

Poor Unfortunate Souls

Part 1: A Warrior and her Heart

Long ago, in a kingdom under the sea, a witch with insurmountable power dwelled in the farthest corner of what modern men call the Atlantic. Here, the depths were barren. Only particularly aggressive anemones stretching out like ghostly fingers cohabitated with the sand, eels, and scavengers. Sunlight rarely reached here, and the entirety of her surroundings was a dismal, deadened grey. It was as if each moment was captured through the lens of a still life photographer's lens. The witch preferred it this way. It was easier for her to grant the wishes of those brave enough to seek her out when she could not see the light in their eyes. Because of her expertise in what most would call dark magick, the witch had grown into a hated and feared entity more closely resembling that of a monster—though this reputation was not always so, nor was it her doing. Her long, snow-white hair danced like wisps of smoke beneath the currents complimented her jovial face and dark skin. Her lips were always as red as the dusky horizon and her high cheekbones gave her an almost constant mischievous smirk. The witch was a full-figured woman; busty like the goddesses of fertility and wide, but strong like a god. When she spoke, she spoke with confidence and love that some would mistake as rude. It was these features that eventually led to her exile all of those years ago. A story that has been, warped by the current king for his selfish desires. For this witch, was the daughter of an Amazonian queen, spirited away in the dead of night and brought as the means to the end of a great war that raged in the kingdom of the mighty god Poseidon.

For years the witch lived with the god Poseidon leading his armies and earning her keep in the kingdom. She became the Arcmage of his royal council, one of his chief advisers, and if her wish were to be true, his daughter-in-law. Poseidon was a man with many children, but only two remained with him in his kingdom. The first, was the well-known and future king, Triton, and the next a lesser-known son, Theseus. It was here from this corner that the darkness began to spread into the kingdom of Poseidon.

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“My lady...” A sweet, yet heavy, voice whispers.

She doesn't move.

“My love...” a little louder this time.

She groans.

“Are you awake?”

“Nnnngh, just two more days Warren,” she murmurs and pulls a large, ornate pillow over her head. She feels the side of her bed give under the weight of the visitor and a hand touches hers.

“It's not Warren,” the voice whispers warmly, teasingly.

“I know that,” she pops as she throws the pillow at the man with a giggle, “and just what *are* you doing here at such an hour Theseus? Ohhh what would the others in the castle think if they were to see the king's son leaving the bed-chamber of the Arcmage at such an hour.”

She throws her hand to her forehead and weeps sarcastically. Her long silver-white hair catches in the moonlight coming in from the open window and her full-figure jiggles slightly with each exaggerated gasp. Theseus rolls his vibrant

“And just what might they say to the son of a king?” he asks slyly, slowly slinking closer, straddling the woman beneath the lavish purple comforter before him.

“Probably something about 'such behavior is unbecoming of a future king' or 'Oh she's far beneath you my lord,” she says with legitimate perturbation interwoven in her sarcasm.

“They would be quite right about one of those things,” he smirks self-assuredly and leans in closer to the set of full lips gleaming like running waters in the dazzling moonlight.

The witch lets out a laugh deep from the pit of her belly that her lover quickly silences with a kiss.

“And they call me bad,” she says still tickled.

There's a knock at the door. The Arcmage quickly sweeps up Theseus and throws him into her closet. While it's true that there isn't very much one could say to the son of a King, the headache of her being late to the next morning's war council would be much more difficult to excuse.

“One moment,” she says as she pulls on a robe.

She gives herself a quick check in the mirror and attempts to close the robe over her aggressive cleavage but eventually shrugs it off. They're just breasts. The world knows they're there.

“All of the women in Poseidon's castle are scales and bones. How could they possibly

know how to clothe an amazon like me?” She would often find herself thinking.

She reaches the door just as the person on the other end prepares to knock again.

“Oh...good evening, Triton,” she says dryly, “to what do I owe this...great surprise?”

“Good evening, My Lady, you look beautiful as always,”

“Mhm,” She’s cleaning her nails more than she’s listening. The onyx lacquer painted there almost blends with her skin that’s comparable to brown enstatite.

