



# *The Celebrity of Broadway*

## *Atlantica*

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Retold Fairy Tales

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A soft lullaby drifted through the wind; the water surface was shimmering as the bluish moon shone brightly over the calm ocean. A lone ship was sailing across the seas, and a beautiful mermaid perched on the rock watched it from afar. The waves gently crashed around her, sending shivers down her spine. A sweet smile spread upon her lips as the last of the song faded, and she gazed at the twinkling stars in the sky before she dove head first into the blue depths never to surface again until she so desired.

Weird-looking creatures who had legs instead of tails and feet instead of fins glided over the sea aboard a huge oddly-shaped wooden contraption every night across the ocean. They wore bizarre garments that covered their bodies: chests, arms, and legs. Their feet were encased in a sturdy looking footwear that echoed against the wooden vessel every time they walked. It was very odd.

Very odd indeed, because the merfolk never wore any article of clothing except for the shells that covered the mermaids breasts. It's purpose was more decorative than for covering in the first place. Their kind took pride in their natural nudity, for the mermen cared not to cover their chests while the mermaids cared to flaunt their slender frame on the other hand. They couldn't imagine wrapping their tails in weeds that grew deep in the ocean. It would be too constricting. Nor could they be bothered to stitch shirts that would hide their upper bodies. Frankly, they deemed clothes unnecessary and greatly wondered why men loved to wear such.

For the beings that lived under the sea, humans were a mystery to behold. They knew very little of them and of

the things they had invented and used for everyday life. As a matter of fact, it became a very popular past time for their kind to debate the use of each spoil collected from various ship wrecks scattered all over the ocean floor. Not only do they debate about it but they performed plays revolving around peculiar human objects.

Theaters all over Atlantica were very famous, and hundreds of merfolks flock to watch the performances of well-known actors and actresses. The most popular plays were "I Need A Fork For My Hair", "I Have Twelve Numbers On My Face", "What's A Shirt For?" and "Baby Roses On A Frame". All of these plays were starred by Ursula. She was a celebrated actress of Broadway Atlantica. It suited her personality well for she was very confident and dramatic. She desired a lot of attention too and loved to use a lot of ornaments and make-up which would've made other mermaids look funny, but she somehow managed to look classy. It must be because of her pretty face and gray eyes that always smoldered whenever she's on stage. She was a big hit, a celebrity to the merfolk of Atlantica.

It was on one of her shows that she had met King Triton. She had been invited to the Sea King's castle to perform "I Need A Fork For My Hair". She had a melodious voice and sang very well, captivating the audience in the castle, the King included. As she swayed and twirled to the music played by the sea animals headed by Sebastian, and backed up by her loyal minions: Flotsam and Jetsam, she can't help but admire the King's handsome looks. This was before he grew old and before his hair turned white. It was as red as the burning sun and his eyes were as blue as the cloudless sky. His body was ripped with muscles, and he had a velvety tail of cyan. Ursula's heart was beating fast as she sang in front of the King.

"Look at this thing

Isn't it weird?

What do you think this unusual thing does?

Wouldn't you think I'm the girl, the girl who will figure it out?

Look at this FORK

Yes, it's what's called

How many purpose does this one untold?

Looking around here you'd think

"Sure, we don't have this"

We've got no forks on cupboards a-plenty

Only Tridents on MerSoldiers valor

You want Triton's Trident?

You can't have it!

But who cares?

No big deal

I want more

I wanna know what this thing is for

I wanna see, wanna see how it's used

Peeking around on those – what do you call 'em?

Oh – ships!

Flippin' our fins, we follow them far

Fins are required for swimming, stroking

Strolling after the ship's – what's that word again?

Wake

Up where they cruise, up where they sail

Up where they stay above the ocean

Wanderin' free – wish I could see

The fork being used

What would I give if I could live to figure it out?

What would I pay to get that fact here on my hands?

Bet'cha on land they understand

they don't use this fork on their hair

Bright young women all are knowin'

How fork is used

And ready to know what the people know

Ask 'em this question and get an answer

What's a fork and why is it – what's the word?

