The Lorelei

by aldiara

Summary

Through the years, Mags tries to figure out who she is, apart from who the Capitol has made her. A character study in 7 drabbles.

Notes

Written for the 2015 Fic or Die challenge, filling antiteb’s prompt “Mags’ life after she won the Hunger Games.” Thanks for the inspiration, BB <3

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I killed four people the year I turned sixteen. Three with fishhooks. One…

My hair was so long then, falling past my thighs. In the interviews before the Games, they called me Lorelei.

I used it to strangle the last one.

After I won, Kerry asked me to walk down to the water and pledge ourselves – in secret, she said;
the Capitol need never know.

I knew better; told her no. That winter she moved away. I never saw her again.

Better that than with me – safer, I told myself. But for years, I carried a fishhook in my heart.

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They were just starting up Career training, in those years. Before my Games, I would have scoffed at it. My father had always been sure the Games were about to stop, once the districts were finally stable again, the Capitol back in power. I believed him, for as long as I could.

I stopped believing when I used the hooks he’d taught me to murder friends.

It didn’t stop. Careers. It took hold, and I was a part of it. I taught them hooks, nets, tridents. I tried not to care for them, but I’ve always failed at not caring.

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The story of the Lorelei is old; no one remembers where it came from. A rock in a river; upon it, a long-haired siren, luring skippers to their watery grave.

Me.

They stopped calling me that as the years slipped by and no one cared anymore about the 11th Hunger Games or the girl who won them. But I remembered, and it still seemed to fit.

All those children. They flocked to me for guidance, year after year. And more often than not, I dragged them to their deaths.

I cut my hair, and had no children of my own.

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Some of them become mine regardless. Sixty-three years, even if I don’t mentor every year: there’s bound to be a few that hook more deeply into my heart.

I would not have it otherwise. I tried, for a few years, to harden myself, and found I did not like what it made of me. Instead, I gave in. Perhaps I cannot save them, but I can care for them. I can remember who they were.

I know this one is different when I see him: fourteen scrawny years old, wild sea-green eyes, a crooked, dazzling grin.

This one is mine.

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They break him, of course, my sweet boy with his too-open heart and too-ready smile. They turn him into a commodity. They make a selkie of him, steal his sea-skin and force him to languish on land, a slave.

Old myths. Old stories. I’m an old woman now. How strange.

I try to help him cope. The year he falls in love, I lose my voice. A stroke: my body cracks just when his Annie’s mind does.
They try to make it work; my heart breaks for their defiant secret. The world we live in has no room for them.

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Interviewers ask me sometimes, when there’s a promising tribute for our district or when it’s a slow Games year, what it’s like to remember a time before the Games.

It’s still a loaded question I’ve learned to answer with a guileless smile, signing, I was only five. I don’t remember anything before the Capitol’s enduring peace.

This is what I do remember: a sense of purpose in the air. In my mother’s face as she took up her weapons and went out to fight the Capitol.

That spark of purpose. It’s there again now, lit by a girl on fire.

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The world is changing. My hair is long again, but white now. It’s been a long time since I’ve been the Lorelei.

I’m not surprised when they announce the Quarter Quell: even less so when they reap both Finnick and Annie. There’s not a doubt in my mind that all of this is planned.

But there is that taste in the air: a strange, sharp tang like soot, or kelp from distant shores. I’m old, but not too old to remember the taste of revolution.

And I still have enough power to draw the Capitol’s ship off course.

I volunteer.

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