

THE SELKIE PRINCESS

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The Selkie Princess

FADE IN

EXT. A ROCKY SHORE - NIGHT

The water is still. It laps soothingly against the black rocks. The sound of waves gently breaking underscores the last blood-red rays of the setting sun.

A seal suddenly pops its head out of the water and a beautiful, sad air, sung by a lone, female voice, drifts out from the sea.

Red sky turns to purple as a full moon begins to rise.

INT. A CABIN BY THE SHORE - NIGHT

A sad FATHER (42) peers mournfully through his window at the seal. His shoulders heave as he begins to weep.

Seated at the wooden table behind him, watching intently by the dim light of a stuttering candle, are the father's three children. All three listen enthralled to the song.

The DAUGHTER (10) looks uneasily at her two brothers, then looks to her father with pity.

DAUGHTER

Why do you weep so, father? Is it
the song that stirs you so?

The father looks round at the expectant faces of his children.

With a last forlorn glance at the seal, he drags his weary body back to the table and sits.

Reaching across to his daughter, he smiles weakly as he gently brushes her cheek.

FATHER

Nay, lass. I weep for the loss of
your mother. But I weep also for
the three of you. For soon, I
fear, you all will be lost to me
as well.

The ELDER SON (13) looks aghast.

ELDER SON

What do you mean, father?

The father solemnly takes the elder son's hand in his own and looks deeply into his eyes.

FATHER

Dearest son of mine, for truly
you are dearer to me than life
itself, the song you hear - that
pulls at your soul even as it
pulls at my own heartstrings - is
your mother calling to you.

The YOUNGER SON (7) looks up, his wide eyes filling
tears.

YOUNGER SON

Our mother is alive!

The Father wipes his own tear-filled eyes.

FATHER

Yes, my son - your mother lives.
And she calls to you now from her
kingdom of the sea... For your
mother is a Selkie and tonight, I
fear, she has returned to claim
you.

The three children look at each other with astonishment.

DAUGHTER

Father dearest. Truly we feel the
song in our souls, drawing us to
the ocean - but, please, tell us
what you know of our mother, for
we remember little of her before
the day she left.

The father sniffs wretchedly and turns his eyes to the
window, as if looking through it into the past.

FADE TO

BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

EXT. A ROCKY SHORE - DAY (FOURTEEN YEARS EARLIER)

The father, in his prime, happily carries his catch of
herring from his currach.

FATHER V/O

T'was fourteen years ago - almost
to the day...

He stands, crate of fish in arms, a troubled expression
growing on his face.

FATHER V/O (CONT'D)

I first saw your mother, sitting
on a black rock.

A beautiful red-haired young WOMAN, wrapped in a cloak of dark green seaweed, sits on a black rock and stares impassively out over the grey sea.

The wind makes her long hair stream like a pennant.

She turns her head slowly and looks at the father. Her expression does not change as her deep blue eyes bore into his soul.

The father drops the crate he is carrying and stares at the woman, mesmerised.

FATHER V/O (CONT'D)

She was the most beautiful woman
I had ever seen and I knew that
she was meant to be my wife.

EXT. OLD CHURCH - DAY

The father and the woman embrace tenderly on the steps of a crumbling grey stone church.

She gazes into his eyes as he smiles lovingly back at her.

FATHER V/O (CONT'D)

We were married that same day.
For her dowry she gave me a seal
skin - smooth and grey.

The woman holds up a folded grey bundle. She stokes it lovingly and hands it to the man with a solemn bow.

The man looks unsure as he takes it from her.

WOMAN V/O

I give to you, my love, my true
skin - for I am the daughter of
the Selkie King. Take this as my
wedding gift to you and keep it
safe. Without it I can never
return to the sea.

INT. CABIN BY THE SHORE - DAY

The woman holds a tiny baby in her arms, tightly swaddled.

She gently rocks it as she sings a beautiful song and gazes longingly out of the window towards the sea.

The father bursts through the door. He looks at the woman and child and beams.

FATHER V/O (CONT'D)
Within the year, the first of you
was born and we were so happy
together.

The woman looks up at the father sadly. A tear runs down her cheek.

