

She, From The Sea



By Ray Howell

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Authors Note

This short story is about a plea sent from a maudlin heart out to the sea, but...

Will the sea listen or will it suck that heart into itself only to spit out and send it crashing against the rocks... over and over again.

She, From The Sea - Part 1 of 5

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If anyone could see me now, I wonder, would they know that I'm lonely and alone as I sit on this, my seat, a weather-worn rock, staring out at the crinkling, shrinking sea. A sea separating me and many others from their dreams. A sea that knows me not at all, though if it could, it would take my pathetic body and maul it upon the rocks for sure.

I came here so it could. But again, like so many decisions in my life, I got it wrong. I arrived too late, didn't I? Instead of deep surging swells up to my knees, or as hoped, higher to smother me, the tide is nowt but a gentle lick around my feet.

I should have come earlier before the raucous seagulls gave up the sky to moths and bats to roost on cliffs in restless, silent longing. Now all I can do beneath the moon's fight to blossom into a watered-down low-energy light is to watch the sea's weakening caress of this rock, while it nibbles my feet. Soon it will disappear to beat against another faraway shore.

Or will it?

Will this watery sheet, too small to cover its bed and breaking weakly upon my feet with no more thrust than a cat's lick, ever make it to that other shore? Or will it be a loser like me, merely tagging on the end of the main flow and never reaching the front row? And what happens when the tide turns? Will these timid laps get whooshed to the beach, or become swamped by a bullying surge of water clambering to be the first to make landfall? Has this straggling water missed its brief chance to touch that longed-for summit? The beach lying tantalisingly beyond its nervous reach? I wonder, is it crying

pitifully, please, just one more swell, please?

Just like I do to love and luck.

If I were feeling kind, I could go off and search for a bucket. Then, godlike, as fate should do for me but doesn't, I'd choose some of the struggling water to scoop up and pour on the beach. "There, I've changed your destiny," I'd say, "now go off and do something useful with it!" But not this day, water, for you weren't here when I needed you.

Were you...?

But then again, what else in my life ever is?

End of part 1 of 5.

## She, From The Sea - Part 2 of 5

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I feel that more episodes of blank staring have passed me by. Self-pitying moments which I don't remember and never do. I only know the forlornness – my oh-so-faithful bullying servant who loves to needle me.

And so is the moon now.

It's climbed into the sky, and it's looking down in full arrogant splendour – “See”, it's taunting, “I climbed my mountain and beat it. But you didn't. You're still wallowing at the bottom. Just like you always do.”

I have to admit the moon is right. As well as damned bright. But as usual for me, there's no warmth to it. It's as chilling as a psychopath's love. Yeah, it's as deplete of spiritual wonder as an Eagle's hunger. I lost that sort of daydream thing years ago. Didn't I?

Here I am now, reluctantly, sulkily staring at the weakening sea. I don't want to see nice things in its surface, but I have to agree with my artist self, the glimmers rippling upon the water's lips are a mesmeric trip and hypnotically pretty.

But...well, hey...!

Wait...!

The glimmers are forming a pattern, a shape...

Strike me down... It looks like a woman?

It is! It's a woman!

Wow!

Is the sea reflecting an unknown "her" wandering alone on a faraway shore? Are the waters rushing away from me to greet her? Is the shape just a fantasy conjured up by my loneliness? If not, is she like me? Is she lost and lonely? And will it help her to know I'm here looking for someone just like her?

"Will it?"

"Why am I crying?"

"And why am I laughing?"

"Why...?"

"What's happening to me...?"

No answer. Even the wind's quiet. But then, why would there be an answer? As always, it's just me talking to the wrinkling, shrinking sea. "Well, hear this sea. Take a message from me to her walking along that other shore. Will you tell her I'm waiting on this rock and say..., I said... I think she might be the one I'm aching to meet?"

"Why am I crying again?"

"Tell her... sea."

"Why... am I... crying?"

"Tell her, she's the mother, the sister, the lover I yearn for. The teacher

I've always wanted. The guide I seek. Oh yes, and add..., please add... she's the inspiration my spirit has sadly lost. And the comforting arms I need to feel holding me. And lips that smile and say, I love you. Oh, will you carry these words for me, sea? Will you please? And will you remember them all? Will you? You do have a memory, I know you do. You always make it back here, and on time too, unlike me... And tell her this as well if you would. She's all I need and all I ever want. Tell her, I'm waiting here on this rock just for her. Will you tell her that, please...? Will you take my message, sea?"

