

Alice gone bad (or, Merfolk)

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Summary: When a mute teenage girl survives as a mermaid after a drowning accident at her high-school froshing initiation.

Prologue

I felt nothing. All was quiet, not a single human life. It was empty, at last. I threw my mouth open and uttered a powerful scream, full of victory and triumph, agony and sadness. Finally, I found my voice.

She wants to find her voice – she has no voice of her own, but she can speak with anyone else's voice. So she is a freak, if she is talking to someone, she talks with the voice of that person, and that freaks them out – so she decided to stop talking all together. She can only talk when someone talks to her, answering – she can't start a conversation on her own. So when she freaks out and runs into the forest and wants to cry, she can only cry when she heard the cry of a bird, and it is the same cry. Her name is Alice Ominotago (it means "beautiful voice") or Alice Wauna (meaning "singing snow goose"), or Ailen, which means "happiness" or "pure".

Everyone in the school wears a uniform, but the uniform on Alice, and any other clothes, loose color and fade within a month or maybe even weeks. Maybe she finds a boy who can't talk for real, and she has to learn how to communicate with him, because she can't talk to him, she doesn't have her own voice.

Merfolk is dressed in silvery slithery silk-like yet thick clothes, tarnished on the edges and faded but looking very much like a fishskin. So maybe there are also silverfox people, or a girl with a bit of the fox fur.

Maybe have the bird people have coarse hair, long and angular noses, and sharp nails, have otter people have short brown layered hair and have them be shorter (have bird people be taller), have fox people wear furs and have them have hair the color of the fur, have it be very short and spiky, maybe have "urchin people", with very angular bodies and sharp features, with very spiky purple hair, and etc.

Empty skin

A huge bus pulled into the parking lot next to my High-School, leaving hardly any space between buildings to squeeze through the door. Such kind reminded me of elderly tourists looking out of smoky windows and flashing their cameras. Everybody started piling into the bus, yelling and laughing loudly. I popped my headphones into my ears and sunk into A-Ha songs, slowly making my way up the stair and into the salon, luckily grabbing the seat at the window. From here, I felt like I was in a different land, somehow, even like in a different country, as if the bus would take off as a fat submarine and dive into the ground on some fantastic journey. Why did I go? I didn't know. I knew this could end badly, since I couldn't swim, and everybody else seemed at such ease with the water.

Finally, the bus started its engine. I was being kicked in the shoulder by my neighbor to move over from the window. I glued my nose to it and didn't move an inch. Everyone shouted excitedly, so I buried my head deeper into my sweatshirt hood. We started rolling. The landscape behind the windows seemed surreal, like we are in one country, and the outside is in another.

"Hey, do you mind if I sit with you?" Dennis Goldwater looked at me apologetically. A-Ha song quietly gave way to an audible thump of my heart. I blushed and awkwardly took out the headphones from my ears, covering my face in the process.

I shook my head NO and edged slightly towards the window, then quickly plugged in the headphones back into my ears. This was one of those moments when I was glad I couldn't talk, as I would be saying some gibberish anyway right now. I blushed again and turned to look outside the window.

No good – he smelled of that perfume, Issey Miyakey, dang it. Just the smell alone made me breath faster, turning every little hair on my skin into a goosebump. I wonder if he could see the hair stand up on my head. I was good at freezing my body in one position, this was the only way to survive his closeness now, so I froze.

He tapped me on the shoulder. I jerked my head in his direction and caught on the wire of the headphone. Impossible. It was simply impossible to look into his chocolate brown eyes underneath thick black eyebrows for more than a second. Come on, what do you need? Say it already, before I embarrass myself again!

"Errr, sorry to bother you, do you mind looking after my stuff for a second?"

I nodded. Sure. What did I think he would ask? Excuse me, do you mind if I kiss you? Sweat dreams, stupid mute.

Dennis vanished out of the seat and into the back row. I peeked long enough to see him next to Kathy, kneeling and pleading with an exaggerated face. Kathy sniffed, and glanced angrily in my direction, I quickly hid in my seat.

Five minutes. It's been now five minutes, and he still hasn't returned. It was hard to see anything when pressing to the window and trying to look behind the seats and the glass, but I didn't dare look out into the bus corridor to see

what is going on. My music conveniently shielded me from any sounds, and so I froze again, despite burning to peek even if for just a second to see what is going on there.

