

## Ocean-Caught, Farm-Raised

She ain't no Disney princess.  
Ain't no fodder for fairy tales.  
Ain't no mythological maiden you'd want tattooed on your shoulder.

She don't bear hardly no resemblance to her sea sisters,  
With their magnificent manes, buoyant breasts, and emerald-inlaid scales.

Why would she?  
She was ocean-caught, but farm-raised,  
Kept as a pet in a pond,  
By a lonely Fish and Game Warden.  
Her fins ain't felt salt water since she was a tadpole.

When they dammed Dix River back in '25  
Master decided to let her go.  
For nigh on a year, he came every day,  
Bringing her corn bread, soup beans, and buttermilk.  
But one day, he brought fruit,  
Said she'd plumped up.  
So she lassoed him with a rope she'd stole from a catfish trap,  
Dragged him down,  
And drowned him good.

She's been fending for herself ever since.  
Living off fried chicken bones, duck dung, and scraps of Styrofoam,  
Won't eat fish,  
Feels like cannibalism.  
When she gets to feeling sorry for herself,  
She gets drunk on generator fuel,  
Hits holes into the hulls of houseboats,  
Screams, "Sink, you son-of-a-bitch, sink."

Nope, she don't bear hardly no resemblance to her sea sisters,  
With her hair hacked all to hell,  
Left tit lost to an outboard motor,  
Right one armored with a snapping turtle shell,  
Shit-brown moss filming up her fins.

Back in '72, she caused quite a ruckus  
When she got her tail all in a twist over a boy named Ricky.  
First time she saw him,  
He was pounding Pabsts and bow fishing off a brand new bass boat.

He might as well have shot an arrow plum through her heart,  
Girl was eat up with him right from the start.

So, after years of laying low,  
She set out to catch his eye.  
Every morning she swam her most seductive swim,  
Back and forth between Chenault Bridge and Wells Landing.

Ricky didn't take no notice,  
But plenty of other folks did.  
Some professor called the news,  
Thought he'd discovered a prehistoric beast.  
From far and wide, the curious came,  
Hoping to get a glimpse,  
Of the Herrington Lake leviathan.  
But, Ricky still paid her no never mind.

She got sick of being subtle,  
Decided to demand destiny for a date.  
So, she spent all night getting gussied,  
Lacing lures through her hair,  
And shining the shell on her remaining right breast.

When Ricky popped the top on his breakfast beer,  
She made her move.  
Shot through the surface, grabbed hold of the edge,  
Then pulled herself up 'til she was looking love right in eye.  
Over teeth shattered and sharpened,  
From years of chewing through fish baskets to free her friends,  
She pulled back bloated lips,  
Into what she thought was smile.

Meant to mesmerize,  
It only served to terrorize.

First Ricky cursed,  
"Fuck that LSD."  
Then he prayed,  
He'd been brought up brimstone Baptist  
Reared on Revelation,  
Believed in the Beast from the Sea.  
Then, he hollered,  
"Monster, monster, I done seen the monster."

Her smile faded,  
As the realization rose,  
That she ain't no Disney princess.

Ricky reached for his bow,  
So, she lassoed him with stringers she'd braided into a belt,  
Dragged him down,

And drowned him good.

In that moment before he gurgled his last "goddamn,"  
She stole a kiss.  
Went a little boy crazy after that...

But now, eighty-five years and as many "accidental drownings" later,  
She's decided she don't need no man,  
What she needs is a career.

She'd heard the bands playing on Saturday night down on Sunset Dock,  
Seen how people hooted and hollered,  
And threw shiny silver into a big, old jar that used to hold pickled eggs.  
In her opinion, that skinny gal who sings for 'em ain't got much of a voice at all.  
Reckoned she could do better.

After all, mermaids were meant to make music.

So, she set about perfecting her siren song.  
Most every midnight,  
You can hear her crooning to the moon.  
But don't try to get a better listen.  
Shy clear of the shoreline.  
Cause old habits die hard.  
She might just snatch up a lasso,  
Drag you down,  
And drown you good.

Cause she ain't no Disney princess.  
Ain't no fodder for fairy tales.  
Ain't no mythological maiden you'd want tattooed on your shoulder.

**By. Donna Ison**