Weird?

When's it my turn?

Wouldn't I know, know how this fork is used up above?

But as of now

I Need A Fork

Fork For My Hair..."

Ursula owned the stage, if only her mom and dad were there to see her. She thought bitterly. Growing up, she had always felt like she was never good enough for her parents. She was always compared to her elder sister who was brilliant at everything she did: singing, dancing and making the polyps grow beautifully in their garden. Her talents were only second best and weren't worth appreciating. She was unloved, and this maybe part of the reason why she always sought attention from other people. She wanted to fill the ache and hollowness of her heart with their praises and care, the reason why she left her homeland and ventured to Atlantica.

It broke her heart to leave behind the life she had grown accustomed to. She wouldn't admit it but she didn't want to be apart from her parents. Yes, they neglected her and didn't acknowledge her existence, but she truly loved and wanted to please them more than anything else. She had realized that she couldn't do that while she stayed in one corner of the ocean though, overshadowed by her elder sister. She had great desire to prove herself worthy of her parents' love, to prove that she had what it takes to bring honor to their family just as much as her sister did.

She may have experienced drought in love but, what little happiness she had was brought to her by the arrival of two moray eels whom she met on her journey to Atlantica. They were just children when she met them, and she identified herself with the two creatures, abandoned by their parents and starving for a parent's love. She considered them her babies and named them: Flotsam and Jetsam. She was anything but cruel to the two creatures. They brought out the light in her, brought smiles to her face and sounds of innocent laughter from her. With their help, she was able to appreciate her own talents. She grew to love singing more. It showed in her craft, and it pushed her to the top of Broadway Atlantica.

King Triton had taken an interest in her. She was a beautiful mermaid: hair as black as the giant pearls of his kingdom, lips as red as blood and eyes as gray as the sky like an approaching storm. And a storm was exactly what Triton felt as he watched Ursula performed.

It was an unexplainable attraction he had for the merwoman. He always had eyes for his childhood best friend

Athena; he had never found any other mermaid appealing, and this deeply troubled the Sea King. He couldn't discern the feelings he had, and he didn't like it.

After Ursula's performance in the castle, she was invited by Athena to the gardens where they talked for hours, getting to know each other. Surprisingly, Ursula found an unlikely friend in her. She was the most generous, loving and kindest mermaid she had met. She couldn't help but like her the first time. She dashed any hopes she had of getting together with the King for she knew Athena deserved him better than her, and she was genuinely happy for her. She left the castle with no bitterness in her heart, for she had gained a precious friend instead.

"I can't believe you are giving up the chance to get together with the King," Jetsam wondered out loud.

Ursula sighed, "I can't help it Jetsam if Athena liked him. She's my friend now."

"But what if..." Flotsam said.

"What if the Sea King actually," Jetsam continued.

"Liked you?" both echoed at once.

Ursula scoffed. "What make's you think that?"

"Hmm," Jetsam and Flotsam swam towards her. "They way he looked at you?"

"How did he look at me?" she asked.

"I don't know. With twinkling eyes?" Jetsam answered.

"With longing?" Flotsam added.

They entwined their bodies and stared at each other's eyes. "Like this."

"Don't be ridiculous," Ursula brushed off.

But the two moray eels were right indeed. King Triton had grown fond of Ursula. The more time she spent with Athena, the more Triton became aware of her presence. It bugged him big time. He was an upright person and the fact that Ursula stirred his thoughts into dishonorable musings, angered him.

Ursula didn't understand the reason why Triton hated her so much. As far as she could tell, she hadn't done anything wrong against him. One day, she decided to confront the King.

"Why is it that you hate me so much?" she asked her voice cracking.

Triton's faced softened upon hearing her trembling voice. "It is not you that I hate but myself. I am angry at me."

Ursula looked at him confused, "But why?"

"Because you make me question my feelings for Athena, and I do not like it," King Triton answered honestly.

Ursula was shocked. She couldn't believe that the King regarded her in any manner other than platonic. And if she was going to be honest, she liked that someone as powerful as him had fallen for her charms. But no, she had no intention of acknowledging his feelings because she cared for Athena more. After hearing the truth, she rarely went to visit the castle. She stayed in Broadway Atlantica where she spent her days singing to a crowd of merpeople.