Ten minutes. The road wove up and down, leading us closer to the mountains. Clouds made up the grey sky, typical for local weather. At least it wasn't raining. We will be there soon, perhaps another twenty minutes. The rare street lights passed us slowly, rhythmically with an song playing in my ears.

Thump. I didn't need to turn to know that Dennis was back. "Thanks!"

I nodded. No problem.

He smiled apologetically, almost too long, for one extra second, that could mean something. Maybe? Or maybe it didn't mean anything, just like it always does. Then he dove into his backpack, fishing out his camera. I looked out the window – there was the lake, magnificent, with fog tongues licking its shore and sandy beaches. It was a piercing turquoise color, almost unnaturally bright under the grey sky.

And then it happened. The entire bus stopped for a fraction of a second with a loud THUMP! Backpack and people flew forward, screams scattered all around me. We must have hit something, or, worse – someone. The bus came to a stop. Everyone tried to make their way out to look, the bus driver stood up to calm us down.

"Everybody, quiet, please! Stay in your seats, I will go and check on it." The bus doors hissed open, driver jumped out. Just a second later, with a puzzled look on his face he climbed back in.

"Looks like we must have hit some large animal, but it left, so it mustn't be so bad." He sat back and the bus started rolling again.

NOTE – it has hit a power wall put up by the Otter people to not let Alice near the lake, maybe? Or, maybe, it hit a Otter person, and he walked away, maybe we see bloody foot prints? Or, maybe, it was a deer, big, magnificent, with horns, or maybe a bear. Or, maybe, an otter? And the bus skidded to the side and then to a halt? Maybe the Otter was one of the Otter people, and now the entire bus and all people on it had to pay for what they had done? Maybe the driver was an older Indian who looked at what had happened and was very sad, trying to turn the bus back, and then maybe one of the teachers took over and the bus still rolled to its destination – the beach on the Crescent Lake? Maybe Dennis was his grandson, the bus driver's Indian? Maybe.

Cold water

I always believed in magic – not anything specific, just that there is something we don't know, don't see, and therefore think it doesn't exist. I clearly remembered how I built a city out of some plastic blocks my mother gave me for my 6th birthday, and how the buildings came alive, with cars zigzagging through the streets, people rushing back and forth, airplanes touching my face with their wings.

I could see it playing in my head like a movie right now, with my eyes closed, submerged in the freezing water of Lake Crescent, the most beautiful and mysterious lake in Washington State – the lake that doesn't give up its dead.

Two hands jerked me out of the water.

Kathy Jensen smiled close to my face, as my body coughed in between rasp breaths. Her face swam in and out of focus. "Good girl. Now, only three more to go!" She smiled, if you can call it a smile.

Her Body-Gloved hand pushes me back under water.

Green turned to blue to silent dark as I snapped back to my movie. I've missed the rocket launch, darn it! Monorails zipped past the skyscrapers nearly missing my hair. The stars circled the sky, pulsating with yellow light, enveloping the city in the night, and sucking out all air. People ran around panicked, tiny police cars smashed into trolleybuses and trucks, buildings flew down as blocks made of feather, with slow grace.

I grabbed them and threw them at walls, I crushed them with my feet and clawed them with fingers, I gnawed on their smooth black surface, but they stood firm. I saw fire coming out of my chest, burning the water, burning Kathy and Natalie and Sarah, together with their pretty faces and pony tales, pink Victoria's Secret bra straps showing through wet t-shirts under identical North Face jackets. They churned black and stunk like some burning plastic from a second-hand 1980's VCR from Goodwill, and they melted and let me go. I dove into air and gasped for it and dunk it through rigid lips.

Dark silhouettes moved on the beach, one stepped into water and sloshed up as Angie Hartman.

"What the hell is Angie doing here?" I thought. "Isn't this strictly freshman-seniors business?"

Angie stopped a few feet from us. "Do you think she's had enough? Maybe we should just let her go, you know. It's getting late, what if she gets Tuberculosis or whatever it is called?" Angie stopped where the water reached her fisherman boots.

"She won't say anything – will you?" Kathy murmured.

I shook my head.

