

A Song for a Siren

A Realms of Highfall Story

Written By

Christopher Epley

The world can be a cruel place, especially to a man like Lennon Lumiere, low-born and deaf. That never stopped him from pursuing his passion and living what the populace of the world would call a normal life. Lennon hated the word "Normal"; it kept people from breaking out of their comfort zones and finding enrichment in their existence. Lennon continued to draw on his pad of paper in the carriage, glancing out of the window ever so often to catch a glimpse of the snowy landscape. Mountains in the distance, trees depleted of leaves for the winter, and the occasional deer or fox poking their head from their hiding spot to investigate the noise of the horse-drawn carriage. Lennon would smile at the sight of the animals; he could feel their energy through magic and sent his back to them assuring the creatures they need not be afraid of him, then he would return to his pad for drawing. Lennon brushed his shoulder-length brown hair away from his face as the icy wind blew a strand on his nose tickling it, the carriage shook and came to a stop, he put his pad and sketching coal down and looked out of the window up toward the driver's seat. A man with the same shoulder-length brown hair and short beard, appearing to be in his thirties, around the same age as Lennon, looked downward making sure to have direct eye contact with Lennon. "Are you sure about this little brother? It's not too late to turn back." The Man said. Lennon frowned and bit his lip as he motioned his hands in sign language to the driver. "In case you haven't noticed, it's fucking cold Lennon and you can lip-read. I take these gloves off and I might lose my fingers. Then how would I sign with you?" Lennon's brother said. Lennon rolled his eyes and shook his head, he signed again. "I worry about you little brother that's all. Sit tight we will be in Brendolknot within the hour, well before nightfall, you might get to start at the lighthouse tonight." Lennon smiled then raised both eyebrows quickly, lowering himself back into the carriage. After about a few seconds Lennon came back out to his brother frowning in curiosity, while holding his pad of paper. Lennon turned the pad around showing his brother, scribbled on it was *I love you, Luc, please don't worry about me*. Lennon's brother smiled and said "It's my job to worry about you, plus you're taking on a job that men have gone insane from the loneliness. I know you have the Magi training and all, it's just scary, every lighthouse keeper they have had has gone missing without a trace. I don't want that to happen to you." Lennon signed again to his brother. "Ha! Okay, you got me there, but it's not my fault I'm not attuned to magic as strong as you are. Sit tight little brother, go back to your drawings, we'll be in Brendolknot soon." Lennon's brother said as he grabbed the reins and started the horses forward on the road once more.

The road was not in terrible shape for the winter time, with a few holes here and there that the carriage would hit but nothing as bad as some roads the Lumiere brothers have traversed. The snow seemed to melt away as there was less and less of it as the smell of salt filled the air. They were close to Brendolknot, the seaport town with the lighthouse. A beacon of hope for the seafarers who needed the stop. Lennon noticed the town sign as the carriage passed it entering Brendolknot. Lennon put his pad and coal down and hung out of the carriage window. He smiled with a wide grin taking deep breaths, the salty air filling his lungs. Though he was happy to finally be here Lennon could sense something through magic. The vibrations of the energy in town told him there was an uneasiness, townsfolk were afraid of something. Most port towns and seafarers were a superstitious lot, but Lennon had trained at the academy as a Magi, superstitions were not something he believed in. Lennon scanned the town, the houses all in rows with a central square that held the market. The town itself sat atop a cliff looking over the great Perth

Sea, next to the cliff was a narrow winding road that descended to the beach below, and on the rocks in the bay was a lighthouse. The one that Lennon was here for the place where he would be able to focus on his passion, his true calling, and his artwork. Lennon wanted to be alone after years of trying to fit in the world, being an artist meant ridicule by the laymen of the world. As he was so quick to point out to anyone who would listen, people fear what they don't understand. The carriage came to a stop outside a building as Lennon was taking in the scenery. His brother looked down at him and said making sure Lennon could read his lips. "Let's go see the Jarl and get this all squared away. Come on now." Lennon smiled and exited the carriage. Luc jumped down from the driver's seat looking at his brother and giving him a goofy grin. "Will you stop that, let's go." Luc scoffed as he started laughing.

