

Searching the Shore

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I don't know why I went out to the beach that night, I was feeling lonely again, and I guess I decided I'd rather listen to the surf than sit at home. Not all foxes are so lucky at finding dates. I'm not all that great with the ladies, and I don't like the bar scene anyway, it's too depressing. No the solitude of nature often feels better to me, so after putting in some extra time at work, I decided to drive out to the beach. It was a nice night, with a bright moon overhead, and a gentle breeze in the air.

I hadn't been out there at night for a long time, so I was glad I'd followed my whim. I was having a good time walking along the shoreline. I'd even taken off my shoes to walk through the waves, feeling the wet sand under my toes, and the water splashing against the black fur of my feet. I eventually came to a nice flat rock and sat down there under the moonlight. Out here I didn't feel so alone, the sound of the surf was a gentle and unobtrusive companion as I let my mind wander.

I'd closed my eyes and sat there, just listening to the waves crash softly all around me. I lost myself in it and didn't know how long I'd stayed there, I'd lost all track of time. Something caught my attention though, a sound next to me, or perhaps just something I'd sensed; whatever it was, it brought me out of my reverie quickly. Opening my eyes, I felt my ears pick up as I moved my head to look around. I jumped when I saw her, letting out a short startled yip. There off to my right was a vixen, standing only a few feet away from me.

I shook myself and stood up, trying to regain my composure and not look like a total fool. "Oh, I'm sorry, you scared me," I stammered, forcing a smile, despite my embarrassment. I tried to perk my ears up, but they still drooped slightly, my body-language giving me away. Damn I must've looked stupid.

Looking at her as I got over my shock, she was rather pretty. She was a white vixen, and her soft fur shone nicely in the moonlight. She was wearing a simple dress, its style a little old-fashioned maybe, and it seemed a strange thing for someone to be wearing for a walk along the beach. It was just surprising to find someone else out here this late at night, but perhaps she was another eccentric fox like me.

I noticed she was standing in the water, but not deep enough so the fabric of her dress would get wet. She didn't move as the two of us regarded each other. I stood there pausing, not knowing what to do, still feeling rather silly. She was staring at me, and I began to feel ill at ease with the situation. The look on her face seemed wrong, not an expression of surprise or embarrassment at disturbing me, in fact her stare was almost emotionless, the look of someone lost in their own little world. She didn't look dangerous, but she could be somehow disturbed.

I hesitated, my mind fumbling for the correct thing to say to her. What does one say to a strange woman you meet on the beach late at night anyway? I didn't want to offend her, but the whole encounter was making me nervous. It was best just to explain how she'd caught me off guard, and laugh the thing off, then excuse myself as soon as possible. Going home seemed

like a good idea right about then.

"Look, I..." I started to say, but as I did so, I suddenly got a better look at her, and my words trailed off into silence. Her fur wasn't just white, it was downright pale, and as I stared at her, disbelieving, I realized that indeed I could see right through her. Her body was partially transparent, her ethereal form standing out thinly against the background. What's more, she wasn't actually standing in the water, looking down to where her dress came close to touching the waves, I could see she was floating above them. A shiver ran through me, for she had no lower legs or feet, there was only a gap of space beneath her as she hovered over the sea.

Gasping, I turned slightly, and started backing away from her, careful not to trip over the large rock behind me. I moved with deliberate motions, inching away from her, unable to turn my eyes away from the pale specter before me. She watched me retreat slowly for a few steps, then I saw her ears jump to attention. The look on her face quickly changed, from that of a blank stare to one of recognition and determination.

"Jackie, it is you," she called out to me, as she moved forward, "no, don't leave, not now..."

Seeing her floating towards me, I quickened my step. I felt my heart beating in my chest and heard my breath rasping loudly as I tried to call out, but managed only a gurgling gasp. I tried to turn, wanting to run, but I couldn't force my legs to work any faster. I was also unable to tear my eyes off the apparition bearing down upon me. Seconds later I felt my foot catch on a rut in the sand. I lost my footing and tumbled down on my back, a scream choked off in my throat.