"See?" Kathy spilled her Christmas bells laugh. "Why should she have it easy, Indian bitch? I want her to make a sound, I will make her talk, you'll see". She turned to me. "I don't mean teeth chatter, Alice. I mean, words – English words, got that? Now, get some air, you're about to dive again."

"Oh, fuck, Kathy! Look at her! She's blue! It's really freaking me out. Let's get it over with and get our asses out of here!" Angie stepped forward, waved her arms to regain balance and stepped back.

Kathy hissed. "Well, nobody invited YOUR ASS here, so you can go as when you want." She turned back to me. "What are you looking at, bitch? Suck the air, suck it, NOW!"

My legs softened too fast under her pressure, my butt hitting the sandy bottom with a flowing thump. I looked around.

My city died, like it was never alive, just a pile of stupid plastic blocks. They lay scattered across the floor. I forced my hands to crawl towards them,

dragging my fingers across fake birch planks, stumbling every inch over gaps in between. After a long minute, I finally reached them. They crumbled and turned to sand, colorless, floating up around me, no magic left in any of them, only sand and more sand. I sank deeper, gently floating my head on the bottom of the lake. I no longer felt the gloved hands or the cold or even the water. I slid into the comfort of darkness, and I didn't care anymore about anything.

EXPAND LATER:

When she dips her into water, she does it 4 times, and then calls her a name, not Alice, but it happens to be an ancient spirit name, and now she will become that spirit, and the merfolk or otter people suddenly all come out of the lake, and take hostage all the girls except Alice, and she has to make a choice to either become one of the otter people and let all the girls live, or stay mortal and have all the girls die or become otter people.

Merfolk

I opened my eyes and realized that I am under water yet I don't seem to be bothered by it, and breathe like normal. I could see the water from inside the lake bulged to white color of foam, with swirls and waves circling around then popping up what seemed like backs of white gigantic whales. The bulges grew larger and larger until they circled around me. I froze looking at this unable to move fascinated with the beauty of it. Then the backs erupted into white hair and beautiful faces, and slowly emerged closer to me like what seemed to be washed out and faded people, both men and women. They were dressed in silk-like white skin clothes, looking like fish skin, almost white, but iridescent, shining as if there was the sun out, but there was no sun, and flailing in the water gently. They stretched their arms out to me, humming some peaceful tune that made me feel at home and safe. They softly grabbed me and lifted me out of the water, I gasped as if born anew, feeling searing pain in my lungs, panicking for just a moment realizing that I can breathe in both water and air.

The crowd of girls stood still, just exactly where I have seen them before I went under water. They looked fascinated, with their faces turned towards the strange people in faded fish-skin clothes, almost smiling. The people in faded clothes opened their mouths and joined in singing the most beautiful song I have ever heard, they walked slowly towards the shore and put me down. Then the man who carried me stopped singing and looked me deep in the eyes.

"Welcome home, Ailen. We have been waiting for you for too long. I am Hotah, and we are merfolk, Now, if you'll excuse me, we have to punish those who did this to you", and with that he resumed his singing, and all the girls started walking slowly after him into the water.

I opened my mouth to scream, and heard myself sing just like they did – of course, what did I expect. So with mute anger, I grabbed hold of Kathy and Angie and tried pulling them back. It was as pathetic as trying to pull the train from moving forward. The force that pulled them was unstoppable. When stopping them didn't work, I tried grabbing the mer folk, but their clothes were so slippery, so wet and oily, that I just slipped on top, without grabbing even an inch or