Luc knocked on the door to the town hall and a burly man with thick coal-black hair and a grizzled face answered. "Yes?" the Man asked. "I am here for my brother; he wants to ask the Jarl to be the new lighthouse keeper." The Man raised one eyebrow and asked, "Your brother can not speak for himself?" Luc curled one side of his lip, "He's deaf." The Man raised both eyebrows this time, "Interesting, follow me, the Jarl will want to speak with you." Luc nodded and motioned his head for Lennon to follow. The brothers followed the man down a long corridor that led to an opening, once through the opening the room was large, two tables one on each side of the room, and a riser directly in front with a throne on it. Not a throne like King Raynard's in Bryalshire, one more befitting of a Jarl, plain brown wood culled from old, decommissioned ships that once patrolled the waterways. Seated on the throne was a young man of maybe twenty, still ever so youthful, likely had not seen combat or even sailed the sea. The young man was wearing gray fish scale armor with an emblem of a knotted rope on a shield emblazoned on the chest. The young man rose to meet the brothers and introduced himself "Gentlemen, I am Giles of House Brendolknot, Jarl of Brendolknot. How may I be of service?" Luc raised one eyebrow, "I did not know Brendolknot was also the ruling house of the town." Giles smiled. "My family founded Brendolknot, we came here from the Bunbury Islands generations ago. I am the latest in the line to be Jarl, I took over for my father who was lost at sea." Luc hung his head and replied, "I am sorry your grace." Giles shook his head, "Thank you, but you do not have to call me your grace. I am a Jarl, not a king, I only govern the town, I still answer to my liege lord. By the way, what can I do for you stranger." Luc raised his head and explained, "My name is Luc Lumiere, and this is my brother Lennon Lumiere, forgive him if he disrespects you he does not mean to he is deaf. But he saw your posting for a lighthouse keeper and wishes to be your next one." Giles looked at the man who brought the brothers to him and smiled, looking back at Luc he said, "Well this may be beneficial to all of us if he can't hear then." Luc frowned, "If you're thinking of taking advantage of him because he has a disability, respectfully Jarl or not I will not allow you to do so." Giles shook his head, "No, no, let me explain. For the last year we have gone through no less than six lighthouse keepers, they keep disappearing. Now we seafaring folk are a bit superstitious, and the citizens here think it to be a siren luring the men to the sea never to be seen again. If that were the case, no siren could affect your brother and he could keep lighting the beacon for the ships. Many ships rely on that beacon to guide them this far up the sea, we are the last safe stop before the crown's reach ends."

Lennon looked to Luc signing, Luc responded then looked to Giles, "As my brother is pointing out in sign language, he trained at the academy to be a Magi, even if he can't hear the siren's song he would still be able to defend himself. He can read lips by the way." Giles nodded, "A Magi, that's great..." Luc interrupted, "Not a Magi, he just trained, he left the academy before he was inducted, my brother is an artist, and quite a good one too. His paintings have sold quite a lot." Giles raised his brow, "If he can make a living off of his paintings, he should forget the lighthouse it's a lonely life." Lennon signed to Luc and Luc relayed the message, "he says he is still looking to create his masterpiece. Living in towns where he is constantly bothered by people and ridiculed has left him without inspiration. He thinks that if he is here where no one will bother him and he has the view of the sea, he might get the inspiration he needs to craft his masterpiece." Lennon smiled at Giles as the Jarl smiled back, "Okay, how can I say no to that, the lighthouse is his. Let me write up a letter of passage, just show that to the garrison commander, and you can move in and start tonight. Make sure the fire is lit at dusk and stays lit until dawn, the fire crystals should keep the flame burning all night. Once every fortnight I will send an envoy to replenish your fire crystals, give him your list and he will be back the next day with the supplies you request. You work for me, and I will see to it you have what you need." Lennon smiled wide and shook Giles' hand. Giles walked away for a brief moment and returned with the letter of passage handing it to Lennon. "Mr. Lumiere, whatever you need don't hesitate to ask. If you like I can send a couple of soldiers by daily on their patrols to check on you." Lennon signed to Luc, "He says the envoy every fortnight is enough." Luc said to Giles. "Noted, you can always ask for a patrol whenever you need it. I am glad you are here Mr. Lumiere, take good care of the lighthouse." Giles shook both men's hands and they left the town hall back to their carriage. The brothers loaded into their carriage, Luc snapped the reins, and the horses were on their way. Luc led them to the descending road at the edge of the cliff and made their way to the lighthouse below.

Luc pulled the carriage up to the lighthouse door after traversing the narrow winding road down the cliff. Luc was never fond of heights, but he did this for his brother. Waves crashed the beach as the wind blew out over the overcast cast. The lighthouse itself was nothing really special, just a tall spire of a building with a flame pit and mirror at the top sitting on a large rock at the edge of the beach, the circular base provided the living quarters like many lighthouses before it, the docks for the ships were to the left further down the beach with a few soldiers manning the area for visitors. Lennon exited once the carriage stopped and quickly rushed to the door knocking. A woman answered the door, equipped with the same fish-scale armor that the Jarl Giles had worn. Her face was weathered and scarred from battle, she had a stern gaze upon her face, the look of a warrior not to be trifled with. She looked around and then asked, "I am Commander Gilda, what brings you here?" Lennon reached into the pocket of his coat and handed Gilda the letter of passage from Giles. Upon reading it Gilda's face went from stern to comforting, almost motherly, "Ah, you're the new keeper, I hope you will last, I am getting tired of filling in for those that wish to disappear. Please do take care and if you need anything just come to the docks and one of my men will help you." Luc jumped down off of the carriage waving to Gilda, "Commander wait! That's it? No instructions? My brother is deaf, he can't hear you." Gilda smiled, "I am sorry sir, but I have a garrison to command, and keeping a lighthouse is not a difficult task. Hearing impaired or not I am sure your brother can manage. Truth be told

