

Current by Vanessa Garcia

So there I was, paddling out to the crystal-clear turquoise outside of the Moloka'i surf. I was visiting Hawaii to train for an upcoming surfing contest. It was just an hour until sunset, and I needed to finish up my training for the day. I rocked gently with the swells on my 5-foot board as I watched the horizon for good waves. Soon, a barrel came rolling out from the left and caught me on its crest. Popping up fast, I tilted the board's nose down as I rode down the steep slope of the wave. The crest crashed down and I was riding the barrel down the beach.

Paddling out again, I searched the aqua ocean for big swells when I happened to look down. As the barrel had taken me rather far along the beach before I hopped off, I was now in quite a different place. Looking down, I saw a beautiful coral reef. It was bustling with action - parrotfish building their slimy bubbles, seahorses clinging to strands of lime-green sea grass, pufferfish drifting along nonchalantly knowing they had nothing to fear, and even a gray moray eel ambushing some blue tang in the secrecy of a hidden cave, with many different hues of coral - ranging from bright pink to navy blue to golden yellow. It was so breathtaking even my heart stood still in awe of the magnificent reef.

When I finally started to breathe again, a flash of green caught my eye. An emerald sea turtle rounded a bend and drifted towards some sea grass. Not knowing what I was doing, I slipped off my board and into the water. I ducked under the surface and started swimming towards the turtle. Strangely, it was easier to hold my breath than when I was underwater other times.

The turtle looked at me and then coolly continued swimming as if nothing was there. *It must see people a lot around here*, my mind reasoned. Then I noticed something shimmery on the turtle's shell. I peered closer. It was a carving of a trident, inlaid with gold. *Strange*. The turtle ate a little grass, and then turned towards a patch of bright orange coral. It rounded a corner. When I caught up to it, it had disappeared.

Suddenly, a silver strand way off in the open ocean caught my eye. What could it be? I started swimming towards it, leaving the reef behind. When I was about three feet away from it, I noticed that it started sucking my feet into it with a powerful force. *Holy bananas!* I thought. *A current!* Yanking my feet away from it and scrambling out of its grasp, I suddenly stopped dead. I looked down at my feet again. Only - they weren't feet. They had become a fluked tail coated in pearly silver-gray skin. Dismayed, I reached down to touch it, only to discover that my hands were now flippers. "What's happening to me?" I tried to shout. Only it came out as, "CRRRRRRX SQUEE!"

I knew that there was only one explanation. I had become a dolphin.

Suddenly, without warning, a rushing force enveloped my whole body. The current! In my panic, I must have drifted closer to it. I writhed in the clutches of the powerful tide. I desperately looked back at the reef, a fast-disappearing speck in the big blue ocean, as if the sight might help me.

"SQUEE! SQUEE!" I yelled. "Help! Help! Somebody help me!"

After about fifteen seconds, something heavy slammed into my side. I tumbled out of the current and into the clear blue ocean. I looked to see who had rescued me. Another dolphin was beside me, rubbing her rostrum with her flipper as if she had encountered a heavy

blow (which she had). "Who are you?" I inquired. "I'm Selena Delphinus," she said. "I heard you calling and came to help. Who are you?"

"I'm Alexandra McKinley," I replied. She scanned me. "You're not from around here, are you?" she said with a wary glance. She jerked her head toward the current. "Normally we stay away from the West Current. It's dangerous."

"I can tell. No, I'm not from around here. I used to be human. I was visiting Hawaii, and then when I went into the water near the reef back there I turned into a dolphin. It was really weird. And now I'm just trying to find a way to get home."

Selena didn't look very surprised. "A lot of magical things happen near Poseidon's reef," she said. Then she turned and started swimming east. "Hey!" I called after her. "Where are we going?"

"To see Poseidon. He can help you get home."

Ten minutes, a breathing rest and a current ride later, we arrived at the same patch of coral in the reef the turtle had disappeared at. Rounding the corner, I saw a bleak wall of dull gray coral before me. Two sentry sharks were in front of the wall, each holding a spear. I started backwards. Selena must have noticed, for she said, "It's fine, they won't hurt you." The sharks crossed their spears together, blocking the wall. "Password?" one of them said in a husky voice. "Poseidon's palace," answered Selena. The sharks uncrossed their spears. One reached for a single piece of coral growing out of the wall and pushed it down.

Immediately the wall slid back and split in two, revealing a jewel-adorned passage with a maroon rug. "Follow the-" began one of the sharks, but Selena interrupted. "I know, I know, the black carpet," she said impatiently. "Let's go." To me she added in a whisper, "They always try to tell you that, even if you already know and have heard it a thousand times." I followed her down a twining passage with the black carpet underneath us. Right. Left. Left. Right. Straight. Left. Right. Finally, we came to a big, open room with a golden throne decorated with pearls and jewels. It was empty. "He'll be here any second," whispered Selena. Sure enough, a chariot came whizzing through one of the doorways, pulled by a team of dolphins like ourselves, with the same tattoo that the turtle I had met earlier had had.

Poseidon himself stepped out of the chariot. He had a bare chest and a cloth around his middle. Placed on top of his long white hair was a crown of pearls, and in his hand he carried a golden trident. He sat down in his throne and the dolphins whisked the chariot away.

"Ah," he said. His voice was deep and strong, although pleasant in a way. He looked at me. "So you are the girl. Yes. Mako told me about you." He gestured to his right, where stood the turtle I had seen before. Mako bowed. "He saw you turn into a dolphin. Hail, Selena," he said, turning his attention to Selena. "Hail, Lord," she replied. "We come only to seek the way home for her."

"Ah, yes. Simple. Take the East Current all the way to the beach, and there you are."

"Thank you, my Lord." We bowed and returned to the reef outside. "See that strand out there?" Selena asked, pointing. "That's the East Current. That's the one you want to take."

"Thanks, Selena," I said. "Thanks so much for everything."

"You're welcome." Selena smiled. "No problem."

I started swimming towards the East Current. "Bye, Selena!" I called over my shoulder. "Bye, Alexandra!" came the reply.

The current spit me out right at Laau Point Beach. I fell to my knees and caressed the warm golden sand with my regular, beautiful human arms. I got up and turned towards the ocean again, but something pink in the waves caught my eye. I sloshed through the water, and, amazed, watched as my surfboard washed up on the beach. I ran to retrieve it. In that moment, Selena jumped out of the water so that her pearly back captured the last rays of the setting sun.