making them notice, for what I could tell. They didn't react and just kept singing, pulling enamoured girls behind them until both merfolk and girls vanished under water with the last twirl. And then it dawned on me, that I am now supposed to be able to breathe under water – I quickly jumped inside and started trying to swim, but somehow it felt more like stumbling around. I tried waving my arms and my legs, but kept just turning left and right, as if taken by a wave and being swirled around. Darn it! I stomped madly and decided to just walk forward, for what it's worth. And it seemed like that was the way to go – as I walked, I covered impressive distance, distracted my own movements, I didn't actually see where I was going, and when I looked up, I didn't see the girls or merfolk, but only the sand and the turquoise thickness of the water, so deep that it must be a pleasure to be lost in it forever, feeling turquoise from the tips of my eyelashes to the depth of my heart. I smelled the turquoise, a fine exquisite odor reminiscent of early spring rain with wild jasmine undertones. As I stumbled deeper, I have realized how free I am feeling in this water, much more free than outside in the air. My movements compared to fluid, my walk compared to waltz. A curious idea occurred to me. I opened my mouth – nothing. Should have thought before trying, same thing again like with Dennis – what did I expect, some award-winning opera singing? Duh. Lost in thought, I kept walking until I noticed a darkening in front of me, It was nothing special, just the water started to darken in the middle, forming a tunnel out of more water, or some thick substance. I only needed one glance inside, and then I would go back to the shore. The water flowed around me like some clear buttermilk, and my lungs or whatever it was breathing water refused to cooperate, the closer I got to the darkness. Between the drinking of the buttermilk outside and breathing it underwater, breathing was probably not the worst of it. It felt oily and silky to the touch, to my entire body. It sucked me closer and enveloped my eyes, and when I pushed forward, spit me out into thinner water with an audible smack. So this must be the entrance then, to their dwellings or some kind of city, maybe. Stupid that I can't get in! I tried with my hands, my feet my head, the combination of my left foot and right hand, right hand and right foot, no use. I showed it a face and spun around.

A young merman was standing a few feet away, his hands in his faded clothes pockets, a smirk on his face. I raised my eyebrows, I'd already tried talking here, no use either. Well, he kept standing looking me in the eyes, without any social inclination of averting them even for just a second. Curiously, I wondered if I would flush under water, and if he would notice. When I made a step toward him, he spun around, his clothes stretching and enveloping him into a silver cocoon that turned into a giant fish. He swam and disappeared in the turquoise disguise. I went after him and came upon another dark spot. As I wandered, I saw a few more of those, just dark spots hanging in the water, you know, like the very middle of the outstretched lips of someone trying to kiss you for the first time, only much more wet and slippery. After wandering for another eternity, my stomach growled, and I started making my way back to what seemed to be the shore from where we got in.

I saw police lights from under water in time to change direction and come out a bit further away. As soon as I got out of the water, I collapsed on the ground, all strength leaving me.

In a few minutes, a police dog happily announced me with loud barking, and an instinct kicked in I ran like mad, into the shallow forest, into the bushes, away from people. My muscles ached, my chest burned. I heard no barking and turned towards the lake. Police lights traveled the sky, water bulged and stood still.

Alone

I was tired. I needed a soul, quickly. It didn't make things better ignoring the suffocation.

I'd already tried killing myself countless times over the last 20 years. I've tried splattering under a train but caused a wreck and 135 human deaths instead. A special crew cleaned the train tracks after to make them less slippery. I dove into a ship's motor and damaged it. It made it to the shore, and ships were off the list. I took skydiving lessons and didn't pull the trigger. It felt odd being stretched into a million drops on collapse with the earth. It took only minutes to trickle back into myself. I didn't know who I was and I tried everything lethal for people. That was before I found I'd turned into a mermaid.

Smart people in smart books said that mermaids died of lack of water. I swam across the ocean into Nile and stepped into the sand of Sahara. In two days, I'd found out my brain controls the weather and never lets me dry out. The rain it brought was record breaking for the region.

They also said I should be called by my real name, that would do it. I picked Times Square as my last place and said I'm Alice to a Bulgarian guy selling hot dogs for buck and a half a piece. He repeated my name, fell on his knees, abandoned his stand, and crawled after me for an hour until a policeman asked for his ID. I quickly disintegrated into the crowd.

Other people in other books suggested to steal a piece of my hair, take away my hair brush, burn my skin, damage my face. I've tried them all. Until I met Dennis. I bumped into him in Columbia river, on my way to find a new feeding ground. Dennis said I was stupid for trying to kill myself. He loved being immortal and superior to humans. He said a human must kill the one who drowned me. After my death is avenged, I would turn my human age and die. But before I could find the one who drowned me, I needed to live. And for that I needed.

I killed my first victims by accident. First time in a Berlin in a night club. A guy hugged me from behind. I turned and hugged him in return. He leaned in to kiss, when I started tickling him. I tickled him to death, inhaling his laugh until it turned to shrieks and his soul made it into my body. Nobody noticed a thing. He collapsed and I dragged him onto a seat and left in horror. His soul was clean and lasted a month. I switched to serial killers, but their souls were the worst, dirty and thin. They only lasted a few days at the most. I turned to hunting on souls of those who would die soon anyway. It quieted the guilt, the self-hatred.