"Will you sea...?"

That sea..., that promise...

That sea, that longing, that watery pull greedily swallowing my banshee tears. These flowing meres, which in a poet's fancy hold my longing pleas...

Ah! Is that why the sea's so salty?

Am I perched on the rim of Mother Earth's basin, the one she uses to catch all the tears shed by others throughout the years? Do those salty lips stirred by her sweet breath carry away all our heartbreaking muses? Although where to and to whom I can't weigh. And will that sea in moody stir ever care to pause and say?

I guess I'll have to wait for the returning tide, that promise of floating free, to see. Or most likely, to hear any such greetings or news which this gift of God, some might pray, or whatever it is, will care to relay to me in guide. Or in truth, more like in scornful deride.

Yes, I have no choice but wait in time's clumsy, spiteful, inattentive embrace to see what fate will offer me in this salt-filled place. It's either that or go home. But if I do go home, then I'll never discover what message, if

any, the sea has for me.

End of part 2 of 5.

She, From The Sea - Part 3 of 5

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You're certainly taking your time getting back to me, sea.

I think I can see you in the distance, foaming like a rabid beast whipped on by a ruthless wind. But I guess you've made the trip so many times it must be boring, so you need a bit of encouragement to return.

"Do you know if the sea is bringing a message for me, wind?"

Hark at me asking. How can the wind possibly know? How can it understand my longing and sorrow, or the depths of my stupidity? All the wind's fit for is rudely running its salt-twangy fingers through my damp hair, restyling it without a dresser's care.

But of course, the wind can't answer. And why would it anyway? Why should this moment be any different to those other important questions I've asked of it in the past? And of the sea, the sun, the earth and even God, and never to receive an answer.

"Or have you been sworn to secrecy, wind?"

Here I am muttering to you, to me, like a fool. But then loneliness knows no shame, does it? But I don't care. You can think me mad if you like, and so what if you do? You don't have to bother with an inconsequential like me either. I'm sure you'll prefer buffeting the seagulls when they rise. That will be more fun than swapping riddles with me. So, forget me! I'll leave you be and get back to staring at the approaching sea".

Oh lord! Hark at me talking to the wind and sea! I should leave. It's

probably Saturday now, and the wind has chased away any lingering warmth. It's cold, and I'm tired. Yes, tired. So, do I go home and plan my tea? Or should that be breakfast? Or do I stay and wait for the rolling sea?

Well? Do I wait?

Do I?

Do I wait for the sea to come to me? For it will. What else can basin-trapped water do but flow where tipped? The sea, for all its swell and swagger, has no more will than me. Not a single drop. Not even a blip caught in the meshing of those entwined symbiotic layers of different, yet the same, water. You push, and I'll pull, and together we'll beat gravity's rule and help things float. Where, in doing, the water's will is sucked down creation's throat.

Like mine.

In my will-less labour, I stock shelves so others can come and buy, and between us we stoke greed's gloat, while making the planet cry. Instead of happily floating along on symbiotic waves, it sinks, to be held under by the weight of that greed. Like me.

But I'm tired of all that. So tired of everything. So tired, my mind is fuzzing and crinkling and what if my tiredness lures me to sleep on this rock?

Will I slip off?

Will I?

In such tiredness, will I care?

Will I move? Or will I just sit and wait for the sea with its message for

me...?

Wait... wait for the sea... wait to see... wait for the roaring, frothing lulling sea, lulling, lulling sleepy-eyed, heavy-eyed me.

Sleepy-eyed me...

I hear the sea coming in, but I'm cold... Stiff... Too adrift to think chariots from the deep, pulled by fuming beasts, urged on by demons desperate to reach the shore.

End of Part 3 of 5

## She, From The Sea - Part 4 of 5

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The sea's grabbed me.

I fly. I fall into the broiling fermentation. Spluttering. Sinking. Swirling. Whirling. Choking. Boking. Screaming. Bleeding.