“I simply wanted to make sure you didn't need anything before I turned in. Maybe some wine? Or hor d'oeuvres?”

“Those things wouldn't do me any good asleep now would they darling. Besides I do have a servant,” she lets out a melodramatic yawn, “No, if you don't mind...a girl needs her beauty sleep doesn't she, Little Triton.”

“Oh, of course, I'm very sorry for disturbing you.”

Despite the long brown beard that covers the bulk of his face, his blushing at her use of the word “Triton” was obvious. Triton is a bit of a petulant child. He loves all that doesn’t belong to him, but most importantly, he loves all that belongs to his brother. This is not to say that the Arcmage *belongs* to Theseus, of course. It’s simply that despite their attempts at hiding their love, the kingdom is very much aware of what Theseus gets up to when he thinks no one in the palace is watching. As Triton scurries off and the tumult of waves in the arcmage’s stomach settle.

“Trout.”

She closes the door. A screw rattles loose against her strength.

“You don't have to be so cruel. He seems to genuinely care for you,” Theseus says as he steps out of the closet.

“And he doesn't have to be so pretentious. He only cares about conquest. Besides, feelings for him would mean no feelings left over for you.”

Theseus drops his head.

“Now, now, now what's with the long face?”

She lovingly takes his chin into her hand, “You know I’ve got enough love for the whole kingdom, but I always have even more for you.”

She holds his head softly in her hands and kisses his forehead. Theseus is always a little embarrassed by this since she needs to bend over despite his being six feet tall.

“And one day,” she continues, “very soon, our children will run around filled with glee. I’ll tell them tales of how their daddy saved the kingdom and how his very *very* beautiful, tall, courageous, heroic, intelligent wife was right there beside him.”

Theseus laughs.

“Alright, alright I hear you. Perfect, beautiful, intelligent, and don't forget humble.”

This time, it’s the witch that laughs.

“But look at them,” he continues.

He motions over to two perfectly sculpted clay statues of children in the corner.

“They’re beautiful. And one day, very soon, we’ll breathe life into them: together. Who knows maybe we should start work on a third.”

She laughs again. Theseus knows full well that she cannot conceive naturally here. The sea’s pressure would place far too much strain on the infant (and during wartime no less), though that was no deterrent for him to “try.” They embrace and the warmth of their emotions is enough to melt the largest iceberg. While they rejoice in their love, on the other side of the door, an eavesdropping Triton fumes at the audacity of the younger sibling who dares to share a bed with the woman he craves. His heart begins to fall victim to a curse that’s sure to set the kingdom down a path that will eventually bubble over and turn to darkness.

The weeks fly by as the arcmage busies herself training the troops and preparing strategies for the upcoming battle: the final battle for the Atlantic quarter. All of the preparations are set for the march and she places herself on the front lines with Triton while Theseus is set to lead the second camp. Theseus always was the better warrior despite being younger than Triton, and despite Triton’s obvious disdain for the idea of being babysat by the woman he believes he should own, Poseidon agreed to the format and ordered Triton to obey all orders the Arcmage gives him. Many argue that Poseidon’s trust and affections for her rival paternal.

Atlantis is dark today, darker than usual. The rain on the surface of the water resounds like dullened footsteps from an angry titan. Deep below the surface of the storm crashing overhead, war rages. The screams of merpeople and mages fighting hard to take back the ocean from the hands of the deserters and the creatures they managed to sway with their lies fill the sea. Oceanides and faeries support the wounded while mighty sea dragons and hippocampi tear aggressively through lines of Poseidon’s army. Despite this, the witch’s plan is working perfectly. She and her mages have managed to put a sudden halt to the advance of the enemy’s front line.

While the dragons are powerful, the viscous substance on their scaly skin is extremely vulnerable to lightning magick, unlike their earth-bound counterparts. Seizing this opportunity, Theseus moves to the back lines with his knights and makes quick work of the long-range fighters at the enemy's flank.

Victory draws quickly near, but the arcmage urges her troops to remain ever vigilant.

