

WHEN SIRENS SING TO HARPIES

PAIGE MAICH

It was almost midnight when Cealus managed to sneak out of the rookery, most of the village asleep by now, including his parents. He flew swiftly but also quietly, silent as a mouse in a grain field with eagles swarming, it had been almost three months since he met the Crystilia prince, Meris, and almost a month since the two had started dating in secret. Who would've thought a siren prince would fall for a harpy knight in training? Not him, that's for sure.

Finally, Cealus saw the crystal cove where the two always met up, landing gracefully on the stones, looking around for his bioluminescent partner among the saltwater crystals lining the rockpool that led to the royal Crystilia palace by a secret tunnel. After a minute he saw glowing patterns he'd traced over many nights, smiling as the dark haired boy emerged from the water, the patterns on his face and under his eyes illuminating his face.

Cealus smiled, "Hi Mer" he said, calling his boyfriend the nickname he'd gifted a few weeks ago. Meris smiled, climbing out of the water, his tail disappearing and turning into legs, a long loincloth appearing around his waist, adorned with gems and pearls only given to royalty. Meris sat down next to Cealus, his webbed hand going to his boyfriend's cheek, moving up to the feathers that grew on the sides of his cheeks.

The two were from completely different worlds, the sea, and the sky, two different elements..well, I guess opposites do attract. The two sat for hours, talking and laughing at each others jokes, like every other night, until Cealus' senses picked up on rustling from the very small glade of trees on the tiny island where the cove was, his eyes flickered over the bush, glowing faintly as he shushed his partner, Meris looked where his boyfriend was looking, as that's when the trees canopy broke a flash of feathers flying from the top and away.

Meris quickly realised what it was, another Eagleite had been spying on them, their heart stopped for a second as their mind started to race, thinking of what could happen if their parents, the king and queen, found out about his winged boyfriend.

Meris slowly looked up at Cealus, whose feathers were raised, puffed up in defense, he obviously knew the dangers that could be released if either species' royalty found out about their love, especially since his dad was the head knight to the Eagleite king, and that very man Cealus was training to fight for. Cealus slowly looked down at Meris, cupping his face, "I have to go, be safe", he whispered, kissing Meris on the forehead before darting into the sky, leaving Meris by himself.



Meris sat on the rocks for a minute, one webbed hand coming up to toy with one of the straps of their binder, which was made from seaweed and cloth from sunken ships' sails. Cealus landed back at the village, hoping whoever had been spying didn't tell his parents or the king and queen. He returned to the rookery, only to come face to face with his attention-seeking younger brother, Adris. Cealus sighed, and his brother smirked, crossing his arms as he leaned in the doorway, "So, where were you?" His brother asked, that annoying, cocky smirk still plastered on his face.

"Nowhere, just having a late night glide, how about you, what's got you all cocky?" Cealus asked, pushing past his brother to get into the rookery, "Nothing, just saw the Crystilia prince, he sure looks good" Adris spoke, knowing if he'd seen what he saw, his brother would get pissed at that, Cealus tensed, turning and looking at his brother, and god, if looks could kill his brother would be dust by now, Adris, noticing the reaction his brother had, "So I did see you, dad is gonna kill you when I tell-" Adris started, only to be cut off when Cealus pinned him to the rookery wall, Cealus glared daggers at his brother, towering over him, feathers puffed out, and wings open behind him, "Don't, you, dare" he growled.

Adris was slightly intimidated, never having seen his brother get mad enough to physically push him, especially not with that force. After a few seconds, he snapped out of it, pushing Cealus off him, "Bro, calm down, I was joking" he muttered, fixing his shirt. Cealus rolled his eyes, knowing his brother well enough to know he wouldn't have joked about that.

The next morning was one Cealus normally got to sleep in due to his training not starting until later, but his father barged into his room at the rookery, pulling his blankets off his hammock to wake him up, Cealus groaned as his father started yelling, "You were with one of those sea dwelling freaks!?" his dad yelled. Suddenly Cealus was wide awake and alert, his eyes going to his dad, catching sight of his brother in the doorway, oh he was so going to kill him later. Cealus looked at his dad finally speaking, "What do you mean?" he asked, looking at his dad, whose feathers were puffed up with anger as he glared at his oldest son, "Your brother says you snuck out of your room last night as he saw you kissing that Crystilia prince" his dad snarled through his teeth, Cealus sat up, running a hand through his brown curls and yawning, "He's obviously lying for attention" Cealus said, still tired, but that's when two of his dad's commanders walked in, Meris' arms held tightly in their grip as he tugged against them, trying to get free, Cealus stood quickly eyes wide, "Mer-"

His brother smirked, "I knew it!"