It's what I wanted, but not how I wanted. Sucked out. I can't resist. I'm a mere speck caught by the sea and gulped down. Debris hurled against the rock.

Fight! Dizzy... Sucked out, snatched up. Cry! Life spinning... Pain... It's winning... Gulped... Smothered screams... Sucked out more... Floundering. Thrown back. Smothered yells. Black dreams. Thoughts cleaved. Breathe...

It's water...

Get air...

Breathe!

It's water!

Breathe!

Breathe In!

Now!

Breathing!

Darkness.

Part 4 of 5

She, From The Sea - Part 5 of 5

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Light spinning.

Blue light.

Vomiting.

Light flashing.

A beacon.

Vomiting. Dazed, fazed, vomiting - a human bucket giving the sea back its water. But I'm not in the sea. A nurse? She's smiling. She's cleaning. Head hurts. She's cleaning. A wound. I can taste blood... Yes..., a throbbing head.

A voice. Have you just been a bit silly?

Spoken softly and kindly. I welcome it. I want to respond.

I hear myself saying stupidly.

I was waiting... for the she... my love... to come out of the sea. I'm hearing myself babble incoherently, deliriously into a face I cannot properly discern.

Or so I guess that's what I babbled. It's hard to know anything with a spinning and thumping head, a burning throat, and guts desperate to heave again. They so want to, but I can't.

“Instead of looking out at the sea...” that kindly voice said, “maybe you should try looking along the beach”.

Dizzily, blearily, I follow the vague nod across the sand where it ended at a shape. I stare till finally I focus on a woman. She looks to be a similar age to me. She has a nervous fidget, and she’s wrapped in a blanket. Is she hurt? Is she trying to get the nurse’s attention, but can’t for a barrier of sorts is holding her back... Social etiquette strung invisibly across the sand, maybe? Could that be why she’s fidgeting so much?

Ooh! Whatever was holding her has gone. She’s coming over.

Oh...

Oh...

And it’s me she’s kneeling beside... Me! Not the nurse, me...!

Me...!

Me....?

Her mouth is moving.

“I want to say... thank you.”

Ay? She spoke to me.

What a lovely voice, gentle and musical! It’s just lifted me as easily as the sea threw my body.

Wow...

But what is she thanking me for...?

Wow, again...

Her long, wet hair is brushing my face. Is she wiping the sand away from it... No way! Is she...?

Don't be stupid, you fool! She's just leaning in closer in case I can't hear.

"I went into the sea to do the same as you... But finding you stopped me."

There's a confession if ever I heard one! I think... Shared with trusting lips close to mine. So close I could kiss them... I could.

"Maybe we can talk when you've recovered. I sense we have lots to offer each other."

I love her honesty. And her suggestion.

And... And... What the, wow... she's taking my hand!

Is my face flushing? It's certainly tingling... So it must be. Or is it just the salt drying? And she's so close I can feel her warmth. Blimming heck... I know my eyes are sparking up, and if I'm not mistaken, she's responding.

Is she? Yes, she is! Yes, it's there in her slow blink. And now it's in her soft smile. She's squeezing my hand tighter! Her lips are parting. She's going to speak. She is...

"I believe it will be good for us both... In fact, I know it will be. Shall we talk...? Shall we do that?"

I'm smiling like a bloody fool, I know I am. A speechless fool. What must she think of me...

But oh, wait...

Wait..!

There's a blush... Soft pink. Her cheeks are like delicate flower petals...? Blossom, I think they call it. And her blue eyes are sparkling, I think... Yes, they are...!

Oh DG..., Oh DG..., Oh DG.... And Oh, my heart - don't you dare give out on me now! And don't be sick either... She's lovely. She is. And I think she wants to know me. Me...!

And look at how the early morning breeze plays with her beautiful hair, so skittish now that its rush is over. And I guess the sun is breaking on that faraway shore too...

That faraway shore... And at last, the waves are calming to a gentle roll... which I think... Yes...! I think... I do...! I think the sea's just murmured... You think...? Think...! There's no think about it...!

Listen to your tingles... You fool!

Listen...! That wonderful moon, the earth and the universe are telling you the sea has just said, "Your message has been delivered."

And here she is! Answering in person!

My lady from the sea, standing now so companionably close to me...

So close...

Thank you sea. Thank you.