our men.

“Done already?” Dylan asks, his brow lifting a bit as Melodia’s stomach rumbles. “You clearly didn’t eat enough, angel.”

“We actually only got around to ordering drinks,” I admit, pulling a grumble from Duncan as I slip into his side, resting my head on his shoulder.

“Everything okay, baby?” Dane asks Celestia.

“Well, we wanted to tell you all something...”

“About where we grew up,” Melodia adds when Celestia pauses.

“You can tell us anything, angel. Whatever it is, we’ll be here for you,” Dylan promises.

“Do you think we could go to the house and explain, Dunc?” I ask, telling Celestia and Melodia about the lake on his property telepathically.

“Of course we can, honey,” he tells me instantly, his eyes warm and concerned, but full of love that I adore.

“Let me grab some groceries so I can cook my girl some breakfast and then we’ll be there,” Dylan states and we all agree, letting me snuggle into Duncan’s side as we head back home. I don’t think we have to worry too much about the truth now. Not with what Aphrodite said about our men only being meant to love us, but they might not like that we’re not exactly human and I don’t want it affecting us going forward. I really want that baby Duncan talked about when he proposed—more than anything I want it, and him to be able to love even this part of me.

Page 6

Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 2:24 am

Duncan

Serenia gives my hand a tug towards the door after we finish the meal Dylan made, and I can't deny that I like seeing my girl with her friends. Maybe not as much as I like being alone with her, but there's something about the three of them that's so incredibly special, and it shines even more when they're all together.

We head down to the lake, the girls sharing looks before Dylan pulls Melodia into his arms, cupping her face gently, his eyes filled with the same worry I feel seeing the uncertainty on Serenia's face.

"Whatever it is going on, just tell us, angel," he urges, and Melodia nods taking a step back from him as Serenia gives the other two a curious look.

"This might be simpler," Melodia tells him as the three girls toss aside their dresses, leaving them in bikinis, and they dive into the water while the three of us are momentarily stunned.

It grows when there's a glow coming from the water, but before I can even comprehend it, the three of their heads pop up out of the water. I blink my eyes, swearing I'm not really seeing what I'm seeing. It's not humanly possible.

Serenia's body looks like it's wrapped with silken water, blue along her torso with white foam creating a bikini top hiding her breasts, rather than the green bikini she jumped into the water wearing. Which definitely makes me happy, even if I know from just looking at my friends that they have no interest in my girl—only their own.

Similarly to Serenia's top changing, Celestia looks like the night sky has wrapped her in layered clouds, darkened with no sun lighting them, creating a feathery look along her torso and over her breasts, rather than the grey one she had on. Melodia looks like she's wrapped in iridescent gemstones forming an off the shoulder looking top, instead of the pink and purple thing she'd been wearing.

"What the fuck?" I get out, and the girls turn towards us, as we move down the dock towards them.

"So definitely not an actual angel..." Dylan teases, as I slip down onto the end of the dock, seeing more than just Serenia's top has changed. There's a little splash of water as a fin breaches the water, and I wrap my arms around her, lifting her towards me, staring down at what's clearly a tail where her thighs and legs just were. "I wondered where you could have been living to not know what the internet and TV was but this..."

"Never saw this coming," I say, while Dane is kissing Celestia hungrily. It goes on for several more moments and I can't stay quiet. "Dude, can you stop long enough for them to explain?" I ask, and finally, Dane lets Celestia up to breathe.

"Okay, this might take a bit so..." Melodia pauses with a glance at Serenia and Celestia. They nod then push themselves up out of the water onto the dock with us. A shock hits when almost instantly, the tail and top disappear, the bikinis returning. I really don't know if I like all the skin it shows still, but my girl is definitely hot regardless of if it's in it or with a tail.

"I like the tail more than the bikini, even if it's just in front of my friends, angel," Dylan says, echoing my feelings and I can see in the knowledge that I feel the same in Serenia's eyes as she looks up at me. There's a bit of hesitation still that kills me. I don't know what the hell is really going on, how she's not fully human, but I'm not running away from it. Not a chance. She's mine and I'm keeping her for good.

