

The Savage Song of Monsters Scorned

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I read a story once. About a crew of sailors, setting off in search of adventure, of wilder waters and bigger monsters. And they took a girl with them, because one of the sailors was in love with her. The other sailors shook their heads and muttered to each other that a woman would bring nothing but bad luck.

Their voyage encountered storms and sea beasts, the likes of which none of them had ever seen. And the crew looked at the girl and despite everything she'd done to help them, they wouldn't rest until she was gone. So they threw her overboard.

That's me. I'm that girl.

He wanted me, told me he loved me, *he chose me*. Then bad things started to happen, so he threw me away. He chose them over me. And now I'm the girl in the story.

The wind lashed at my face, my back pressed against the wooden railing as the men advanced, trying to keep their feet in the ocean that covered the deck.

"Please," I begged. "*Please.*" My eyes searched the ship, finding him standing at the helm, staring fixedly into the stormy sky ahead. "*Please!*"

He wouldn't even meet my eyes. Sobs caught in my throat as the first mate and his husband grabbed me by the arms. They pinned me, held me in place, mouths set with determination. Struggling did nothing against them, nothing at all except weaken me. Tears mixed with the rain and saltwater streaming down my face.

The ship's boy retrieved the chains sitting in their box under the mainmast. I crumpled to the deck, thrashing and wailing, pleading for my life, but they wouldn't listen. They bound my legs in metal, tied my hands with coarse rope, gagged me with a strip of wet silk – a mockery of everything they blamed me for losing.

I screamed through the gag, screamed as they lifted me up, as they turned my face away from the ship and forced me to see the writhing, hungry waves that would soon swallow me, chew me up and spit me out and swallow me forever.

I screamed as they shoved, as I fell, weightless, surreal, through the churning, howling winds.

Cold. It was so cold. I was still screaming as the liquid ice flooded my lungs and the weight of the sea pulled me down, down, down into oblivion.

Pain, sharp and vicious, tore through my heart. My back arched, my pulse thundering in my veins as agony engulfed me. It spread, hurtling through my limbs, rushing through my body like a torrential waterfall of flames. My eyes squeezed shut and I started praying, praying to whoever and whatever would listen.

The fire in my veins focused to jagged points in my lungs, in my legs, the tips of my fingers, my teeth. My bones throbbed in time to the furious roaring of the ocean. My heart cried out, cried out for something, anything, to help me, to avenge me.

And now I'm the girl from the story.

The pain in my legs eased, the pain in my lungs faded, the pain in my fingers and my teeth gradually lessened. The pain in my heart sharpened to a knife-edge, and I bared my razor-sharp teeth at the inky depths above me.

My claws sliced through the ropes with ease. One twist of my tail left the chains in pieces. The strip of silk lay forgotten in the sand underneath me, and my heart burned with rage.

A song reached my ears, curling through the waters, swelling in a turbulent crescendo. I joined my voice to the anguished chorus, rising through the darkness alongside my sisters. Scorned monsters, every one of us, and we were hungry for blood.

The powerful strokes of my tail propelled me through the waters, my hair streaming behind me as I raced towards the surface. My sisters came with me, arrows chasing their mark. Our song rose with us, savage and wild and tearing at the threads of the world, overflowing with bitterness and rage, malice and spite.

No force in the ocean or out of it could stop me now.

No kings to rule me here. No laws or power of men.

I *was* the power. The ocean was my realm. And I would suffer no captain.

The shallow reaches of the waters seethed and roiled, and my sisters waited, still amid the tempest, their eyes burning with tameless desire as the ocean surged around us and our song intensified, and they ceded the first kill to me.

My right.

My kill to make.

I bared my teeth in a savage grin and broke the surface.

The ship struggled in the towering waves, tossed to and fro as the sea toyed with it, toyed with the sailors on board. The sea was one with us, my sisters and I, and we had no mercy. I followed the ship, danced through the waves to the ravenous melody, called to him, to my first victim, my first kill.

He appeared at the railing, trapped in our song, helpless to resist our call. Cruel delight honed my razor-smile as I sang to him. He leapt into the crest of a wave, swimming madly towards me. I beckoned him with a claw-tipped finger, with a flick of my hair, with a trill in my murderous song. He came.

My sisters loomed in the waters around us, our song soaring along the remorseless winds, drawing them to us.

He grasped for my face, desperate for the taste of my kiss. I denied him, taunted him, enticed him further, closer, deeper. Under. Only when he started thrashing against the ocean did I pull him to me and crush his face to mine, dragging him deeper and deeper into the greedy waves.

My claws punched into his neck, my teeth sank into his lips. His blood spiralled in the waters around me and I drank it in, revelled in the sweet torment. The creaking of timbers fracturing filled the seas as my sisters pulled their own victims into the depths and the waters and winds tore at the ship until not even driftwood remained.

I caressed his face, trailing blood in the darkening waves as his eyes searched frantically for a light, a sign of hope. I smiled at him as I claimed his life for my own.

I'm the girl from the story.

We withdrew into the shadows, into the coldest, darkest depths, as we waited with shivering anticipation for the next ship, for the next meal. And when it came, when the winds and the waves battered the ship and its sailors, when the young woman sank through the waters, screaming through her restraints, praying to something, anything, we went to her. We went to her with our song, and watched as the fire in her eyes kindled to wrath, as the pain sharpened to a red-hot point, as her teeth gleamed in feral desire and she joined her voice to our song.

And now we are the girls from the story. Scorned monsters, every one of us, and we are hungry for blood.