him being hearing impaired may work in his favor, I have heard the tales of sirens and by the gods, I think I have heard their song in the distance." Luc's eyes widened, "You have heard the sirens!?" Gilda shrugged her shoulders, "Perhaps, may have been just a whale, or two dolphins fighting. Or coulda have been the mead, Norse mead is strong." Luc frowned, "Okay Commander, I think we can handle it from here." Gilda smiled, "Tis all yours Mister Lumiere, I bid you adieu." The Commander grabbed her crossbow and sword from the side of the door, waved goodbye, and off she walked toward the docks to rejoin her soldiers. Lennon looked at Luc disapprovingly, "What? She was a drunk." Luc said. Lennon signed to his brother telling him he should not have been so rude; she is a warrior who obviously has seen battle and deserves a drink every once in a while. "I didn't think I was that rude, and you heard her, she thought she heard a siren song but chalked it up to the mead. Some Commander." Lennon signed again this time saying to his brother that he was still rude, Gilda was very friendly, and he needed to be more sympathetic as he did not know what she had been through. "Little brother, you are always so compassionate, if you're not careful it could be your undoing." Lennon signed telling his brother that if that is his destiny then at least he would be undone as a good person. Luc grinned and shook his head, "Well ok, I'm not going to argue with you. Let's get you settled in." Luc and Lennon began to unload the rear cargo hold of the carriage.

Lennon had packed two bags worth of clothing, his easel, paints, brushes, sketch pads, his drawing supplies, and also his books on magic, monsters, and the Magi arts. His sword was also in his belongings and even though he was proficient with it, he rarely used it. Luc brought the last of his brother's belongings into the living area and began to look around. There was a large bay window that looked out onto the sea, and the view was breathtaking. To the far right was the kitchen area complete with cooking materials, and to the far left was the bed, chest, and armoire. A table and chairs sat next to the bed area. Behind them was the entrance door and a weapons rack on both sides, both empty. In the center of the living area was a brick column with a winding staircase inside leading up to the lighting area. It was cozy but that was all Lennon needed. He smiled with a large grin at the bay window with the view running towards it. Luc had never seen his brother so happy. Lennon signed to Luc excitedly, Luc responded laughing, "I know little brother, it's beautiful. Hopefully, this will be where you can craft your masterpiece. It is getting late, and I should be going, it's a long way back home, I still have a job you know." Lennon curled his lips, hugged his brother goodbye, then signed. "I love you too little brother. I'll be back to visit in a month or two then we can catch up." Lennon walked his brother out to the carriage and watched as he drove off. The gray overcast sky was darkening quickly, Lennon went back inside and made his way up the staircase to the lighting area. A chest full of blue fire crystals was placed next to the wall. Lennon could feel the vibrations of the magic energy emanating from the crystals as he picked one up. They resembled a large grain of salt, rough, coarse, and jagged. The energy was powerful, if in the wrong hands, they could be weaponized, thankful to Lennon they were just a tool. Before he placed a crystal in the pit he took a second to enjoy the view from atop the lighthouse, he could see over the bay and into the vast sea. Ships dotted the horizon, knowing they would need the lighthouse as a beacon Lennon placed the crystal in the pit, and waved his hand in the most basic fire spell, a candlelight-like flame emerged from his index fingertip. He lit the crystal, and the flame almost instantly became a full-on orange campfire. Lennon wound the gear for the mirror that hung on rollers around the

window, the wind of the gear would keep it moving all night. The mirror began to spin on rollers connected to tracks on the top and bottom of the windows. The light from the fire would be reflected out into the ocean as a pulsating light. Lennon smiled as he made his way downstairs to whip up something for dinner.

