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SEA CHILD

DUNE CHRONICLES

SHORT STORY 3

Bene Gesserit punishments must carry and inescapable lesson, one which extends far beyond the pain.

– **Mother Superior Taraza,
Chapterhouse Archives**

As she had done since the brutal Honored Matres had conquered Buzzell, Sister Corysta struggled to get through the day without attracting undue notice. Most of the Bene Gesserit like herself had already been slaughtered, and passive cooperation was the only way she could survive.

Even for a disgraced Reverend Mother such as herself, submission to a powerful though morally inferior adversary galled her. But the handful of surviving Sisters here on the isolated ocean world—all of whom been sent here to face years of penance—could not hope to resist the “whores” that arrived unexpectedly, is such overwhelming force.

At first, the Honored Matre conquerors had resorted to primal techniques of coercion and manipulation. They killed most of the Reverend Mothers during interrogation, trying unsuccessfully to learn the location of Chapterhouse, the hidden homeworld of the Bene Gesserits. Thus far, Corysta was one of twenty Sisters who had avoided death, but she knew their odds of continued survival were not good.

Back in the terrible Famine Times after the death of Leto II, the God Emperor of Dune, much of humanity had scattered into the wilderness of star systems and struggled to survive. Left behind in the core of the old Imperium, only a few remnants had clung to the tattered civilization and rebuilt it under Bene Gesserit rule. Now, after fifteen hundred years, many of the Scattered Ones were coming back, bringing destruction with them. At the head of the unruly horders, Honored Matres swept across planets like a raging spacestorm, returning with stolen technology and grossly altered attitudes. In appearance, the whores bore superficial similarities to the black-robed Bene Gesserits, but in reality they were unimaginable different, with different fighting skills and no apparent moral code—as they had proved many times with their captives on Buzzell.

As dawn gathered light across the water, Corysta went to the edge of a jagged inlet, her bare feet finding precarious balance on slippery rocks as she made her way down to the ocean’s edge. The Honored Matres kept the bulk of the food supplies for themselves, offering little to the surviving inhabitants of Buzzell. Thus, if Corysta failed to find her own food, she would starve. It would

amuse the whores to find out that one of the hated Bene Gesserits could not care for herself; the Sisterhood had always taught the importance of human adaptation for survival in challenging environments.

The young Sister had a knot in her stomach, pangs of hunger similar to the pains of grief and emptiness. Corysta could never forget the crime that had sent her to Buzzell, a foolish and failed effort to keep her baby secret from the Sisterhood and their interminable breeding program.

In moments of despair, Corysta felt she had two sets of enemies, her own Sisters and the Honored Matres who sought supremacy over everything in the old Imperium. If the Bene Gesserits did not find a way to fight back—here and on other planets—their days would be numbered. With superior weaponry and vast armies, the Honored Matres would exterminate the Sisterhood. From her own position of disadvantage, Corysta could only hope that her Mother Superior was developing a plan on Chapterhouse that would enable the ancient organization to survive. The Sisterhood faced an immense challenge against an irrational enemy.

In a fit of violence, the Honored Matres had been provoked into unleashing incredible weapons from the Scattering against Rakis, the desert world better known as Dune. Now, the legendary planet was nothing more than a charred ball, with all sandworms dead and the source of spice obliterated. Only the Bene Gesserits, on faraway Chapterhouse, had any stockpiles left. The whores from the Scattering had destroyed tremendous wealth simply to vent their rage. It made no sense. Or did it?

Soostones were also a source of wealth in the Known Universe, and were found only on Buzzell. Therefore, Honored Matres had conquered this planet with its handful of punished Bene Gesserit Sisters. And now they meant to exploit it...

After the water's edge, Corysta reached into the lapping surf, withdrawing her hand-woven traps and gathered night-scurrying crustaceans. Lifting her dark skirt, she waded deeper to retrieve the nets. Her special little cove had always provided a bounty for her, vital food that she shared with her few remaining Sisters.

She found footing on the slick, rounded surface of submerged rock. The moving currents stirred up silt, making the water murky. The sky was steel gray with clouds, but she hardly noticed them. Since the arrival of the Honored Matres, Corysta spent most of her time with her gaze lowered, seeing only the

ground. She'd had enough punishment from the Bene Gesserit. As unfair as it was in the first place, her suffering had been exacerbated by the whores.

As she pulled in the net, Corysta was pleased to feel its heaviness, an indicator of a good catch. *Another day without starvation.* With difficulty she pulled the net to the surface and rested on the rocks, where she discovered that its tangled strands did not hold a clatter of shellfish but, instead, contained a weak and greenish creature. To her surprise, she saw a small humanoid baby with smooth skin, large round eyes, a wide mouth, and gill slits. She immediately recognized the creature as one of the genetically modified "phibian" slaves the whores had brought to Buzzell to harvest soostones. But it was just an infant, floating alone and helpless.

Catching her breath, Corysta splashed back to the shore rocks behind her. Phibians were cruel and monstrous—no surprise, considering the vicious whores who had created them—and she was afraid she would be beaten for interfering with this abandoned child. Adult phibians would claim the infant had been caught in her nets, that *she* had killed it. She had to be very careful.

Then Corysta saw the baby's eyes flutter open, its gills and mouth gasping for oxygen. A bloody gash marred the infant's forehead; it looked like an intentional mark drawn by the single claw of a larger phibian. This child was weak and sickly, with a large discoloration on its back and side, a glaring birthmark like ink spilled on a quarter of its small body.

An outcast.

She had heard of this before. Among the phibians, the claw wound was a mark of rejection. Some aquatic parent had scarred its own frail child in disgust because of the birthmark, and then cast the baby away to perish in the seas. Stray currents had brought it to Corysta's nets.

