

## Sealskin Soulskin (Pam England's variation)

There was an old fisherman walking along the beach, kind of a lonely guy....just to see what the ocean had brought him. Gradually, his attention was drawn to voices, or laughter....way off into the distance, looking up on a cliff, illuminated by the moon, he could barely make out a group of women.....very unselfconsciously dancing on a cliff just above the sea.

He asked and wondered to himself...."***Could this be the legendary sea people? Could this be the Selkies?***"

He'd never seen one and he wanted to take a closer look, but he didn't want to frighten them back into the water, so he stepped very slowly and quietly around the back side of the cliff.....and that's when he discovered their seal pelts, tucked between the rocks.

They were in all colors, black ones, gray ones, golden ones, even a pink one. So, he decided to take just one —so that he could take it back and prove to others that he had, indeed, seen the Selkies. So he tucked one into his parka and he watched them dance and play a wee bit more before he headed back home.

Then, they began to slip back into the sea...they were yelping and barking with joy.

Well, the fisherman went home and stashed the pelt above the door jam. Tucked it right in there, then he went about making his dinner and mending his fishing nets. And after the sun went down, he heard some strange barking and an unfamiliar wailing outside the door.

He opened the door and there he saw a beautiful woman. So vulnerable.....so, so vulnerable....and she just looked like she was made of moon milk.

He was beside himself! She said, "***I am Seal Woman, I live in the sea, but today, I was playing on the rocks with my sisters and I don't know what happened. She began to cry. I can't find my sealskin, when I wasn't paying attention, someone must have come along and took it...and without it, I cannot return home to the sea.***"

***"I want to find it! Can you please help me find it?"***

Her fate was in his hands, much more than she even knew. He weighed his options. If he returned her pelt, he knew she would immediately return to the sea. And WOW....she was beautiful.....and he WAS lonely. Without her skin, she would have to stay ashore and be dependent on him.

Now, he wasn't a malicious fisherman, but he knew an opportunity when he saw one. He seized the opportunity and he answered her very kindly, very caringly.....

***"You know...someone must have taken your pelt when you were distracted and amusing yourself. I bet someone took it. I just don't know what happened to your pelt, but if you become my wife, I will provide for you, and take care of you and keep you safe."***

She contemplated her dilemma. I'd rather live and love and give birth in the sea....I'm not at home here, without my pelt, I can't survive in the sea without it, I can't go home. But, on land, I can't survive alone, I need him.

She consoled herself... "***Well, he's not so bad, he seems fairly decent, he said he'd feed me and take care of me and keep me safe. I can make do, make this work, I'll be okay.***"

And so, although she didn't **CHOOSE** this arrangement or seek it out, here it was.

So, she consented to his offer and when she wasn't doing her wifely duties, seal woman looked out to the rock by the shore for her skin. Years passed...living out of her element of the deep sea. Living away from the food and friends that nourished her and the life she knew.

Seal woman's skin began to dry out, began to flake.....her eyes became dull and red. She no longer was alive and full of life.....she even began to limp. The memory of her former self began to fade. But, she went on doing the things she needed to do every day. Not quite herself, not quite right.

One day.....when her husband was gone to sea....there was a terrible storm.....the winds came and the rain came and a GALE wind SLAMMED the cottage door shut really hard and knocked that sealskin from its hiding place!

Plop! Right at her feet!

Seal woman looked down....she cocked her head, "***What is that?***" She slowly picked it up and pressed it to her cheek, and upon smelling it and feeling it, she knew it was her pelt! Seal woman began to remember who she was, where she came from!

Memories of the sea filled her mind and her heart...and she ran, yelping and barking, all the way to the beach.....

She ripped off her human clothes and she slipped into her own skin...without a moment's hesitation....she dove into the sea....leaping out of sight!

Then downward she swam...down, down, down...into the deep water until she was home

Home at last, in the deep sea, where her healing took place naturally.