Lennon stood at the window once he made his soup just staring out into the water, the sight of the waves crashing gave Lennon a sense of calm. As he stood bowl in hand taking a bit something caught his eye. In the time that passed since lighting the flame dusk had settled into pitch black night, the only visible light coming from the moonbeams hitting the water and the light of the flame in the lighthouse. Lennon thought he saw a person in the water out in the bay. Lennon set his bowl down on the window sill and walked up front to grab his coat, he put it on and walked outside. The chill of the wintery night air was crisp yet refreshing. Nothing like sea air to rejuvenate the senses. Lennon walked to the edge of the rock the lighthouse stood on and looked out to sea. He could not see any person in the water, but he felt the energy through magic, he felt the vibrations of someone. Through the magical vibrations, he could sense that the entity was malicious, but at the same time damaged, and emotionally scarred. Lennon thought to himself if this could be the siren that people have been blaming for the previous keeper's disappearances. With what little magic he was still able to wield from his Magi training, he formed a rune on the edge of the rock by waving his hand and casting the spell. The rune he placed on the rock was one of safety and compassion, hopefully letting the person or creature know that he meant no harm to them. Lennon retreated inside and cleaned up. Once everything was finished he blew out the candles on the walls and table and went to sleep for the night. Drifting off to sleep Lennon felt a small shift in the vibrations of magic, perhaps it was this supposed siren coming to lure him. His eyes were heavy, he drifted off to sleep with the vibrations more profound, strange yet soothing.

Lennon opened his eyes the next morning feeling an odd sense of comfort, he arose to find the light of the sun coming through the bay window giving off a comforting warmth. He walked to the window to look out onto the water but noticed something on the edge of the rock where he left the rune, footprints. Lennon grabbed his coat and hurried out to the edge of the rock, and sure enough strange footprints were all around the rune. They were of a similar shape to humans but had three long toes with dots at the end that Lennon guessed were tips of claws. The footprints went from the rune to the outside of the lighthouse's bay window. Scratches could be seen on the glass, four in a row and falling down the length of the window. Lennon reached out to touch the glass and as he did the memory of the vibrations he felt drifting off to sleep came flooding back to him. He recognized the familiarity, it was music, he felt it the last time he encountered a music piece, especially a beautiful one. This was the siren he thought to himself, and she sang her song right outside the window where he sleeps to try and lure him out. Lennon wasn't afraid, he felt sorry for the creature. Her whole existence relied upon singing a beautiful hypnotizing song to lure sailors and men to their doom in the water. But why he thought to himself, was she cursed, was she a natural born creature that it was her nature? The academy never spent much time on sirens as there wasn't much known about them. Sea creatures were a hard breed to study, wizards were the ones who studied magic and creatures, wrote the spells, and kept the records. Magi were more the monster hunters and peacekeepers of the Academy of

Magic and rarely went to sea. But Lennon didn't train long before realizing his true calling was to paint and create art, not battle monsters. Lennon went back inside and checked his books for any info on sirens, as he guessed there was very little in his encyclopedia of monsters. Lennon went into the kitchen and made a sweet pastry with strawberry jam sandwiched between it, he put it on a plate and went back outside to the rune on the rock. Lennon placed the pastry by the rune hoping the creature would come and take it as a peace offering. Lennon went back inside and set up his easel, he hoped to start painting his masterpiece.

Lennon spent the rest of the day just sitting at his easel, paint in hand but nothing coming to him. Dusk was on the horizon, and he put his paints away for the night. While putting them away he noticed the plate on the rock was empty, but something sat next to it. Before lighting the flame Lennon went outside and looked next to the plate, the creature had left a gift, a ring. It was a plain gold band nothing special, but he knew the siren had left it for him. Lennon touched by the gift, went back inside and found a pearl necklace lying about the armoire by his bed. He brought the necklace back out to the rock and placed it there for the siren. Not sure what was going to happen, Lennon lit the flame and went to sleep, once again as he drifted off to sleep he could feel the calming vibrations of the siren's song.

Lennon awoke again feeling rejuvenated as he stepped to the bay window, this time he saw the creature herself sitting on the edge with the pearl necklace in hand. Where most men would tremble in fear at the sight of the creature, Lennon was calm, he grabbed his coat and slowly walked out to the edge of the rock. The siren had gray skin, slimy from the water, she also had wings and three-toed clawed feet confirming she was the one who was at his window that first night. As he stepped closer the siren turned around, her head had short-length stringy black hair, her face was humanoid but animalistic at the same time, and her mouth was wide and full of razor-sharp teeth. She flapped her wings and rose to her feet screeching at Lennon, but he could not hear her. He smiled and waved hello, the siren tilted her head in confusion. He pointed to his ear and shook his head signaling he could not hear. The siren landed on her feet and stared at Lennon for a brief minute before waving back. Lennon reached out his hand in greeting, the siren very cautiously reached her hand out and shook Lennon's. Even without sensing the magical vibrations, Lennon could sense in her energy she was in shock, not fear but shock that a human was willing to try and communicate with her. Lennon motioned his hand for her to follow him into the lighthouse. The siren tilted her head, folded her wings, and followed Lennon inside.

