

## Mermaid Lagoon

I sat in the back of the car, staring out the window. It was summer! I should be swimming at the pool with my friends. Not driving four hours to visit a grandma I hardly knew.

As I grumbled and glared icily out the window, my mother turned around in her seat to look at her gloomy daughter.

“Kelly Elizabeth Sherman!” my mother yelled. “You cheer up this instant! Your grandmother is looking forward to seeing you!”

I directed my glare to my angry mum. She never understood! How could I tell her that spending my summer with someone I didn't know was hardly my piece of cake.

After a couple of hours we arrived at my grandmother's house. You could hardly call it a house! A monster of vines slowly devoured the white washed walls, while the forest crept up behind it as if to surprise it.

I stared in horror at the house while my mother stared at it with unnatural longing. I was going to have to sleep there! It was more likely to collapse on top of me than have heating.

As it turned out, the house didn't have heating, but as my mum pointed out cheerfully, it did have a stove in every room. I sarcastically pointed out that we could hardly freeze when there was no firewood anywhere. As we were arguing my grandmother entered the room.

When I met my grandmother, I was surprised. She looked like a fairy godmother! Her silver hair was done up in a tight bun. Her face had a kind smile on it.

She noticed me staring, “Why hello, you must be Kelly! You look just your mother when she was your age!”

I nodded, speechless. How could my stern mother be the daughter of this kind woman?

“Oh, dear,” Grandma sighed, “I forgot to introduce myself, you can call me Grandma!” With that said and done, she hobbled down the hallway.

After she left, tension seemed to build up in the room. I plopped down on the sofa. My mother fingered some books. After a while I left the room.

I made it through dinner without falling asleep on the table. It was so boring! There was no conversation at all, we all just picked at our plates. The evening was just as boring as dinner was. After half an hour of doing nothing I went upstairs to my attic room, though it did not ease the balled up knot in my stomach.

For a while I gazed out the only window towards the forest. Somehow it looked more inviting at night! The glittering fireflies flitted from tree to tree as if searching for something; what it was, even they didn’t know! The majestic trees swayed as if to point the way.

When I glanced at my watch I was surprised! It was late! I had spent a long time looking out the window. A wave of yawns swept over me as I fought the urge to fall asleep.

I staggered over to my bed and fell into it, relishing the softness of the pillow. Within minutes I was sleeping like a baby.

The songs of the morning birds woke me up. Streams of sunlight filtered in through the bright window. I headed down the long, winding steps of the staircase

towards the smell of bacon. As I glanced out a window, I glimpsed the shimmer of sunlight hitting water. I told myself that I would check it out later today.

My mother gave me a brief greeting, “Hello darling, eat up! You’re going to be busy today!”

“I am?” I said uncertainly.

“Of course you are! You’re going to explore the forest!” my mother retorted.

I tried to hide my glee as I replied, “Okay,” with my sour voice.

My mother nodded and returned to cooking. Grandma came and sat beside me with some orange juice. I welcomed her with a pained smile. She responded with another pained smile and the squeeze of a hand.

As soon as I was done breakfast I dashed out the door, ignoring my mother’s shouts. I ran straight toward the forest, ignoring the brambles that scratched at my legs. All of a sudden, the brambles stopped. There was only soft grass and tall oak trees.

I walked forward in awe. The sun-dappled clearings, the dark green leaves, the tall, smooth trunks of the trees. Again the glimpse of sunlight on water caught my attention.

I took off at a run towards it. When I got there, I was stopped dead in my tracks. The lagoon was beautiful! Lily-pads dotted the water. The water was aqua colored and crystal clear. A weeping willow draped its leaves over the water. Moss-covered rocks surrounded the rest of the pool.

“She is back.” a musical voice said, “I knew she would return, though it has been so long.”

“Patience,” another one answered, “is a virtue, one that we must uphold. The sun and the moon pass each day, but we will always see them again.”

The voices never rose, nor fell; they were always the same clear tone. I stepped forward to look around for the people who had spoken. There was no one to be seen and uneasiness crept over me. I called out for anyone there to come and show themselves.

To my astonishment three girls heaved themselves from the water. My astonishment was even greater when I saw that they had tails.

“Y-you’re mermaids!” I gasped, “What are you doing here, this is my Grandma’s property!”

They laughed the sound of a bubbling brook. They turned their bright green slanted eyes onto me.

“Jessica,” the eldest mermaid said, “What do you mean? This is your mother’s property. You were gone for a long time, but now you’re back!”

“Jessica?” I asked, puzzled, “My name’s Kelly!”

They looked at each other, puzzled. Then shrugged their shoulders and welcomed me to their home.

We spent the rest of the day talking about what was happening. We discovered that my Grandma’s mother first discovered the mermaids and from there Jessica also found out and became friends. We also talked about how my mother could not have been Jessica because she was too stern and didn’t like the outdoors. They advised me that I ask my grandma about her childhood.

As I left, I asked, “Oh, what are your names?”

The eldest said, “I’m Emerald, the middle’s Fern, and the youngest is Shelly.”

I nodded and ran back home. When I got there my mother asked whether I had liked the forest or not. I said I had.

“Good darling, now I know that the real estate agents will like it.” My mother said, “You see, Grandma’s getting old, so we’re going to sell the house. Grandma will live in a nursing home.”

“Now dear, I hardly think that’s necessary.” Grandma reasoned. “I’m fine!”

“No Mum, no!” I cried!

“Don’t argue with me, young lady!” Mom yelled!

I stormed off upstairs, and flung myself on my bed. I didn’t come down for dinner, and I cried myself to sleep.

The next morning I asked my Grandma what her name was. She said her name was Jessica. She said her only friends were in her own imagination. I said that the mermaids were real. She walked off with a dazed look on her face, muttering to herself.

After breakfast I dashed out the door to visit the mermaids again. I said that my Grandma was the friend that they used to play with. She hadn’t come back for so long as she was getting older and her memory was fading. My mother also wanted to sell the property to take care of Grandma. The mermaids reckoned that the only way to save the house was to tell my mother about them and find a way to make my mother see how important it is to Grandma and me. With that they disappeared into the lagoon. I slowly trudged home.

The next day I asked my mother and Grandma to come with me. When she asked where we were going, I told her it was a surprise. I led them all the way to the mermaid lagoon.

“What are we doing here!?” my mother demanded.

Without looking at the women beside me, I shouted, “Emerald, Fern, Shelly; please come out now!” And with that the mermaids rose out of the water.

“Mum, Grandma. This is why we can’t sell the house!”

“Kelly! What about Grandma losing her memory?”

“Elizabeth, I think I have the answer to that!” Grandma stated, “You can move in with me. I’d love the company!”

My mom thought about it while I looked at her with pleading eyes.

“Alright,” Mom sighed. “We were going to move closer anyway!”

“Yes!” I cried. This was better than I hoped. This summer could turn out to be the best that I’d ever have.