I guide Serenia over to a lounge chair, pulling her into my arms and press a soft kiss to her temple, holding her to me tightly as the others settle in around us. My jaw's almost on the ground when Serenia tells us, "We're sirens."

"Sirens, like the beings that lure sailors to their deaths on the rocky shores?" Dane asks and they nod. "I thought they were half birds not..."

"We used to be," Celestia says making his brow lift even higher but mine goes right along with it, because sure, I've read about them before but never imagined finding they really existed. Let alone that I fell in love with one.

"Sirens once roamed the skies, singing their songs, getting men to follow them, on the sea and on land. Others grew jealous, and when a siren lured a man a muse wanted, they went to Hera and claimed the sirens thought they were the greatest beings in the world. The smartest, the prettiest, the most talented, which also upset Athena, because she felt she was the smartest," Melodia tells us, resting in Dylan's hold until he leans back a bit, his brow high as he looks at her in shock.

"Hera and Athena, as in the goddesses?"

"Yes," she answers him seriously. "To teach the sirens a lesson, they tricked them into a singing competition with the muses. A sirens' song is only meant to lure, it sounds different to everyone, and not every siren can lure every man at the same time."

"So when several siren sing at once, the ones that have no effect sound hideous to the listener. Muses on the other hand," Serenia says, "are meant to inspire, especially music itself. So when a group of them get together, it creates the most beautiful sound ever."

"The sirens were laughed at by the men present, and because they won, the muses

were able to decide what their prize was. They said they wanted the sirens' feathers, to make them even more beautiful to men, because ours were the prettiest. Once plucked, the sirens' wings shriveled and could no longer support them in flight, and they were trapped on the ground to walk on their talons," Celestia adds.

"But the men that once were under their spell now mocked them, and unable to fly, they captured all of them and told them to try and put them under their spell when they looked like monsters. They wanted to drown all of them, and so, they tied the sirens' feet together and threw them into the water. They sank fast, the pressure made their bodies elongate while their legs fused together, their skin turning to scale, and the wings rotated and became arms. The coldness of the water turned them into the true monsters the men called them. Their once lovely human faces became bone and terror, their hair long weeds, and ice flowed through their veins, allowing them to breathe under the water. Horrified of the creatures they created, the muses disappeared, and the men tried to fight. In the water they stood no chance. Several were killed instantly, others, managed to escape, and when the sirens went after them, it was discovered that they could not cross the land because they had no feet or legs to stand on any longer," Melodia admits sending Dylan's brows up higher and mine definitely follows.

"But all of you have...and you're even more beautiful..." he says.

"The beauty was a gift from Aphrodite," Celestia explains, and that's a name I know even if I'm not some scholar on Greek mythology—that suddenly doesn't seem so mythical now.

"She also gave the sirens the chance to reclaim what was taken from them, freedom to roam the land and sea," Serenia adds, nodding at me when my brow lifts her way a hint as I glance at her pretty legs still bare beneath my shirt she's wearing.

"But the sirens used their newfound legs to hunt down the men that mocked them, to

kill them instead. Aphrodite offered them the chance to find love, real love, but all they could feel was the cold in their hearts, the urge to kill. And seven days after they were given their legs, as they slayed the last mortal man, Aphrodite took back her gift of legs, forcing the sirens back into the seas. For nearly three thousand years, the sirens have used their powers and Aphrodite's gift of beauty to kill. Not knowing they had another choice if they just ignored the icy cold," Melodia says. "None of us ever liked the cold, the urges it created within us to kill. Sirens become their most powerful after they turn twenty-one. The bloodlust is said to be unbearable at that point. Likely because that's how old the original sirens were when they were thrown into the ocean."

