



## Men Who Wish to Drown

*Elizabeth Fama , Anna Balbusso (Illustrator) , Elena Balbusso (Illustrator)*

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From the Falmouth Historical Society Collection

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Companion story to Monstrous Beauty.

## Men Who Wish to Drown Details

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## From Reader Review Men Who Wish to Drown for online ebook

### Trish says

This is one of the free short stories on tor.com that I discovered by coincidence because a friend of mine had read and reviewed it.

No, I can never resist a story about a mythical being and mermaids are no different.

There are many stories about mermaids and sirens (yes, there is a difference) and many records of sailors being convinced of having seen either one or the other have survived until today. This short story apparently came to be because of one such record:

*From the Falmouth Historical Society Collection*

*Cited as the only extant firsthand record of a mermaid encounter in New England waters, this deathbed letter from a great-grandfather to his great-grandson is more likely an instructive fiction--a parable of regret. Supposedly corroborating the mermaid story, a ship's log (in the collections of the Provincetown Historical Museum) of the schooner Hannah, which plucked Mr. Stanton from South Weepecket in 1788, indicates that the crew saw two figures on the island prior to his rescue, but failed to locate a second victim. However, regarding accuracy and reliability, this is the same crew, under Captain John Merriweather, that reported sightings of a ghost ship and not one, but two sea monsters. ~James S. Rucker, Archivist, Family Collections, Falmouth Historical Society, 1924*

(from the blurb)

Thus, we get a letter from a great-grandfather to his great-grandson, telling this story one final time before his death. I'm not really sure why this old man would be so full of regret as he got a pretty sweet deal (if it was a deal at all), but the story of how he encountered his mermaid was interesting and kinda sweet (you know, except that you were expecting bloodshed at any moment \*lol\*).

Apparently, the story belongs to or teases a full-length book by this author, but it can be read as a standalone.

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### Anne says

**Because life goals are important.**

*And you need to get your priorities straight.*

I thought this one was above average shorty about **mermaids** and **regret** that you can read free here. Now sometimes, *free* equals smelly garbage. But that's not the case with **Men Who Wish to Drown**, so free to click the link and have fun. Bonus: if it doesn't suck you in, you've lost nothing but a few seconds of your life.

So, this old dude looks back on this ONE BIG *safe* choice he made (which led to a pretty cushy life, by the way) and feels the weight of it in a way that only someone who made **good choices** can feel 'regret'. I'm gonna be honest, the entire time I'm reading this I'm thinking...what the hell are you going on about, you idiot?!

Wah, wah, wah - I got scared off by a witch who showed me a horrifying death scenario and so I decided *not* to run off with an ancient mermaid I'd only known for a few days. Instead, I chose option B, which was a long life filled with a nice wife, happy children, prosperous business, and a fat bank account.

**Obviously, I can see how this would be upsetting for the man.**

I kid, I kid. <-sort of

This is a letter that an old man writes on his deathbed. And then he leaves it in his will for his great-grandson to read as a cautionary tale about not following your heart, and/or letting fear guide your life, and/or falling in love with salty women.

*Awwww!*

Just be sure to remember that a healthy dose of caution is a good thing, kids!

Not every fish tale has a happy ending, after all...

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**Jen says**

Good, but sad. An old man, regretting a decision made as a young man. How would it have ended if he chose the other path? Lady, or the tiger? 4 solid stars.

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**Erin \*Proud Book Hoarder\* says**

**Choose wisely when your time comes. Live—or die—without regret.**

Mermaids are amazing, and it's hard to get enough of their legends. At least I haven't had my personal fill of them yet, they seem hard for me to find other than mere glimpses in stories. This is a short story - again, only a mere glimpse of a mermaid tale. The writing is haunting and lovely, the main character a weak man who lives to regret not taking a chance. The writer's pause between reflective thought and her subtlety in dialogue that says it all is skillful.

The mermaid is easy to fall in love with - subtle and sweet but clever. I do think the old hag's story would prove true and to love her is to meet your death, as so many other mermaid legends go, but that brings together the haunting charm of the mermaid tales and voyages in the epic, vast sea.

It's haunting, it's whimsical, it's mind-bending - perfect reading. The tone is almost gothic and works well to give me reading willies.

At the end of the story there are some questions I wondered though.

(view spoiler)

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Read the story here - Men who wish to drown

### **Elise (TheBookishActress) says**

An excellent and very creepy short story about men wishing to go back to the ocean for their mermaid lovers. I love how this plays with point of view; it's a letter from the point of view of someone who fell in love with a mermaid to his grandson. I also adore how this subverts expectations for a mermaid mystery; it's creative and atmospheric and lovely. You can read this for free here!

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### **Acqua says**

*Men Who Wish to Drown* is the story of a man who was saved by a mermaid in New England waters. He loved the mermaid, but he couldn't be with her, and he tells what happened to his great-grandson in his deathbed letter. It's a story about regret and not settling down for what doesn't make you happy, told in a really interesting way. I really liked the writing and message but I think it could have done more with its atmosphere (and it could have been even more creepy!)