Mermen and merwoman from different parts of the ocean had heard of her name. She became so famous that her parents back in their hometown heard news of her success. They were stricken by grief. They realized too late who unfair they had treated her and how they always favored her sister. They came to visit her in one of her performances, and Ursula was beyond happy to see her parents among the audience, beaming with pride.

The three hugged each other for the longest time imaginable. Ursula buried her face in her mother's embrace as she stroked her hair lovingly. They asked for her forgiveness for not loving her the way they had loved her elder sister revealing that they had unreasonably blamed her for the death of her grandmother. The accident happened when she was a child and she stubbornly asked her grandma to take her above the ocean.

Unfortunately, men had seen them and killed her with a spear. Ursula had almost forgotten the incident, and looking back now everything made sense. It was also around that time when her parents started to ignore her presence.

But none of that mattered, she was just relieved that they hadn't hated her for not being good enough. All those years of insecurities and self-doubt, now led to this moment and she was grateful.

Everything would've been perfect if not for Triton. His desire for Ursula grew bigger the more distance and self

restraint he placed upon himself. He dreamt of her face again and again: her black hair, gray eyes and red lips beckoning him. Triton knew his feelings were nothing deep. It's just a shallow attraction, stirred by his desires. It was nothing pure like what he felt for Athena. This was only brought by Ursula's alluring nature. He was enchanted just like all the mermen who had fallen for her spell.

He needed to do something. He had to stop the growing want.

He wanted to remain faithful to Athena, and mermen were so weak: so easily swayed by their fantasies, so easily tempted.

Using his Trident's power, he had concocted a potion intended for Ursula. The brownish brew smelled so sweet that one wouldn't think twice of drinking it. Visiting her while performing "What's A Shirt For?", he knew what he's about to do will change Ursula's life, not for the better. No, not better but worse. Still he had resolved his mind that this was supposed to be done. She was a witch that beguiled mermen with her voice. She was greedy for attention, a threat to all.

Slipping the potion into her drink at the after party, he approached her. He guided her away from the eyes of the rest and once they were alone urged Ursula to try the drink.

She was wary; she didn't want to be alone with Triton. She had kept herself in check and stayed away from the castle. Why he seeked her out, she couldn't understand. She knew he loved Athena, but one sip from the brownish brew clouded her mind. It made her feel so light that she gulped the entire drink in one go. Triton smiled.

Ursula swayed from side to side. Her head started spinning. She clutched unto the nearby column and steadied herself.

"What was it you made me drink?" she croaked.

Triton touched her face one last time. "A brew that will take away your charm. So that no mermen would ever be enchanted with your looks or your voice."

Ursula looked at him accusingly, speechless.

“Don’t hate me Ursula. I’m only saving the mermen of Atlantica.” But Triton didn’t know that he wasn’t saving anyone by doing this to Ursula. He only bred the evil that will plague his reign.

Her long black hair shortened and turned white; her beautiful purple tail contorted and twisted into six black ugly octopus-like tentacles; Her slender frame morphed and changed into a plump bellied figure; The only thing she retained were her gray eyes that expressed more hate than love for the world.

Gone was the sweet, beautiful celebrity of Broadway Atlantica.

Triton banished her from his lands, and her hatred for him grew. Not only did he take away the thing she loved doing most, performing in front of the crowd of merpeople, but he also took away that which had made her parents proud. Exiled and too ashamed to face her parents despite of their reunion, she pledged herself to one day take revenge on the King of Atlantica. The one merman who had stripped all the goodness in her.

“Poor child. Poor, sweet child,” Jetsam and Flotsam echoed as they swam away from Broadway, wrapping their bodies around Ursula.

“Don’t pity me my babies,” Ursula slurred. “One day... One day, I’ll take my revenge on King Triton. I’ll be watching and waiting. My chance will come and when it does....”

“Ohhh, you poor unfortunate soul,” she grinned wickedly.

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