

OCEAN SONG

by

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Moana was a quaint fishing village one hundred miles south of Hawaii and its neighboring islands. Unlike Hawaii's overpopulated, commercially-driven environment, Moana's inhabitants led a simplistic existence that centered on the fishing trade.

There were no high-rise condos in Moana; just small, pastel-painted cottages that picturesquely adorned its shoreline.

Moanans were hard-working, proud people, unaccustomed to extravagance. The men worked grueling hours under a blazing sun, drifting atop a turbulent sea, while the women tended to the everyday needs of caring for their families. A good day on the water was determined by how much fish was caught to sell for a meager profit with enough left over to feed their families. In their free time, the men taught their sons how to fish so that when their adventures on the ocean became only memories, the tradition would continue on with their descendants.

One boy in particular, Dane, was unwilling to learn the trade. At fifteen, he was consumed with the desire to explore the ocean's depths rather than assist his father in his fishing ventures. Both of strong temperaments, Dane's lack of desire to follow in his father's footsteps caused a great deal of resentment between the two that was only buffered by his mother's endless excuses of how much Dane was needed on shore to help her with home repairs and planting.

Dane's unwillingness to conform was based solely on his steadfast belief that marine life – *all* marine life – should be respected and left to live out its existence undisturbed by man. The thought of such precious creatures being savagely snared on thick metal hooks and roughly flung, thrashing, upon a boat's wooden deck to later be cut up and sold for money, repulsed him. He nourished himself from the vegetable, edible plant, and fruit fields he daily tended. It was to the ocean that he escaped once his chores were finished. It was there that Dane felt the most at peace with himself and where the emotional strain of not living up to his father's ideals could be forgotten, at least for a little while.

It was on a day no different than any other, that Dane paddled his small skiff in the direction of a magnificent sunset. Once he had reached his favorite spot—a partially submerged coral reef—he dropped anchor. He first spit into his dive mask and rubbed the saliva across its tempered glass to prevent it from fogging while submerged before he adjusted it on his face. He then dunked his rubber swim fins into the ocean to wet them so that they would slip on his feet easier.

Carefully, so as not to overturn the boat, Dane lowered himself over its side and held on to a wooden cleat while he took deep breaths to expand his lungs so that he had plenty of oxygen to sustain him.

On the last intake of breath, he held it and dove beneath the ocean's crystal-clear surface.

Within moments, he became lost in the vast array of multi-colored, various shaped and sized species of marine life that crowded before his mask and lightly brushed against his skin as they led him deeper into their undersea paradise. He tried to gently cup them in his hands, but they were way to fast. Seaweed and other plant life abounded and clung to the reef, which offered a safe haven for the vast array of sea creatures it attracted. Also within his scope of vision were a few sharks and other sea predators. They did not cause him any fear for they were as welcome a sight as any other creature in this incredibly beautiful, natural underworld habitat.

Dane often wished that he could become a creature that didn't have to rely on air to breathe. He so wanted to remain permanently in this environment where wonders far beyond the imagination existed and where emotional strife had no place.

Suddenly, Dane caught sight of what could only be described as a spectacular apparition. It resembled a manta ray in shape but was much larger than any he had ever seen. Its pectoral fins were extended and billowed out like a cape caught in the wind. Its skin was alive with iridescent streaks of color that undulated across its back. Dane was so mesmerized by this beautiful creature that he ignored his body's warning signals to return to the surface to replenish his oxygen supply. Instead, he began to swim after the large, willowy creature as it descended further into the ocean's depths.

Despite the increased throbbing in his head, pain in his chest, and numbness in his body, Dane was not afraid. Instead, he felt invigorated, so much more alive than he had felt at any other time in his life! If he could only catch up to it, to *ride* it, that would mean the world to him!

As if the fish had magically read his thoughts, it slowed enough for Dane's outstretched fingers to graze its surface and grip its wing-like fins. Upon contact, a vibrant explosion of color spread out from the creature's body and encircled him in its ethereal glow. Startled by the tremendous sight, Dane gasped, releasing the remainder of his oxygen supply from his straining lungs. But unbelievably, he found his body continued to move, to function.

He was no longer breathing air, but breathing water!

Realizing that his most cherished fantasy had finally come true, Dane succumbed to a profound inner peace and drifted away with the sounds of the ocean, the *songs* of the ocean lulling him to sleep.