Once inside Lennon motioned for her to have a seat at his table and ran to get his drawing pad. The siren sat down and waited patiently as Lennon came to her, writing on his pad *"I am a friend, I will help you, but I am deaf. If you can speak directly to me I can read lips."* The Siren looked directly into Lennon's face and spoke, "Why are you helping me, aren't you afraid?" Lennon scribbled down a response, *"Everyone can use a friend, especially those that are misunderstood. I can sense your energy through magic, you have a gentle soul."* Lennon could see the Siren's eyes begin to water and a lone tear fall down the left side of her cheek. She looked directly at him once more and said, "My name is Serena." Lennon smiled and scribbled down on his pad, *"I am Lennon Lumiere, it is a pleasure to meet you, Serena."* Serena responded, "No one has shown me the kindness you have, due to my nature I am supposed to lure men to

their deaths, not befriend them.” Lennon grinned as he scribbled more down on his pad, *“I do not fear what I do not understand, you are a living being just like me and you deserve the same respect. Besides, I know magic, I trained as a Magi, maybe I can help you.”* Serena gave a concerned look, her solid black eyes still conveying worry, “Magi hunt my kind, I doubt they would tell you anything in your training on how to break my curse.” Lennon's eyes widened as he scribbled once again, showing Serena, *“Part of the reason I left the academy was because the magi didn't care about curing only killing. I have been doing my studies as well as my art. Perhaps we can work together, you help me with my art, help me find my inspiration for my masterpiece and I will help find a cure to break your curse.”* Even though Serena's mouth was wide and full of sharp teeth when she smiled Lennon could still sense the happiness and excitement in her. Serena told him, “I would like that very much, when I was human I had a love for paintings. If you can continue to leave me those pastries with the strawberry jam I would be happy to help.” Lennon slapped his knee with a huge smile and scribbled down his response, *“Consider it done. I will make you your pastries. Now how about you tell me about yourself, what happened to you, and who cursed you.”* Serena settled into her chair and began to tell her story, “It happened three years ago, my husband and I were privateers. We sailed for King Raynard hunting criminals and pirates on the Perth Sea. We came across a ship sailing into Bryalshire that we identified as a pirate vessel carrying stolen cargo, a massive cache of silver ore taken straight from Silver Mountain. We locked up and boarded the ship, I duelled the captain and killed him, and we took the crew hostage. We had no idea the captain's wife was a witch. She used witchcraft to free herself and curse me, I don't understand much magic, so I have no clue how it worked. Those first few minutes I felt my humanity disappear replaced by this animalistic urge to kill men. I remember screeching and attacking my husband, I feared I killed him. I flew off into the sea to avoid killing anyone else but the nature of becoming a siren took over. I took the lives of many men once I learned to use my song. I fought it and slowly as I swam and swam the sea some of my humanity returned until what you see here today. I had heard my husband still makes trips up here all along the coast of the Kingdom of Colkirk so I settled here hoping to see him once again, and maybe he would help me. We were going to retire to a sea village like Brendolknot and live out our days together, his fishing and me shopping for art and learning to paint.” Serena hung her head as tears began to fall from her eyes. Lennon grabbed a towel and walked toward her wiping the tears from Serena's cheeks. He smiled as he scribbled onto his pad, *“You have gained me as a friend Serena, and I will help you I promise. But first I need to teach you how to use sign language, so I don't waste my paper.”* Lennon smiled widely as he showed the words to Serena. She gave a smile and said, “You are a kind man, I will gladly let you teach me your signs, but the hour is getting late, and I must retreat to the water, or I could die. Leave me your pastry and I will return in the morning.” Serena smiled. Lennon did not realize the time he spent with Serena; it was nearing dusk. He shook his head yes and brought her back to the rock outside. He hugged Serena, she smiled, waved goodbye, and jumped back in the water. Lennon felt the vibrations of Serena's energy, it was hopeful, happy, and filled with love. Not just the romantic love for her husband she missed so dearly, but for the platonic love she felt for her new friend Lennon. The sun continued to set over the horizon as Lennon went back inside to light the fire and retire for the night.