"Melodia discovered a loophole that could keep us from becoming full-sirens," Serenia says giving her a grin and once more, it's like I can feel what she's feeling. The relief, happiness, joy that it really happened, and I hold her closer. "She told us about it, and we all agreed it was our only option."

"As long as we didn't kill by the end of our twenty-first birthday, we would get the chance to have Aphrodite's gift given to us. So, we spent our birthday together in the lagoon outside of town, keeping each other from letting the cold consume us, and as the night turned to midnight, we found ourselves with legs," Celestia states, laughing a bit.

"Serenia was four before she came to live with us, so she knew the most basic things about humans, was able to teach us how to walk, and then Celestia remembered a hidden bag of clothes that also had money in it that would likely be useful. We walked to town that morning, and then one by one, met you all."

"And spent several days worried that you wouldn't fall in love with us, and we'd have to go back," Serenia adds, and I just hold her gaze because not loving her is impossible.

“And then worried that it seemed too simple that you did fall in love with us, until Aphrodite joined us in the diner at least,” Celestia says and all three of us guys share confused looks at that. “She walked right into it past you. Said you ignored even her, but it wasn’t a surprise since your hearts were never meant for anyone but us.”

“So, we really were brought here to find you,” Dylan says to Melodia, echoing what I felt once more, and she nods his way. “And you still were worried it wasn’t real?”

“We’ve spent our entire lives fighting against the cold. You’ve no idea just how powerful it was, so yes, when nothing happened when you told us you loved us, we were worried somehow our powers had gotten you to fall for us, even though you said it happened in an instant,” Melodia states.

“Then Aphrodite told us, it was never your love we had to worry about, it was always us. That you would have fallen for us no matter what, because you were destined to be ours, but if we hadn’t listened, hadn’t fought the cold bloodlust, we wouldn’t have seen it, seen any of you, and ended up like the others,” Celestia adds, snuggling into Dane’s hold as he kisses her forehead.

“Knowing what it took to get us all here, in this town, and knowing that we all had listened, we knew her words were true,” Serenia says, giving me a smile that I feel even deeper now.

“And then she told us she’d given us two more gifts,” Melodia states, giggling a bit as she looks up at Dylan. “Well, she said the first was really for you all.”

“Being that when we transformed back into our siren bodies, we’d have a little more coverage than normal, because sirens only have tails,” Serenia says making my brow lift high in confusion.

“And hair for coverage,” Celestia expands on for them, bringing a growl to my lips

that Dylan echoes.

“So the other gift is that you all can transform whenever you want?” Dane asks her.

“Because in the water you had a tail but once out of it...”

“That was part of her original gift for those that found true love not the extra ones she told us about in the diner,” Celestia answers.

“She did say that we could only transform back into our siren form when in a natural body of water. So the lake, a river, or the ocean. Pools won’t do it, and neither will the rain thankfully because we’ve kept our existence from humans for thousands of years now,” Serenia adds, nodding at me with a grin like she knows I was thinking sirens were total myths earlier.

“So, what was the last gift?” Dylan questions.

“You all as ours forever. Sirens are immortal beings,” Melodia tell him, sending his brow upwards as I hold my breath a bit. The thought of never losing Serenia floods me with a peace I never knew I needed. “Every soul that the Lycophron consumes, gives us more strength. Even if we didn’t do the actual killing or consuming, the strength is shared by all through the bloodline. Normally, when a siren mates, it’s to breed. When a siren has a man under her lure, it’s to kill, unless she’s ready to breed. Once a siren knows she’s with child, she kills the man, so he has no chance of sharing a bond with the child.”

“That bond gives them strength and sirens hatred of men is as deep as the bloodlust that runs through them. But that strength was just that, strength, not immortality,” Serenia adds. Something in her tone hits hard, and I need to know what made her happiness dim this much.

