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You and Me & the Stormy Sea

There was only one light on in the house, the one he knew illuminated her bedroom most evenings at this time. If there hadn't been the hanging plant suspended in just that spot in the window he sensed he'd be able to see her, just beyond its crowded fronds, at an angle to the left where shadows were moving. He paced the beach sands, neck craned, peering upward.

He wasn't really here. He was a wisp of sea breeze. There was no chance of his becoming anything more substantial until he was far from here again, somewhere he ought to be. But for now he endured his vaporous condition willingly; when he was anywhere near her he was intangible to all but her imagination, whose lazy tentacles turned what was solid into something cloudy and malleable. Her imagination was something he loved stepping into, to see how she would distort, mold and transform him.

His eyes skimmed across the beach then rose again to the lighted window. He hopped onto the craggy peak of a salty boulder, searching for a view.

She watched a wet pebble of melting wax wobble off the edge then slide howling down the candle's smooth side. She was dimly aware that he was watching her, it felt like he was

watching from down on the beach. She would ask him in later, because she wanted a fire in the fire place tonight and she didn't like the mess of arranging that herself.

She had in her room a collection of fish bones for spells involving change, a rope stolen from around a dog's neck for those dealing with control. There were owl feathers for learning and a lizard who had died after being imprisoned in a tightly closed jar; hopefully the lizard's soul remained in there as well, because should the need ever arise, she planned to send it out spying for her, which lizards were adept at doing.

She thought she was a witch, although she didn't exactly know what to *do* with these odds and ends she'd collected. Simply *having* them gave her a sense of command over whatever surrounded her (she was never sure from moment to moment what that might be).

Her dusky stare shifted to the window, settled upon the stretching shadows of the ocean below. Her eyes probed the sands and, though he was being very still at the moment, blending into the darkness expertly, she discerned his location and her gaze rested there.

Crouched like a grasshopper on the boulder's jagged peak he teetered, then carefully eased himself into a precarious standing position. He'd felt the exact moment her stare had rested upon him. He watched her move closer to the window and pull it up. Then – *jubilant!* – she extended a thin, pale arm into the night to beckon him in.

There were always faint, whispery breezes traveling through the hallways of the house and the perpetual hint of a stifled laugh echoing off the walls. The creaking, shiftings and sighs were enlivened by the salty air that permeated the place. He poked at the fire, goaded it into crackling life. “Are you warm enough?” he asked, sitting back on his haunches to look at her.

“Mmmm,” she answered. Her mind was wonderfully convoluted. She dwelled briefly on any number of odd thoughts and images; her consciousness flitted quickly over items, not contemplating but fleetingly assessing, cataloguing. A librarian briefly touching each book on a certain shelf, not moving or opening any, just making sure each was in its place. Her concentration was absolute at times, then would break like the waves below the house; her attention would wander to traipse, arms swinging and hair flying, along the uneven shore. He imagined that her thoughts were deep scarlet, throbbing with plans, nudging one another and giggling maliciously.

She was only nineteen, most certainly psychotic, whatever that really meant. He knew that certain words (sociopath, delusional, personality disorder) were tossed around casually by laymen; he’d had a few of them applied to himself. But he’d always had an inkling that those words were just convenient tags. When one was confronted by someone or something puzzling, it was reassuring to have a word handy.