

Alone, Cassandra walks to the seashore, bare feet padding along the rocky beach. While she normally avoids the color like the plague, today, of all days, she wears gray with a single blue flower braided into her hair. She carries with her a picnic of dried fish and other things she believes seals might like. She settles down on the blanket and doesn't touch the food, just stares out over the water and feels her emotions.

After a while of watching the horizon, she turns and carefully unpacks her paints. She hasn't painted in almost a year, but today is a day for painting.

She lets herself get lost in it like she used to. That capability is still inside of her; it never went away. She creates as if her life depended on it, pours out the many complexities of her heart onto the canvas in watercolors that stain her fingers gray and blue as the Maine coast she sits before.

When she's done, there's an image of her once master there, staring back at her with storm gray eyes and Cassandra feels herself get choked up. There's silence for a long moment before she settles the painting down into her lap and begins to talk to it.

"They don't understand."

"When they saw you, all they had ever seen was my jailer... This *monstrous* creature with blood on her teeth. They hated you because you required me... You needed someone to stand for you and fight for you. But more than that, you needed someone to be soft."

"It's why you chose me, right? Because I was soft and fragile and some part of you needed that. Some part of you needed the *humanity*." She brushes her thumb over the selkie queen's face and feels the tears rolling down the lines of her cheeks.

"You didn't mean to hurt me. I think you loved me, as much as you were... capable of. But mortals aren't meant for the sea to love. You dragged us down and drowned us..." her voice catches in her throat and her eyes squeeze shut as tightly as she can manage.

"I love you too-" her voice cracks and she shakes her head, releasing the painting into her lap and aggressively rubbing at her eyes with the heels of her hands.

She moves to stand, because there's too much inside of her and she has to move. The painting slides from her lap and is immediately caught by the wind, carried off the edge and towards the sea.

"No!" Cassandra cries, lunging towards the surf but catching herself on the edge of the rocks. She watches as the painting flies freely down to the crest of the waves below before landing. The colors bleed as it sinks further down and she could swear the face of the Fae wept until it was dragged too far below the surface to see.