“But it will be different with us, for us,” Melodia says to her, telling me I’m right that

there's something she hasn't said. "Aphrodite told us that when we have daughters, they won't ever have to fight the cold. They won't feel it because of your hearts, and with our daughters' birth, the bond will create a new one for us, where we'll get to have you with us for eternity. They as well as all of you will share in the strength, her victory over the ones that use her gifts for evil."

"They won't be able to kill you even in the water then," Serenia says to me, shuddering with the memories in her eyes that hurts deep inside me.

"Until then, you have to swear you'll stay out of the ocean, away from the rivers or lakes that connect to them, because if our mothers do come, that's as far as they can go," Celestia adds.

"Can they try to hurt you?" Dane asks her, making my breath stall again, needing to know that Serenia can't be taken from me.

"They can try, but it would only kill them as well. A siren can't kill another siren, without killing all of her blood," Serenia answers, her hand on my chest, right over my heart calming its racing beat. "If our mothers tried to kill us, it would destroy them, as well as our entire lineage."

"Even if they tried to have Celestia's mother kill me, and mine kill Serenia, and hers kill Celestia, it would still kill them as well," Melodia adds giving Dylan a reassuring smile.

"There must be thousands of sirens out there then," I say and Serenia shake her head no.

"Sirens can only have one child each, and sirens only have girls," she tells me, and the fact that we can have a daughter fills me with happiness even if it'll only ever be one.

“A little you that’s part me too sounds perfect, honey,” I return, making her flush, and her eyes soften more, the glow returning to them.

“Nothing wrong with having more of perfection in the world, that’s for sure,” Dylan agrees.

“I can’t wait to have a little piece of you and me in the world, baby,” Dane states.

“I wonder what our daughters’ powers might be,” Melodia says, bringing curious looks from all of us men her way.

“What do you mean powers?” Dylan asks.

“Well, sirens have powers to lure men,” Melodia states, and he nods. “We have different ways of achieving that, usually they’re enhanced based on who our father is. Mine was a musician, so my song is more powerful than anyone else’s. There was never anyone I couldn’t enchant if I tried. When sirens are pregnant, they can feel what the powers their child will have, and normally we’re named after them in some way.”

“Hence Melodia,” Dylan says, and she nods in return.

“My father was an astronomy professor, it left me with an affinity with the sky. Sailors used to track their positions using the night sky. Others with similar gifts would rearrange a star here and there to confuse them, draw them nearer to their deaths. With new machines, their abilities weren’t quite as useful, so when I was born with the ability to disrupt the force of the moon and stars, they realized I could mess with their machines as well,” Celestia adds.

“And men know to watch out for rocks as they bring a ship in, and while some of our kind can mask them, no one else could create an entire vision of land so true that men

would leave their ship and fall into the vast ocean for the sirens to drag into their depths. My father was a geologist with the Army Corp of Engineers. He managed to escape my mother when she tried to kill him the first time. Found her when she was having me, and stole me, to try and keep me from her, keep me safe. I was four when we moved to a base near the ocean, and she found me. Despite his strength, he was pulled into the depths and drowned when my mother pulled me into the water so I would have my first transformation. At least now it's not painful," Serenia says, and the same sadness from earlier fills her eyes. I wrap her up tightly, holding her close, giving her a soft kiss to show her I understand. That I'm here for her. I always will be.

The others stay through lunch, before heading home and I take Serenia upstairs, kissing every bit of her, showing her my love hasn't changed a single bit, only grown deeper.

"Promise me you won't go near the water," she says as we're laying in bed, our bodies sweaty and touching one another entirely.

"What?" I ask, turning her to face me, lifting her face up to mine.

"Your lake here is fine. Pools are the same, but the ocean and any of the rivers that flow directly out to it aren't. Most sirens won't go too far up a river because it's fresh not salt water, but some will, especially if they're hunting one specific person. Modern dams will stop them, but there was lore that one siren traveled all the way from Argentine Sea, up to the Gulf, and up the Missouri River until she found the man that evaded her some two hundred years ago. He was a fisherman from the norther part of the US. What's now Montana I think," she says but I still don't fully understand.