“Stay focused. We still don’t know the full extent of their magicks.”

Despite her warning, one warrior simply will not heed her words. Triton continues to rampage as he mercilessly mows down his enemies.

“Triton!” she roars, “by the gods, these are living creatures. Have some mercy!”

Her plea falls on deaf ears. Danger is something that does not exist to gods, and anyone who turned their back on the kingdom, on *him*, does not deserve mercy. The divine blood of Triton always boils over on the battlefield and makes him a cocky, reckless fighter. Just as Ursula predicted, when Triton draws close to the enemy commander, his blood lust overpowers his training. With his guard lowered, he does not see that the commander's sea serpent has been playing opossum. It springs to life to protect its master by releasing a spray of a toxic, sulfuric oil from its great maw. The dragon sought to destroy any that might wish harm upon its master regardless of who or what was caught in the crossfire. Theseus, having sensed the dragon gathering its magick before, quickly swims to throw Triton away from the cloud. The Arcmage chants as quickly as bolts of lightning crackle around her body. Her eyes glow vibrant white as she prepares to fire, but she sees the serpent’s scaly, pointed tail wrap around Theseus' waist and torso.

He struggles and fires off a weak spell into the dragon's eyes, but the beast tosses him deep into the toxic cloud. He starts to sink like a rock to the bottom of the Atlantic. His body is lost to the undertow, but his spirit fills the sea witch’s convictions. Theseus' power and love flow through her as she raises her hand and conjures a mighty golden trident infused with her thunder magick. She hurls her new weapon with the strength of Zeus and the precision of Artemis; it strikes true and the great beast howls and convulses before it plummets to the depths of the deep. The arcmage quickly grabs the enemy commander with her magick lasso and barks for her troops to return to the kingdom with the captives.

“Show them mercy, but do *not* show them weakness,” she barks shooting an icy stare in Triton's direction, “I'm going to search for Theseus.”

Triton opens his mouth to offer his assistance, but like a true seeress, she cuts him off before he can suggest what she thinks is as insulting as slapping her right across the face.

“NO!” Her voice wavers, yet the ocean quivers at the Amazon's fury, “Have you *not* helped enough Triton? You obnoxious, pig-headed *fool*.”

The ocean does well to hide her tears, but her heart beats one with life, and all of the water's creatures echo her sorrow.

“Get *OUT* of my sight! Escort the troops back to the kingdom and begin the battle report,” Triton stands still, mouth agape and pale as pearls. “NOW!”

This time she has trouble containing her power and the very ocean rattles with her words. Triton quickly turns tail and gives the troops their withdrawal orders. With that, she throws herself into the depths in a desperate attempt to retrieve the body of the man she loves.

Days pass and the arcimage finally returns to the kingdom disheveled and exhausted. Her face while still radiant is more like that of an eclipsed sun on a dreary day: the light is there but it's repressed and dark. She heads straight for the throne room and throws herself at the feet of Poseidon. She weeps apologetically, discarding the notion that the court should not see her, a mighty Amazon cry. Poseidon rises from his throne and scoops the defeated woman into his arms. Despite her ox-like build, Poseidon showed no signs of struggle as he swaddles her in his divine cape and weeps with her. Knights remove their helmets, women cast their hair to the floor at their feet, and the entire throne room is cognizant of the weight of her loss.

“Sire,” she holds out her hand. In a glow of golden light and blue static, the trident from the battlefield appears, “I believe it sensed Theseus' trouble and sought to help. I'm so sorry.”

“Ursula,” he strokes her hair like a loving father, “that's the first time you called me by a title instead of my name.”

“And that's the first time you didn't call me by my Amazonian name,” She snuffles and let out a small chuckle. It feels good.

“This trident is a symbol of not just my power, but also of my royal lineage. If it came to you, it means that you have the makings of a King. If the next in line is in danger, it hears their call and appears before them. I had been discussing it with Pelop and we were going to give Triton control of Atlantis and other areas of Atlantica, but with the current state of things, I do believe that honor goes to you. After all, it seems the universe itself has overruled our opinion. You love strongly and justly just as Pelop and I. I know you will do my sea a great honor by

watching over it as King.”