Just as he promised, Lennon left Serena the pastry he had made her before, and just as she promised Serena had returned to help Lennon find the inspiration he needed to craft his masterpiece. Over the next month, every day Lennon would leave Serena her pastry and she would come ashore. The first few days Lennon taught her how to sign, he was surprised how quickly she took to it. Within those first few days, she was fluent, and he could sign to her while she would speak, and he could read her lips. Serena began to teach Lennon her skills as a painter, although Lennon was an amazing artist she still knew a few things he did not. As Lennon would tell her, "No one person knows everything, we should all open our hearts and minds to learning from those willing to teach." Serena was pleasantly surprised at how kind and gentle Lennon was. He never showed fear or winced at her no matter her appearance. She could see in the mirrors and reflections in the water how monstrous she looked. If she were human, she too would attack on sight fearing for her life. Lennon spent his nights when Serena returned to the water studying all of his magic texts from the academy. Encyclopedias, spellbooks, and notes from wizards of the past. He worked tirelessly trying to learn all he could about breaking a siren's curse. During the first fortnight when the envoy dropped off more fire crystals, he would have Serena hide while he met the envoy outside then he would bring the crystals in himself. On that first visit, Lennon asked for a specific book from the bookstore. The next day the envoy returned to drop off the book. Day after day Serena would help Lennon with his paintings and he began to even paint better because of her help. Nights he would study his books and just before the end of the month, Lennon thought he found a breakthrough. He was so excited he could not wait to tell Serena.

The sun rose and Lennon awoke to walk outside and place the pastry on the rock. The sun shined rather bright this day and he could feel the energy and excitement of his news for Serena. She jumped out of the water and the two friends hugged, Serena had become comfortable with Lennon and even began feeling some of her humanity return. Lennon signed to her, "I have wonderful news, I think I may be able to lift your curse." Lennon felt the magic vibrate in a way he never felt before, it was pure happiness and excitement. Serena squealed with glee, "Are you serious!?! Lennon, you are a miracle worker." Lennon smiled and signed, "I can't make any promises that it will work but everything I have read says it should." Serena spotted something in the distance and told Lennon, "There is someone over on the beach, I think they are watching us." Lennon looked behind him and saw the person standing there, he replied to Serena signing, "Let us go inside, pay them no mind." Serena responded worriedly, "Lennon, if they see me they could send soldiers to hunt me, and I wouldn't blame them I have lured the previous lighthouse keepers to their deaths." Lennon waved her off and signed, "They don't know you as I do; I won't let them hurt you. Besides they won't come." Serena frowned looking worried, "Lennon you're too trusting that people will be like you, I have seen the evil this world is capable of. I am proof of some of it." Lennon nodded and signed, "My brother says something similar. If it makes you feel better then let's go inside." The two unlikely friends went inside the lighthouse and the figure on the beach walked away. Serena still felt an uneasiness about the man.

Once inside Serena sat down at the table and Lennon with a big grin on his face pulled out of his shirt a necklace that he was concealing, on the end of that necklace was a small key. He signed to Serena, "Your cure is connected to this key, I have it locked safely in my armoire. However, there is one last thing I require from you." Serena without hesitation said, "Name it." Lennon signed, "I need to hear your siren song." Serena frowned looking puzzled, "You can't hear Lennon, and if you could it would put you under my control and you would lose all sense of your humanity. You would be a zombie, nothing more than a draugr until I died, only that would release you." Lennon smiled widely and signed, "I am deaf, yes, but I am also attuned to magic, which means I am the perfect candidate to do this. Your song will not affect me, but I can feel the vibrations of it. That will allow me to complete the last part of the cure, every siren has a unique song, and it is tied to breaking their curse. Then I just ask you to let me work on it today and tomorrow morning I will give it to you and try to break the curse." Serena widened her eyes and let a lone tear fall as she said, "Okay, I will sing it to you, we can try it, but I want to ask something of you." Lennon signed smiling, "Name it." Serena smiled and said, "Complete your masterpiece, there is nothing left I can teach you; the skills are yours." Lennon smiled and signed, "I have my inspiration, it is you my friend. That is part of my other surprise, while working on your cure I have been working on my masterpiece as well, and it is also tied to your cure." Serena got up and hugged Lennon tightly, he could feel the platonic love emanating from her energy. Serena looked into his eyes and said, "You are too good for this world, it doesn't deserve you." Lennon smiled and signed, "I just see the good in everything, hate is wasted energy whereas love is life-giving. I would rather love, maybe my loving will help the energy of the world change." Serena hugged him tightly again and then sat down. She asked Lennon, "How did you lose your hearing? I know you were not born that way because you read lips just fine." Lennon nodded and signed his explanation, "You are right I was not born deaf; it was an accident. My brother and I were children, we found an alchemy book that belonged to our father who worked at the Academy of Magic. He was a custodian of the library there during the day and came home at night. My brother Luc wanted to make a firework for King Day that year so all of our neighbors set them off to see who would celebrate the King more. Even at that young age, I felt more like drawing, but I feared for my brother, he was clumsy, and I thought if I did go along with him I could prevent him from hurting himself. Oh, the irony. He chose a mixture of saltpeter, quartz, and a fire crystal. All readily available in the house, we took the ingredients and followed the instructions. Luc was too scared to set the mixture off and begged me to do it because I was the smart one. I did, but I added too much saltpeter and the mixture exploded before it hit the ground, it exploded right by my ears with a massive force. Luc blamed himself for me losing my hearing, but I tried to tell him that it was not his fault I could've said no but I was worried about him. After I lost my hearing I started to be more attuned to magic, my father noticed that and took me to the academy. I wanted to be a wizard, a scholar, but since my father knew my proficiency with a sword he had them take me in as a Magi. I stayed on for a while but eventually left to pursue art full-time. Luc supported me but my parents did not. When I said I wanted to come here to work the lighthouse I thought it would make my parents happy, but it didn't. We fought the day Luc and I left home, and a few days later I arrived here. I also can speak but it has been so long I doubt I would make the right sounds, so I just stay silent and sign."