"Why should I avoid the ocean though, honey?" I ask her, seeing fear in her eyes as I run a knuckle down her gorgeous face.

“Because if my mother learns about you, that I’m here with you, staying with you...that I won’t ever become a full-fledged siren, she’ll take you from me and I’d die if that happened. I hated being a siren, being in the ocean. I wanted my dad back but because of me...”

“What? Serenia, what happened?” I ask because that pain from earlier is there but even deeper now, and I hate it.

“When I said my mother found me...my dad told me not to go near the water. That I wasn’t allowed. I kept feeling this pull towards it though and one night, I slipped out to figure out why. I know now that it wasn’t even the water that was pulling me, but my mother telepathically urging me to get to the water. That’s how we talk,” she adds as my brows lift at her news. “The closer to the ocean I got, the deeper the connection became, but it was actually her whispering to me to come to the water that had me so curious. As soon as I stepped foot on the beach she felt I was there and before my dad could get me and get me back home, she and the other sirens were there. She grabbed me, pulling me into the water while the other sirens held my dad under it. He was stronger but against a dozen sirens...he died because of me.”

“No, honey,” I state, wiping away the tears that fall from her sweet eyes. “He died because of your mother and the others who were completely taken by the cold, by the need to kill. He came to find you, to protect you because that’s what dads do, what I’d do if it was our little girl that was missing or taken.”

“I can’t lose you, Duncan,” she cries, the tears falling faster.

“You won’t, honey. Not now, not ever. Isn’t that what you were told? That when we have a baby, the bond created will protect me too?” I remind her, calming her frantic breathing.

“Until then...you have to stay away from the water. Promise me,” she begs and

there's no way I can deny her that.

"I promise," I whisper to her, softly kissing away her tears. "I'll be careful, I swear. I won't ever do anything to risk you being hurt in any way. But you know, if you want to shorten the time until I'm fully protected, that's apparently up to you," I add with a grin as her eyes open, staring up at me in surprise. "You said a siren can only breed when she wants to, so whenever you want that, want to bring our little girl into the world, I'll be more than ready for it."

"So, if I said I was ready right now?" she asks, her eyes glowing more, and I don't bother answering her with words. My lips cover hers and I show her just how ready to breed her I really am—all night long.

Page 7

Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 2:24 am

Serenia

I can't help but smile as I hear Jasmine and Duncan's conversation as he tucks our little girl into bed. This day started as incredible and now...it's almost as shocking as that day eight years ago when Aphrodite's gift gave us legs. I still can't quite believe that Melodia's actually pregnant. We all have beautiful our little girls, born nine months after our birthday, bonding us with our men in even deeper ways.

I think we've all loved our little families, but more than once over the years, each of us has expressed a wish that we'd have been able to have more than one baby. Especially when we see our men with our little girls. Duncan is incredible with Jasmine, our amazing little girl that has the gift to turn the air around you into the sweetest scent ever. He's patient and kind and loving, and not just with Jasmine.

We each take turns watching the girls, letting them have sleepovers while the other two couples get to spend the night entirely alone. When it's our turn, there's no difference in how he treats Madeleine, Melodia and Dylan's little girl, from Hazel, Celestia and Dane's little one, or our sweet Jasmine. If one of them scrape their knee, he's right there making sure they're okay, and gods I've wanted to give him another baby so he can have more of that.

He's done so well dealing with the girls' powers, so I know he'd be able to handle more. Madeleine's powers occasionally seep through her cooking making everything taste like heaven. While Hazel's energizing ability occasionally hits when she's happiest and it makes one forget the need to sleep. He's never complained even when it means he wakes exhausted for work the next morning, or with a stomachache because Madeleine's cooking can sometimes miss the edible mark since she's only

seven.

Now, with this newest information from Aphrodite that a siren can have more than one baby, it's running through me so deep that it's hard to contain it. Even more so after listening to Jasmine's sweet little plea for a little baby sister—or brother since that's a new little gift Aphrodite's put into existence with help from the fates.