She was on me quickly. I put my arms up to shield myself from her attack, but it was to no avail. A shiver ran through me as I felt her make contact, pushing her ghostly body against mine. It felt like a cold wind brushing up against me, but then I could feel her weight upon my chest. It was not as heavy as a living person's would've been, but still enough to push my back down against the sand, if only slightly.

My eyes were frozen upon her as she looked down at me, her own pale orbs holding me in her gaze. I tried pushing against her, but the phantom weight of her body held me steady, my muscles feeling cold and numb, my body locked in fear. My breath came out in low moans as I lay there so utterly helpless, a sinking feeling gnawing away at the pit of my stomach.

There was a longing in her eyes as she regarded me, the moments ticking off slowly with the pounding of my heart in my ears. Finally, she spoke again. "Oh, Jackie, you've come back to me," she whispered softly, bringing her face closer to mine. I could feel the cool touch of her breath ruffling the fur of my cheek. "You don't know how long I've waited for you" she added. "They said you'd been lost at sea, but I knew that wasn't true, that if I only waited long enough, you'd find your way back to be with me."

She was smiling at me, which only sent more shivers down my spine. She pushed herself closer to me and I felt her weight increase, her touch becoming slightly warmer, not as cold. Her eyes glistening, she brought her mouth down upon me, resisting my attempts to shrink away from her.

Those cool lips touched mine, kissing me gently at first, then with more insistence and urgency. Her advances weren't quelled by my aversion to her touch. Her kiss was both needy

and desperate, cutting off my breath as I tried to fight against her. To my horror, I felt her muzzle opening wider against mine, her mouth pressing against my lips even harder. She felt more solid against me, her weight growing heavier still. She was warming steadily with my presence too, her body taking on more substance, but even so, I could still see through her; her form not yet become completely solid.

I fought back against her advances, slowly finding the resolve, my body coming back under my control. My muscles awaking from their paralysis, I found the strength to push against her. Turning my head I broke off her kiss, and bringing my arms up, I pushed her off of me.

"Jackie, No...." she said as she looked at me, confused surprise and hurt washing over her face.

"I'm not Jackie" I said as I scooted away from her, my legs still too weak to stand. "I'm not him..." my voice croaked as I tried to make her understand, as I tried to get away from her.

She reacted to my words almost as if I'd struck her, her mouth hanging open, her eyes regarding me with shocked disbelief. Moments later, she started crying, holding her face in her hands. Looking at her, I saw tears flowing from those ghostly eyes. As she cried, I saw she was becoming paler, more transparent once again. Her sobs chilled me, sending more shivers through my body.

I lay there watching her, frozen in place, not knowing what to do. Still sobbing, she finally rose up, standing once again on phantom legs, her head hung low and her ears drooping. She looked at me, her face still wet from her tears, and simply said "I'm sorry, I've been searching so long that I thought you were him..." With that, she let out a low moan of a sigh and turned to float away from me. I watched her go, my heart still beating heavy against my chest. I looked after her as she found the water's edge and started moving back down along the shoreline. Her tail hung limply behind her as she moved, dragging along the sand and then finally into the wet embrace of the surf.

"No wait....," I called out to her as I managed to find my voice again. The low sound of my words was lost in the noise of the surf though. I tried calling to her again, but she never turned back towards me, she just continued receding from my view. As I watched, powerless to stop her, I saw her fade to disappear into the mist of the sea. Lying there shivering, recovering from the shock, I felt new twinges of emotions washing over me. My mind still reeling from the terror, I also felt her loneliness tugging at me, knotting my stomach even further. I could not escape the feeling of her desperation, and I shivered at how lonely the pale, moonlit landscape of the beach now felt.

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I've been back there many nights in the months since then. The nights I don't go out to the beach, I often have trouble sleeping. She's stayed with me in my thoughts, and she haunts my dreams, calling out to me in her sadness. I haven't been able to find her again, but still I search for her. I watch the shore for her to return to me. I want to be there to comfort her in her loss, and to let her know that she doesn't have to be lonely anymore, neither of us do...