“...I'll...I'll think about it. Thank you for that,” She picks herself up from the swaddle of Poseidon's cape, straightens her clothes, and leaves the chamber.

She returns to her bed-chamber to think. Looking over at the clay children she wants to cry but can't find the strength to do even that. She hears her door slowly creaking open.

“What do you want Triton,” she sighs not even needing to feign ignorance, “Can't a girl grieve in peace.”

“Apologies...I just wanted to come to see how you were is all,” He says as he sits down on her bed. His weight barely makes the bed budge.

“Yeah, well I'm fine. Goodnight,” she throws herself face down into the pillows.

“You don't seem fine,” He moves his fingers across her exposed shoulder blades. “And soon you'll have an entire kingdom to run all by yourself. I'd be more than willing to help you with that.”

He rubs her shoulders.

“For the gods' sake Triton it's *not* happening. You think barking up the tree you've been barking up for the last....however long you've thought this was a good idea would work? Your *brother* was just killed. Not only was he killed, but it was YOUR overwhelming inability to control your ‘fire’ that got him there. Much like it's about to get you thrown into the kiln now. So take your fishy little paws off of me before I *break* them off.”

“Don't be coy angelfish,” he brings his lips closer to her neck, “c'mon, you'll need a man like me to make all of the tough decisions in the new kingdom. Someone with the strength to cut down your enemies; none of this valuing life ideology. Besides, I forgive you for your battle strategy not being quite up to par and getting Thes—oomph”

Ursula headbutts Triton before he can finish his sentence and hoists him high over her head with one hand.

“You come in here when I'm grieving, making passes and allegations,” she snarls. “Then you have the audacity to insinuate that I, Hippolyta, would *ever* need the help of a pathetic man like yourself. You come up to my kneecap on a *good* day Triton. Your brother loved me, your father *respects* me, but you only saw lust and now you only see power. Were it not for *my* magick you wouldn't even be able to walk around this palace without a fishbowl. Yet, you dare think I would need *you*?”

Triton kicks his feet as the oxygen leaves his lungs.

“You are a *child* Triton. I'll let you play house for a while since it seems to be so important to you. But know this: Atlantica is *my* kingdom. I *will* be watching you, and if you mistreat a single member of my kingdom you will know my wrath. Now get the *hell* out of my room.”

She throws him out taking the doors to the wall opposite the hall with him. She materializes the trident and launches it into the wall behind his head.

“I'll let you borrow that. Maybe by the time you've figured out how to use it, you'll have developed some respect and decency.” She turns to the crowd of servants that have gathered at the commotion, “Tell Poseidon I humbly decline. I am unfit to be King, I must go to find some purpose in what's left of my life. Oh, and Triton? One last thing.”

She pulls out her breast knife and with one quick motion cuts most of her hair. She casts it into the air and watches it slowly cascade down. Each strand that hits the marble becomes a snake that hisses and spits as Triton cowered against the wall.

“Even gods play second chair to the will of the universe.”

With a loud rumble like that of a war elephant's footstep, Ursula and the snakes are gone. The hall was left only with her silver hair and the echo of her laugh.

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That was the last time Atlantis saw Ursula. Ever since the events of that war, she has lived her quiet life tucked away in the dark depths. She had no interest in Atlantis or the squabbles that Triton often found himself in. He was problematic, but none moreso than his enemies. They were always fighting over land, women, men, and resources, and it was rarely for anything other than personal glory. She was exhausted, but at least here, in her cave, she didn't have to see it.

She swore that she would never return to Atlantis unless Triton personally endangered its citizens. So far, he had managed to keep war away from the land going himself and taking his most annoying knights, but one day, the song of the sea changed. She sensed heartbreak, deep and resonant but far away. That night she dreamed of a child with beautiful red hair and eyes filled with innocence, hope, and destruction. This child would be the reason she finally returned to Atlantis, but for now, all she could do was wait.