“Someone swam a little too much today I think,” I tease as my two loves quiet when I slip into our girl's room. Jasmine lets out a yawn confirming my suspicions and I grin when she lifts her arms up for a hug.

“Happy birthday, Mommy,” she sighs, filling my heart with love and happiness, and I smile seeing the look in Duncan's eyes as he watches us. He gets more protective of us every year, but I love it. Love that he's still concerned even though he knows we're immortal. That even though we were disowned by our mothers and the rest of the Lycophron, it couldn't undo the bloodline connection that kept us from getting sick or dying.

That day on the beach, telling our mothers that we weren't coming back was the last day of true worry that I felt. Yes, there've been times when I've been concerned about Jasmine or wondering where Duncan was when he wasn't home at normal time, but the depth of fear and worry I had back then is gone.

It soothed me to know that just as no other woman could turn our men's heads, none of the other sirens could put them under their spell. Duncan teased me that night that I'd already ensnared him, wrapped myself around his heart like vines do on a trellis, so no one else could begin to override my hold on him, and he never wanted anyone else to begin to try. Hearing our mothers shouting that we'd regret our decisions, that our men would betray us, made it crystal clear that none of them ever felt an ounce of love—not even towards us—or they'd know what's between Duncan and me, Dylan and Melodia, and Dane and Celestia is true. It's a gods given gift that we all cherish.

“Thank you, baby,” I whisper back to her, giving her a kiss to the cheek as her eyes flutter shut, and she’s out before we’re even at the door.

“How much did you overhear?” Duncan asks, his arms wrapping around my waist, pulling me back into his strong hold. He may be forty-four now, but he’s even stronger thanks to the bond and his hold floods me with love, longing, and desire.

“Jasmine asking for a baby sister—or brother,” I muse, my breath hitching when his mouth trails down my neck as his hands move quickly to pick me up, carrying me into our bedroom.

“And what do you think about that idea? Another little girl for us, or a little boy we can name after your dad,” he suggests as he lays me onto the bed, and no words are needed, just kisses and touches, until stars are right before my eyes without needing to manipulate any mountain to take me closer to them.

“Do you mean it?” I ask as breath returns, my lips teasing his skin, tasting the delightful saltiness on it now. It just makes me want him again and I slip over his hardened length, looking down into his eyes as he simply lays there grinning.

“Always honey. If you want another baby I’m more than okay with it, but if you don’t want another, or don’t want another now, I’ll be okay with just having you like this,” he states, and I lick up his neck, delighting in the taste, before meeting his lips in another kiss that sends us straight back to the stars.

It’s so hard to say what I want more. Another little girl like our Jasmine because I know how much Duncan would love another little girl, or a little boy that’s definitely making me yearn, but I know I want it. With everything I am, I want it. So, I’m not at all shocked, as I was when Melodia told us she was pregnant on our birthday, a few weeks later when I feel the difference inside my body. The same warmth that settled in my belly when I was pregnant with Jasmine is there and I move into Duncan’s arms as I slip into the kitchen where he already has our breakfast ready and put his

hand on my belly.

“Little girl or little boy, I’ll love either,” Duncan says drawing a full squeal from Jasmine when she realizes what that means.

It’s not shocking when a couple of weeks later Celestia also admits she’s pregnant too, and we enjoy growing big with our babies together again. Although I grow bigger than even Melodia who’s at least a month or more ahead of me. We tend to avoid doctors. It’s not needed for us health wise and there’s no telling if something in our blood would give us away, so there’s no one to ask about it.

I don’t feel any different than when I was carrying Jasmine other than being twice the size, so I try not to worry about it as the months progress. I’m around six months when it really becomes noticeable. My belly is even bigger than when I was due with Jasmine, bigger than Melodia is still, and I fret about it while Duncan takes Jasmine over to Celestia’s for a sleepover.