TWs for suicidal ideation.

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### **Wendy Darling says**

Read this free digital short on Tor.com  
set in the Monstrous Beauty world.

LOOK AT THAT COVER IMAGE! \*swoons\*

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### **Karlyflower \*The Vampire Ninja, Luminescent Monster & Wendigo Nerd Goddess of Canada (according to The Hulk)\* says**

*I saw a woman—only a little more than a flash of pale skin and white hair, and she was gone. It was a*

*brainsick reverie, I knew. I longed to allow myself to tumble in, but I hesitated, as I always did, lacking purpose even to die.*

Resolved Henry Stanton has led a long and prolific life, now – at its end – he writes to his great-grandson of love and regret. He writes of the fantastical world of mermaids; and the impossibility of loving and being loved by one.

This short story is really just a letter, a letter to his beloved great-grandson, speaking of his youth. However, it is also a story; and a beautifully crafted one at that.

I am crazy about mermaids, and also crazy about the message this story is sending:

***Choose wisely when your time comes. Live—or die—without regret.***

I remember when I was 22 sobbing my heart out one evening to my mother, I had just broken up with my boyfriend – a sweet boy I had gone to high school with, who loved me dearly. ENTIRELY. but whom I, through no amount of determination and effort, could muster romantic love for – about cruelty in love and lamenting it for being unfair. I remember her running her fingers through my hair and doing all the soft motherly things one would expect, but I also distinctly recall her saying “Love is rarely fair, in almost any relationship one person loves the other more” which I found both harsh and bitter tasting. She told me that I may never find another boy who would love me as J had, and I told her then – and I would tell her again now were the situation to come up again – “That I am too young to settle for that”.

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### **Alexxy says**

I don't normally enjoy short stories, specially if they're not part of any series because I need time to feel my characters and short stories can't provide me with that. That being said, *Men Who Wish to Drown* was a beautiful yet sad story of a man, writing his grandson a letter about something that happened to him during his youth and how he met someone very dear.

Like I explained, I didn't grow to like the characters, 32 pages is very short, but I believe the message it conveys is pretty important.

That you can't always go back to things or people you've abandoned thinking that they're waiting for you to come back. You life isn't the only one that goes on. Universe changes and if you make a decision, you got to live with its consequences.

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### **TL says**

*I have led a life that most men envy. I achieved health and wealth almost without effort. But as a young man the future was unknown and there were two paths before me. In my nineteenth year I tasted the nectar of truly living, and I might have leapt over the chasm of the ordinary into the ravishment of an ecstatic extraordinary, but I turned away from it.*

I skipped past the introduction and didn't realize this was the same author of "monstrous beauty" (which I didn't care for, not the fault of the writing but couldn't connect with it). Haha, whoops :)

A haunting and somewhat lovely tale... Connected with it and at the same time not really. The letter format was a nice touch, made it feel more personal.

*"When you give your heart to the ocean, you either drown, or spend your life wishing you had drowned."*

Read the story here

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### **karen says**

*"When you give your heart to the ocean, you either drown, or spend your life wishing you had drowned."*

you know me - you know i have read all kinds of stories about what happens when a man or a woman succumbs to the love of a creature not quite human. this is the story of what happens when they don't; the missed connections version of monsterporn.

and it's gorgeous.

it takes the form of a deathbed letter by mr. resolved harry stanton to his great-grandson thomas, in which he recounts an experience he had when he was nineteen years old, and the life-changing decision he made as a result.

it's about fear and hesitation, a lifetime of regret on the road more frequently traveled. it's about the knifetwist of someone else's "pleasant indifference."

it's a strong and beautiful story.

and it's no great coincidence, i think, that this mermaid story features a character very like dear overcautious j. alfred prufrock, with his:

*But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,  
Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter,  
I am no prophet — and here's no great matter;  
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,  
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,  
And in short, I was afraid.*

set against resolved's

*I have led a life that most men envy. I achieved health and wealth almost without effort. But as a young man the future was unknown and there were two paths before me. In my nineteenth year I tasted the nectar of truly living, and I might have leapt over the chasm of the ordinary into the ravishment of an ecstatic extraordinary, but I turned away from it.*

and i think it's worth quoting the closing lines of that poem:

*I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.*

*I do not think that they will sing to me.*

*I have seen them riding seaward on the waves  
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back  
When the wind blows the water white and black.  
We have lingered in the chambers of the sea  
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown  
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.*

poor prufrock. poor resolved.

*And indeed there will be time*

but what if there isn't?

choose wisely.

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read it for yourself here: <http://www.tor.com/2012/08/29/men-who...>

### **?Tash says**

*“When you give your heart to the ocean, you either drown, or spend your life wishing you had drowned.”*

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Beautifully written and poignant

### **Jess \*Harbinger of Blood-Soaked Rainbows\* says**

So everyone who's friends with me knows I am obsessed with mermaids, right? I mean, it's in my profile under "interests." I love mermaids. I find them fascinating and think their history and mythology from all cultures is very unique. There is just one thing I have never been able to stomach about the whole original "Little Mermaid" tale by Hans Christian Anderson. She accepts her fate and dies when the prince she loves marries another. Bitch. You're a mermaid. There ARE (ahem) other fish in the sea.