Serena nodded her head and said, "I am so sorry Lennon." He signed back, "Don't be, I never would have met you otherwise and that would be a travesty not to know a beautiful soul like you. Everything that has happened to me up to this point has led me here, and for that I am thankful." Serena shook her head and smiled, "You are a great person, don't ever change. Now for my song, you wish to hear it?" Lennon nodded, Serena took a deep breath and began to sing her siren song. Lennon could feel the vibration of each hypnotic note she sang. Though he could not hear the melody he knew it was beautiful it reminded him of the last piece of music he remembered before his hearing loss, the most beautiful piece of music. Serena finished singing and Lennon was able to obtain the information he needed from it. He smiled with a warm grin and signed, "I think this is going to work. Come back tomorrow, let me work on this today and I think we will have you back to human in no time." Serena with tears down her cheeks said, "Do what you must my friend, just have my pastry ready." Lennon smiled as he walked Serena back to the water, the two friends hugged and then she jumped back into the water. Lennon wasted no time and got to work; he worked tirelessly all night; he was determined to do this for his friend. One thing was for sure, the world would be a different place by tomorrow.

Lennon locked the armoire that contained the cure as the sun rose above the horizon. He went to the kitchen and whipped up a pastry for Serena. A sense of calm came over him, he felt this would work and his friend would have her life back, she could even be reunited with her husband. Lennon smiled brightly as he grabbed his coat and walked to the rock waiting for Serena. As expected she jumped out of the water and onto the rock, Lennon handed her the pastry and she gobbled it up. He smiled and the two friends hugged. But not all was right, a voice was heard yelling just off of the rock by the lighthouse, it said, "It's attacking him get it!" three heavily armored men armed with swords came running toward Serena, she raised her wings, but Lennon put his hand out and shook his head no. The men were equipped with House Brendolknot's armor, they were the Jarl's men. They came swords drawn ready to swing at Serena, but Lennon jumped in front of her and cast a defense spell that he remembered from his Magi training. The three men fell backward, and the leader of them yelled out, "She's got Him under her spell, there's no saving him. Kill him too!" From the sky, a crossbow bolt was fired, and a fourth man was kneeling on the roof of the lighthouse's living area armed with a crossbow. The bolt reached Lennon before he could dodge it or defend against it, the bolt struck him right in the side of his gut, and he fell to the ground blood pouring from his wound. Serena let out the loudest screeching scream any of the men had ever heard, it froze them in their tracks. Serena grabbed her wounded friend and flew off away from the Jarl's men. She frantically searched for a cave and found one. She landed softly and gently lowered Lennon to the ground. The bolt wasn't barbed so she pulled it from his wound, blood was draining profusely even before she removed the crossbow bolt. She tore fabric from Lennon's coat and tried to tie it down to put pressure on and stop the bleeding. It wasn't working, the blood was still coming. "Damn it, Lennon, no you can't leave me," Serena said as she started crying. Lennon looked up at her and touched her cheek smiling but also wincing in pain. Serena crying but also angry said, "I will kill them all!" Lennon for the first time in years spoke with his voice in a weak gargled sound, "No, they did not know. They...don't know you...like I do. They thought...you were...hurting me.

Revenge...and hate...will take...away who...you are. The cure...it can...still work." Lennon reached for his necklace with the key on it and handed it to Serena. She took the key in her hand the tears now falling hard from her eyes. Lennon smiled and managed to say, "Thank you...for completing...my masterpiece." Serena confused watched as Lennon's eyes rolled back into his head and the life left his body.