“What’s wrong, my child?” a voice questions, surprising me and I turn, finding Nina there, but it’s not the normal Nina. At least, not the one I’m used to seeing. She’s almost glowing with the light coming into the room behind her, and she’s wearing her hair down when it’s usually up out of the way.

“Nina?” I query because the words she used are definitely not normal. Yes, we’ve become friends over the years. She’s one of the only other humans outside of our men that know what we are, but she’s never called me ‘my child’ like that before and her voice is a little different as well.

“Not quite,” she says confusing me more. “Unlike Aphrodite, I don’t like traveling down to the human world. Instead, I momentarily inhabit willing beings while staying on Mount Olympus. They don’t always recall the conversations later, though your friend here normally does.”

“Who are you?” I ask, covering my belly as I breathe in deeply, concern turning towards worry quickly and I hate that feeling.

“I’m Hera, goddess of childbirth amongst others,” she answers, and my eyes widen completely, unsure why she’d inhabit Nina before now, come here now, when she was one of the goddesses that caused the sirens to be cast into the ocean as well. “When I became aware of not one, but three sirens that were able to receive Aphrodite’s gift to come onto mortal land again, I was concerned. I hovered, watching you all, then came down through Nina to see how your man would react to someone suggesting that you might not truly love them, was only with them for money perhaps. His response told me that he was true in his love and that you had never lured a man before, because if you had, you would not have been a virgin in your human form.”

“Is that why Nina kept asking us questions, certain we weren’t just from some weird religious group as the guys told everyone?”

“Yes, as I said, most don’t recall the conversations or being inhabited, but your friend is different. I suspect she has some minute trace of god’s blood in her family line. She is not the reason I’m here right now though, you are, my child,” she says, and I relax a bit as I rub my stomach, the baby incredibly active right now.

“Is everything alright with the baby?” I ask, needing to know that more than anything else.

“They are both perfectly fine,” she replies, and my jaw drops as I stare at her in shock.

“Did you say both ?” I question on a bit of a gasping laugh.

“You couldn’t decide if you’d rather have another girl that you knew your husband wanted in his heart, or the little boy he mentioned that you wanted, so fate stepped in

and gave a helping hand. They are both growing fine and will be healthy, happy babies because they're adored by their parents. Their hearts as pure as the love they come from," she states, and I blink in silent shock for a few moments. "Stop worrying, my child. Enjoy," she adds and before I can say a word, she's gone, leaving me standing there, my hands on my belly, a smile on my lips as Duncan comes into the house.

"Was that Nina leaving?" he asks, pulling me into his arms and hesitate for a moment. "Serenia?"

"It was Hera via Nina," I admit, explaining it to him and he just laughs, shaking his head a bit at that news.

"I knew there was something weird about her questions that day. I just didn't know if it was because she'd never seen us with a woman before or what, but it makes sense now. As does her pushing for answers as to where you lived before you came to town. So why was she here?" he adds, and I move his hands to my belly as his eyes widen a bit. "It's about the baby?"

"She reminded me that she's also the goddess of childbirth and knew I was concerned about my size this time. She was here to reassure me that our babies are just fine," I say quickly when his face pales a bit at the mention of childbirth and my concern.

"Babies?" he repeats much as I did with Hera, and I nod.

"A little girl that your heart desired and a little boy that mine did because I couldn't begin to think which I wanted most at that moment," I tell him, letting out a huge laugh when he picks me up, taking us upstairs to our bed.

"You're all good then?" he asks as he strips me bare, his lips pressing kisses to my stomach.

“Perfect according to Hera,” I assure him, smiling beneath his kiss as he shows me how thrilled he is to know that. I am too and sink into the heavens with him over and over while our little girl enjoys time with her friends. My life out of the water far exceeds the one in it. I can’t imagine how any of them would begin to prefer it if they really knew how this felt because it’s pure bliss. Especially wrapped in my loves arms, ensnared in our shared warmth.