I headed now to a hospital near ... (name of the city), ...

Thoughts and ideas

- She is the last mermaid of her kind
- She must be avenged, or, rather, her death must be avenged by someone other and not her, then she can die peacefully, so that means someone has to kill the one who killed her.
- She died an unnatural violent death near the lake just before her marriage
- She falls in love with her killer.
- She must be 14 because she must have been killed before she was married
- She can kill with her laughter
- She just wants to be loved, but keeps killing men unknowingly
- She was killed near a lake (Scotland, Finland, Karelia, Canada) – Inari, Everglades, Lake Crescent
- If a human steals her hair, he can gain control over Alice, but when she gets it back, she flees
- She has healing and prophetic powers, can control weather
- On full moon, she goes dancing into the forest with other mermaids, and in the morning a ring of thick grass is left – if a human steps into it, he dies
- She is cursed to never find her true love, if she will, that love will die a terrible death
- She has blue or green eyes, short dark hair, marble white skin
- She can swim really well, knit and sew clothes, and do hair, and she sings better than anyone
- All her clothes appear very faded, almost to white
- She can die if she asks a human to give her a name and a piece of clothing, but she can only ask once in 7 years, she has to live the length of her full life before she can die
- She eats mostly fresh fish
- She can become human again if she marries a human
- She drowns in the lake at the high-school initiation – it takes the brain to die about 6 minutes, ...
- She will die if she ever dries out
- In ancient times, the people of the forested lands around the River Danube believed that when you die, your spirit or soul goes to inhabit a tree. This makes the trees into the sacred dwellings of the tribal ancestors. Not a bad thing. But when a maiden dies, by drowning, it is a special case. Her spirit is trapped in a tree for most of the time, but on summer evenings it is allowed out and she may play and dance and sing with the spirits of the other drowned maidens on the river-side. These are the rusalki, these water nymphs, sometimes barely seen or heard on warm, summer nights.
- To exist, she draws energy from the men, to sustain herself, until the point of exhaustion or death
- Lilith and the Lilin (Jewish), Lilitu (Sumerian) and Rusalka (Slavic) were succubi

- She will float for 7 years, and then she becomes a rusalka (the fireflies are the souls of the unbaptized children, if someone doesn't baptize them in 7 years, they become rusalka's)
- Rusalka's live 300-400 years, and when they die they melt into fog
- She is drowned in the frothing or hazing accident
- Lake Crescent in Washington state is where she drowns, and emerges as a mermaid 7 years later
- Her mother has disappeared (how much time ago?), but she is used to her disappearances...
- In Salish culture, everything happens 4 times (the girl and the cedar tree story). The number 4 was sacred, any incarnation or magical activity had to be repeated 4 times or in the multiples of 4 (usually 8)
- Salish people were called "people of the cedar and salmon"; Western red cedar was called the tree of life
- Klallam tribe means "strong people", birds are symbols of strength and pride
- There is no death, only a change of worlds (said Chief Seattle)
- All patterns mean something
- Significant stages in any person's life – birth, naming, puberty, initiation (rebirth) into various religious groups, marriage, accession to office, retirement, death. A person had several birthdays, one when born, one when initiated.
- Knowledge was gained through observation, experience, stories, dreams, and spirit quests.
- A boy went on his first spirit quest, lasting only one night, at about eight years of age. As he became older, and took more quests, the quest would last several nights. An old man, usually a grandfather, would instruct the boy in the technique of acquiring a vision. He or she would be told to go to the top of a certain mountain or to the shore of a particular lake where he was likely to find a spirit. The boy stayed out alone all night, sitting beside a fire on the mountain or diving repeatedly into the cold waters of the lake. In order to make sure the boy actually went to the designated spot, the old man would give him a peculiarly shaped stick or piece of hide to leave at the spot, so that the old man could find the object the next day. This would prove that the boy had actually been there. The youth was supposed to stay awake all night, but it is said that that rule was often broken. The vision itself involved seeing a spirit in the guise of a human being in a dream or hallucination. The spirit revealed its true identity to the child, and would tell him the activities in which he would be successful as an adult. The spirit also listed the kinds of harm from which it would protect him. For instance, a person might be told they would be lucky in gambling, be a great hunter, be able to bring rain in time of drought, or that he would be protected from harm in battle. Then the spirit taught the boy a song, which was supposed to be an original one different, at least in detail, from every other song; when this was sung at a later date, it called forth the boy's supernatural power and assured his success in the undertakings listed by