Serena spent the rest of the day and that night sitting by Lennon's body grieving his death. The one person who wasn't afraid of her, her friend whom she loved dearly was dead. All from a misunderstanding, an accident. She calmed herself knowing she wanted to respect his wishes of not harming the men who did this, after all, it was because of her they were so ready to attack. Serena was not innocent, but she was starting to get her humanity back. Once the sun set she returned to the water so she wouldn't die as the curse of the siren dictates. She would swim around staring at the key that Lennon left her, and wondering what he meant by thanking her for helping him complete his masterpiece. She would wait until morning and return his body to the lighthouse and see if his cure worked. She wondered if it was a potion, or a piece of food, or maybe a talisman. Only time will tell.

As the sun rose Serena returned to the cave where she left Lennon's body. The sight of him broke her heart, the kind, gentle, man lay there lifeless. Crying she picked him up and flew towards the lighthouse. Once she saw there were no men in the area she landed and entered the lighthouse placing Lennon on his bed. She took the key and walked over to the armoire, she unlocked it and opened the door. A large piece of brown paper was wrapped around an object and had a note pinned to it. That was all that was in the armoire, no potion, no talisman, just a wrapped tall item and a note. She opened the note, it was from Lennon and addressed to her. It read:

Dearest Serena,

This has been quite the task, but I think I have done it. All of my studying has led me to this. Each siren has a unique song, and to break the curse the song must be translated. No one in the academy knew what that meant because the song of a siren hypnotizes people. That is until I figured it out, the key is to translate it through the vibrations of magical energy, something only I could do. I found a book about a rogue wizard who learned how to channel that energy into an object. I took your song's energy and placed it into an object as instructed by the wizard. I placed it into my masterpiece. I was able to translate your song's energy into what you look like as a human, and Serena you are beautiful inside and out. This is my gift to you, open it up and when you see it, my cure will work and reverse the curse. Every great piece of art has a name, so I call It, A Song for a Siren. For it was your song that broke the curse. Live your life as it was intended.

Forever your friend,

Lennon Lumiere

Serena stood still holding the note, she mourned her friend even more. She grabbed the package and tore the paper off, she stood stunned at what she saw. A painting, it was a beautiful

woman with long blonde hair in a red dress standing confidently in a forest. She recognized it as herself when she and her husband were not out on the sea working as privateers. So many emotions filled her, happiness, sadness, mourning, hopefulness, and regret. But she could feel a new sensation, a humming coming from the painting. Blue energy waves emanated from the painting and surrounded Serena. Her body began to change, her wings disappeared, her skin returned to the hue of snow from the monstrous gray, her three-toed claw feet returned to human feet, and her face no longer that of a siren returned to the beautiful woman before she was cursed, her eyes lightened from solid black to a human's blue, and her hair lightened to blonde and grew to the long length she had from before. The waves disappeared and she fell to her knees naked but human again. She felt inside of her the monster was no more, only her human self. She stayed kneeling looking at the painting for some time just crying tears of joy. She got up and found a robe and some clothes to put on. She walked over to Lennon and kissed his head one last time saying, "Thank you, my friend. The world never deserved you." She grabbed a coin purse filled with some of Lennon's money, knowing he would not mind. She took the note and painting and headed into town.

Serena spent the next few days working in town and staying at the inn in Brendolknot trying to earn enough coin to figure out where her husband was and travel there. She would ask the local sailors if they had heard of her husband's ship *The Corsair* and for weeks no luck. But one day a sailor came in and told her the ship was docked at Bryalshire and had been there for some time as the captain was training some of King Raynard's naval men. Serena bought passage to Bryalshire and left that night with just a bag of clothes, her money, Lennon's note, and of course the painting. From Brendolknot to Bryalshire was a week's sail, and she waited anxiously for landfall. On the day of landfall, she was ready at the edge of the deck to get right off, belongings in hand. Once docked she ran off the ship and headed to the palace courtyard where the naval men would train first. There he was, her husband Peter. She walked up behind him and whispered, "Hello my love." Peter stopped in his tracks and slowly turned around; tears filled his eyes as the wife he had not seen in three years stood in front of him as beautiful as the last time he had seen her. They embraced tightly for what seemed an eternity as Peter asked shockingly, "How? How are you here?" Serena just smiled and said, "It's a long story, and we have plenty of time."

Serena and Peter were reunited and were happier than ever. They did exactly what they wanted to do before Serena was cursed to be a siren, they retired to Brendolknot, an old seaport. Peter spent his days fishing and Serena her days painting. Peter would sell his catch and art connoisseurs came from all over the realms of Highfall to purchase Serena's paintings. Their nights were spent holding each other by the fireplace watching the flames until they fell asleep. Above the fireplace hung a special painting, the one that Lennon made to break her curse and give Serena her life back. She would look at it daily and remember the friend who took a chance to know her, and through the kindness of his heart help her. She had told Peter of him and even he mourned his loss. Life was good for Serena and Peter and it was all possible because of a song for a siren.