I know the fable is supposed to send the message that it's better to sacrifice yourself for someone you love, that it will pay off in the end, but you know what? That message is stupid. Become a siren and lure shitbags like Mr. Prince Charming to their deaths. You saved him and he chose another. And you were too weak to even tell him, "Hello" Excuse me? I saved you. Not some stupid waif who just happened to be there at the

right place at the right time." And then if he still chooses her? Move on. Do something with your life. You're a friggin mermaid. You're better than he is anyway.

There is a song by Grayson Capps entitled "Mermaid" that has always kinda been my juice. Since the first time I heard it, the words spoke to me with such power that it seemed as if I was meant to hear it over and over and over throughout my life. This song is probably actually what makes mermaids so special to me. Because it is a song about saving someone who may be from another world. But the song is not about giving up or sacrificing yourself. The song is about fighting like hell to get through. It is a song about survival. Because that's ultimately what mermaids are. They rescue shipwrecked sailors. They give themselves to people who need help. They do love fiercely and deeply and strongly. But they are fucking survivors.

Elizabeth Fama's writing is absolutely gorgeous and her words hold much power. Some of the passages were breathtaking and rang with so much truth. I cannot wait to read more from her.

(view spoiler)

BAM!

This short story gutted me. Completely. I read it at exactly the right time and needed to hear its message. Because I am a mermaid. I love fiercely and without compromise. I am loyal and love to help others who can benefit from my nurturing side. I am filled with passion and that passion causes me to be unable to "love by halves" to quote Jane Austen. But I am a fucking survivor. I will not pine away for a prince who has chosen another less colorful life over the one I can offer in my world. I will not settle for less than what I want or deserve in this life. I will not choose the path of least resistance over the road less traveled, if that latter road is what will lead to happiness. And I will fight like hell to get through the darkness. I have probably too much life experience at thirty years old than what I would have wished for, but all that life experience has given me even more will to survive. I've fought addictions. I've fought physically and emotionally abusive relationships. I've fought apathy and denial and depression and anxiety. I've fought the loss of friends and family. I fight my demons every day. And I always win. Especially the demons inside who "have much magic" but "never the power of prophecy."

You have the magic of a mermaid.  
You swim when I drown.  
Oh I need you now more than ever.  
My ship is going down.

The Devil he stole my soul.  
Too much idle time.  
I'm crawling just like a snake.  
The Devil he owns my mind.  
He's driving me straight to hell.

I was wise when I was with you.  
I died with you a million deaths.  
And every time I was born again  
but the last time you took my breath.  
Left me never to breathe again, never to breathe again.

Give me life. Give me hope. Give me strength to hold on.  
Give me life. Give me hope. And strength to hold on.  
I need one more day to rise above this jail.  
I need one more day to rise above this hell.

The walls are wet and cold inside this bottomless hole.  
Your fingernails slip on the slime.  
It's harder and harder to climb.  
I'm sinking deeper, deeper into hell.

Thoughts bleed down my face.  
My brain wears a thorny crown.  
Look out Johnny Ace for the Devil's coming back to town.  
To give your guns to me. You give your guns to me.  
He's gonna give your guns to me.

Give me life. Give me hope. Give me strength to hold on.  
Give me life. Give me hope. And strength to hold on.  
I want one more day to rise above this jail.  
I need one more day to rise above this hell.

This is for all my friends who fight the darkness. Who sometimes feel the weight of the world pressing on you or who get flack all the time just for being you. You all are amazing, wonderful, beautiful people and have all enriched my life in some way. You all are survivors, and will fight your way through anything.

Do yourselves a favor and watch Grayson play this song. You may get an idea of why it affects me so much.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LtEp...>

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### **Amy (Other Amy) says**

*A man could suffer with his death, and I daresay most do, but mine had no agony. Have you wondered what dying is like? I shall tell you the end of it, the release, which must be the same for all men: Darkness folds around you, just as soft water closes around a stone tossed into a pond, claiming it.*

Karen's review has me in a review-by-poetry frame of mind. I had a high school English teacher who argued that "The Road Not Taken" was the most misinterpreted poem in all of American literature:

*I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*

that the choice the poet makes is of no consequence and makes no difference at all, as all roads end in death.

*I lay motionless for hours, disappointed that I lived.*

Here is a story that says otherwise, and even in its deep regret, it is beautiful, hopeful in passing wisdom down, urging the new generation to avoid the safe shallows, to really live.

*Choose wisely when your time comes. Live—or die—without regret.*

The road, it matters.

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### **Tuba Sayed says**

"When you give your heart to the ocean, you either drown, or spend your life wishing you had drowned."

So freaking good!

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