FATHER V/O (CONT'D)
Or so I thought...

EXT. A ROCKY SHORE - DAY

By the last rays of the setting sun, the woman stands on the black rocks, with the swaddled baby in her arms. She has a dreamy look in her eyes as she sways gently in the evening breeze.

Below her, in the water, seals pop their heads out and stare at her with doleful black eyes.

The father desperately jumps from rock to rock to get to her.

He grabs her tightly and pulls her away from the edge.

She turns and looks sadly into his face with her deep blue eyes.

FATHER V/O (CONT'D)
She bade me hide the sealskin and
never give it back to her, lest
the desire to return to the sea
proved too great and I lose her
forever. (beat) I did as she bade
me, for to lose her would have
been more than my heart could
bear.

INT. A CABIN BY THE SHORE - DAY

An excited young boy runs through the door, followed by the father, who looks very happy.

The woman is in bed with another baby in her arms. She looks tired and drawn as she smiles weakly.

FATHER V/O (CONT'D)
As the years went by she seemed
to forget about her old life and
to be happy here with us. She was
the best of mothers and a most
loving wife.

INT. A CABIN BY THE SHORE - NIGHT

It is dark and the wind is stirring the curtains.

The clouds roll back to reveal a full moon, which floods the cabin with cold, blue light.

The woman, lying in bed, opens her eyes.

She silently gets up and glides across the stone floor, bare-footed, to the hearth where the fire has died.

She turns to regard her sleeping husband and three sleeping children. She smiles gently and turns back to the hearth.

A beam of moonlight strikes the thatch and pale blue sparkles shine back. The woman tilts her head with curiosity.

Reaching up into the thatch, she pulls out a large silver key and smiles.

Kneeling she opens a sturdy wooden sea chest with the key.

Slowly she lifts the lid and her eyes fill with tears of joy.

She takes out the seal skin and rubs it lovingly against her cheek. She closes her eyes.

EXT. A ROCKY SHORE - DAY

The father gets out from his currach and walks wearily towards the cabin.

FATHER V/O (CONT'D)

Then one day, seven years ago,
she was gone.

He opens the door and looks in.

FATHER V/O (CONT'D)

I searched land and sea for her
every day, but never could I find
her.

The children are sleeping peacefully.

Out over the sea a single seal pops its head out of the water and watches the father.

He looks round sadly and covers his face with his hands as his shoulders heave.

END FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. A CABIN BY THE SHORE - NIGHT

The father, hands over his face and shoulders heaving, lifts his head. His eyes are bloodshot and watery.

FATHER

She was the most beautiful woman
I had ever seen and I knew that
she was meant to be my wife. But
I also knew that she would one
day leave. Leave and return to
her people.

The children, all with tears in their eyes, look at each other and hold hands.

FATHER (CONT'D)

And now, seven years later when
the moon is full, she calls to
her childer to join her.

The father gets up slowly from the chair and crosses the stone floor to the door. He opens it and turns to his children.

FATHER (CONT'D)

It is time. Go to her, my
childer. Hear your mother's call.

The children slowly get up and solemnly cross the stone floor to their father.

He bends down to them.

One by one they kiss him gently on the cheek and sadly embrace him as they walk through the door and into the night.

The father watches them and weeps bitterly.

EXT. THE GREY SEA - DAY

In a swelling sea, the father hauls in his nets. Four seals pop their heads up next to his currach and stare at him with doleful black eyes.

He stops hauling, sits and watches them sadly.

A chorus of beautiful voices take up a sad air as the four seal heads disappear under the water.

The father sadly goes back to hauling in his nets.

Something large and grey is stuck in the net. The father pulls it out with great curiosity.

He lifts it up for a better look. It is a seal skin.

The father looks around and hastily begins to put on the seal skin.

EXT. THE GREY SEA - DAY

With the sun setting behind it, the father's currach gently bobs on the swelling sea. It is empty, save for a pair of oars and a fishing net.

A little away from the currach four seal heads bob up for a second and look at each other. A fifth head pops up, then more seal heads. They look around for a brief moment then disappear one by one.

FADE OUT

THE END