his spirit helper. In addition to the loneliness and fear experienced by the boy, fasting from food and water on the longer quests increased his discomfort and helped induce the hallucinations or illusions regarded as visitations of spirits. Spirit helpers were not sought in all-night vigils after the age of adolescence. But Sanpoils believed that spirit helpers would contact people on their own volition any time in their lives. The results of the a successful vision quest in childhood or adolescence were not told to anyone for many years. Then, when the visionary was twenty-five or thirty years of age, and had achieved full adult status, his spirit helper would return. This caused him to get spirit sickness, a feeling of lonesomeness and despondency, which usually came on in the early winter. Only a shaman could cure such sickness.

- She found the secret to why the Lake Crescent doesn't give up the dead – they all turn to “blackfish” people, or merpeople.
- Initiation was on the top of the mountain, lasted 7 days and nights without food or drink until the spirit came, the spirit had to leave a physical object and a song; she asked for a special talent, she asked for being loved, and the song she learned had everyone come to her and fall at her feet.
- She must find where she belongs – she is part Indian, part Russian, so therefore when she comes of age she becomes part Spirit and part Rusalka, and is shunned from both sides as not belonging to either one. Both sides are secretly at war with each other still, and that is why the birds vanish and the ecology suffers – as the spirits kill each other, she must stop this war to be able to belong again.
- At puberty, she had to be in a hut alone for a year to get “pure” – the longer, the purer, and the higher the price for her as a bride. But she rebelled against being held in a hut.
- She must give her life to stop the war, to turn into a ...
- She comes alone to the beach in the evenings because she has no friends, and only talks to trees and stones and fish
- Spirits were both good and evil.
- It was the worst crime to do damage to a face.
- The Tlingit (in Alaska) believed in the reincarnation and the transmigration of the spirit; death was not feared as they believed that people would be reborn as children of their same clan with some birth marks from the previous life. The dead had to cross the river or the lake.
- Among the Tlingits it was horrible to be drowned. Relatives and friends would search at great length for a person missing in water. Unless the body could be found and cremated, thus releasing the spirit to be reincarnated later, the departed had to live forever with the underwater spirits. A more feared fate was to be captured by the Kushtaka or Land Otter People. They deprived the victim of everlasting life, for his soul could not be reincarnated. They captured those who drowned or who became lost in the woods. The captives were taken to their homes and were themselves turned into Land Otters unless saved by a shaman. Kushtaka

- often appeared in a form of a friend or relative to confuse the victim. Dog's barking forced them to reveal themselves for who they were.
- The shaman went for his spirit quest from months to a year, and hoped to cut out a tongue of the otter, since it was believed it held the whole secret of shamanism. Nobody hunted otters out of respect to such power until the Russians came.
 - A Kushta-ka (or River Otter Man) could charm people, drive them mad and turn them into werewolves.
 - The chief underwater spirit was thought to be Konakadet, monster with a large head, legs and flippers; one glance at him brought wealth and good fortune.
 - Skin-walkers are shifting shapes and are in every culture, Rusalki in Russia, and Otter Men in Alaska, half-otter, half-men, taking the shape of a diseased relative of a victim, then tearing the victim apart or turning the victim into a kushtaka. Modern kushtakas are serial killers, psychopaths, sociopaths. Always described as quiet, even nice, before something dies inside them and they attack, but by then it is too late. Skin-walkers are also called shape-shifters, when they are in their animal shape, they are impossible to kill, when they are in their human shape, only a skilled medicine man can kill them. When they are in the animal shape, they always look and move a bit wrong, but they are impossible fast and impossible to catch. You can only kill a skin-walker if you know the real person behind him, and will call his real name, then 3 days later that person will die.
 - Skin-walkers can read human thoughts and can imitate any sound or voice or animal cry.
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Inspiration

Twilight

Titus

Rosetta

Perfume: The story of a murderer