I knew you were with someone, but her-" Adris started, only for Cealus to quickly cut him off when he misgendered Meris, "They" he spoke firmly, glaring at the guard who had a tight hold on his partner, whose hair was messy and his crystal encrusted frills



just above his gills, showing he was royal with the crystals he was born with, while his parents were known to have plain quartz, Meris had rare Amethyst. Cealus' dad, Orpheus, just looked at Cealus weird, seeing the protectiveness to his partner in his eyes, it wasn't hard to see Cealus cared deeply about Meris, and among Eagleites, protectiveness was normal, but this level? Was much higher than most.

"They?" Adris muttered, confusion covering his face. Cealus nodded, "Meris is non binary, not a she", he spoke, still on edge as he watched the guards hold his partner. Cealus stepped forward, "Let, them, go" he spoke firmly, looking the guards right in the face. The two glazed at Orpheus, who nodded, silently telling them to let Meris go, and when they did, the prince quickly went to his boyfriend, hugging him.

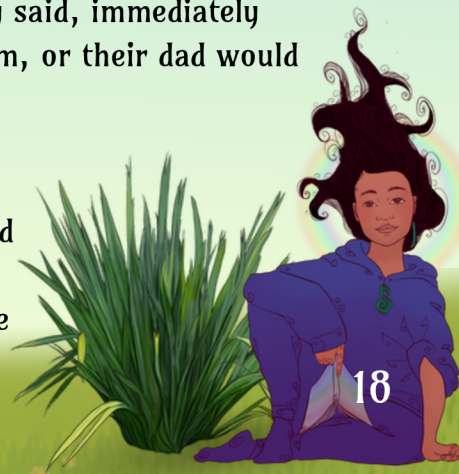
"What's happening..?" Meris murmured, holding Cealus' shirt. Cealus' hands went to Meris' waist, "Nothing love, don't worry" he said softly, kissing his head, before looking back at his dad, gently pushing Meris behind him, "Now, you're going to leave them alone, and you're going to let them return to the Crystilia palace".

The look in Cealus' eyes when he said that made Orpheus nod, not knowing if it was good to fight with his son right now, Cealus walked out, Meris behind him, and the two went back to their cove, Cealus gently setting Meris down in the water, watering their legs turn into one lilac tail, "I'm so sorry Mer.." Cealus said, rubbing a hand over his face, "I didn't mean for my brother to see us last night, and I definitely didn't mean for him to snitch to my dad, or for the guards to-" as Cealus started to rant Meris smiled, pushing their body up with their arms to shut him up with a kiss.

Cealus froze for a second before melting into his partner. He always loved it when they did that. The two sat like that for a minute before Meris pulled back, "I need to go home, see you tonight, Cealus" they spoke softly, and Cealus nodded instinctively, watching Meris disappear under the water.

Meris eventually got back to the palace, quietly swimming past guards, not wanting their mother to see them sneaking in, but as if the world was against them, their parents appeared in the door as they came into the throne room, their mother, Queen Novalyn crossed her arms, "Where were you?" she asked, her voice holding a commanding air, Meris quickly answered, not wanting their parents to know about how the Eagleites kidnapped them from the cove, "Nowhere! Just the gardens" they said, immediately cringing inside as they realised there was no way either their mum, or their dad would believe that.

Meris' dad, King Atreus, shook his head, "No, you weren't, and why are there bruises on your arms?" Atreus asked, his voice cold as he looked down at his child, Meris sighed, knowing there was no way they could hide what happened forever, "Um..two Eagleite guards grabbed me, its fine, they didn't hurt me" Meris said,



knowing they were screwed, their mothers eyes widened, “You were kidnapped?! By Eagleite guards!?!” she snapped, Meris flinched slightly and Atreus’ eyes widened, he quickly called for the guards, and got one to escort Meris to their room.

A few days passed and Meris finally managed to sneak out of the castle and go to the cove, hoping that Cealus would be there, when they got there, to their happiness, he was. Meris smiled and emerged from the water.

“Babe, what's happening, the last thing I heard was my dad yelling at soldiers and then he sent me to my room” Meris said, climbing out of the water and sitting by Cealus. They watched as Cealus sighed, “Last I saw was the knights getting armour on” Cealus said, and that's when the two of them saw Eagleite soldiers fly overhead, all of which wearing armour and carrying weapons.

“It's a war..” Meris murmured, fear filling their eyes, Cealus wrapped his arms around them, wings curling sound Meris’ form as the yelling from the soldiers from both sides fought. Cealus and Meris curled into each other, needing to find solace in each other's embrace.

And beneath the clash of wings and waves, neither of them noticed the shadow watching from the cliff—smiling, silent, and waiting...