Gently, she untangled the creature from the strands and washed the small, weak body in the calm waters. It was male. Responding to her ministrations, the sickly little phibian stirred and opened its alien, membranous eyes to look at her. Despite the monstrous appearance, Corysta thought she saw humanity behind the strange eyes, a child from the sea who had done nothing to deserve the punishment inflicted upon it.

She gathered the baby in her arms, folding him in her black robe to hide him from view. Looking around, Corysta quickly ran home.

* * *

On Buzzell, deep, plankton-rick oceans swallowed all but few patches of rough land. It was as if the cosmic creator had accidentally left a water tap running and filled the plane to overflowing.

On the only patch of dry land suitable of use as a spaceport, Corysta worked with several other beaten Bene Gesserit Sisters. The women carried heavy sealed boxes of the milky gens called soostones. After all their specialized training, including a remarkable ability to control their bodily chemistry, Corysta and these defeated Sisters were nothing more than menial laborers forced to work while the brutal Honored Matres flaunted their dominance.

Two Bene Gesserit women walked beside Corysta with their eyes cast down, each one carrying a heavy satchel full of the harvested gems. The Honored Matres enjoyed grinding the disgraced Reverent Mothers under their heels. During their exile here, Corysta and her fellow Sisters had all known one another's crimes and supported one another. But in their current situation, such minor infractions and the irrelevant penance and retribution meant nothing. She and her companions knew the impatient whores were sure to kill them soon, rendering their life histories meaningless. Now that the phibians had arrived as specialized workforce, the Sisters were no longer necessary for the economic processes of Buzzell.

On Corysta's left, five adult phibians rose out of the water, lean and powerful forms with frightening countenances. Their unscaled skins shone with oily iridescence; their heads were bullet-shaped, streamlined for swimming. The Honored Matres had apparently bred the creatures using technology and knowledge brought by Tleilaxu gene masters who had also fled in the Scattering. Experimenting with human raw materials, had those Tleilaxu outcasts cooperated willingly, or had they been forced by the whores? The sleek and glistening phibians had been well designed for their underwater work.

The humanoids stood dripping on the land, carrying nets full of gleaming soostones. Corysta no longer found the jewels appealing. To her, they had look and smell of the blood that had been spilled to get them. Thousand of Buzzell inhabitants—exiled Sisters, support personnel, even smugglers and traders—had been slaughtered by the Honored Matres in their takeover.

The whores in charge of the work crew snapped orders, and Corysta took a webbed net from the first phibian. On the creature she smelled salty moisture,

and iodine-laced body odor, and an undertone of fish. The slitted eyes were covered by a moist nictitating membrane.

Looking at the repugnant face, she sensed coldness, and wondered if this might be the father of her sea child, who was now secretly recovering in her hut. As that thought crossed her mind, the adult phibian struck a blow that knocked her backward. In a bubbly voice, the creature said, “Too slow. Go work.”

She grabbed the satchel of soostones and scurried away. She did not want the Honored Matres to focus on her. Her instinct on survival was ever-present.

No one would be coming to rescue them. Since the devastation of Rakis, the Bene Gesserit leadership had holed up on Chapterhouse to hide from the unrelenting hunters. She wondered if Taraza was still Mother Superior of the order, or if—as rumor suggested—the Honored Maters had killed her on Rakis.

On this backwater world, Corysta and her companions would never know.

* * *

That evening, in her hue lit by a glowing fish-oil lamp, Corysta cradled the phibian baby in her arms and fed it broth with a spoon. How ironic that her own child had been taken from her by the Breeding Mistresses, and now in it strange cosmic turnabout she had been given this... creature. It seemed a cruel joke played by Fate, a monster in exchange for her beautiful baby.

Immediately she chastised herself for thinking that way. This poor sub-human child hid no control over its surroundings, its parentage, or the fate that had befallen it.

She held the moist, cool baby close in the dim light and could feel the strange humming energy of its body next to hers, almost a purring sensation that made no detectable sound. At first the baby had fussed about the spoon, refusing to eat from it, but gradually, patiently, Corysta had coaxed it to accept the thin broth boiled with crustaceans and seaweed. The baby hardly ever whimpered, though it looked at her with the saddest expression she'd ever seen.

Life was so unpredictable, moment by moment and year by year, and so chaotic within the much larger chaos of the entire universe. People were anxious to do filer and that, to go in directions they imagined were important.

As Corysta gated down at the phibian and made gentle eye contact with it, she had the sensation of supreme balance, that the now they war spending together had a healing influence on the frenzied cosmos... that all of the chaos wasn't really what it appeared to be, that her actions and experiences had a larg-

er, significant purpose. Each mother and child extended far beyond their own parochial circumstances, far beyond the horizons they could see or even begin to imagine.

In the distant past, the Bene Gesserit breeding program had focused on creating a genetic foundation that would result in the Kwisatz Haderach, supposedly a powerful unifying force, for thousands of years the Sisterhood had sought that goal, and there had been many failures, many disappointments. Worse, when they finally achieved success with Paul Atreides, Muad'Dib, the Kwisatz Haderach had turned against them and torn apart their plan. And then his son, Leto II, the Tyrant—

“Never again!” the Bene Gesserit had vowed. They would never try to breed another Kwisatz Hadench, and yet their careful sifting and twining of bloodlines had continued for millennia. They must be trying for something. There must have been some reason her own baby had been torn from her.

Corysta had been ordered by Breeding Mistress Monaya to obtain specific genetic lines that the Sisterhood claimed it needed. She had not been told where she fit into the higher picture; that was an unnecessary complication in the eyes of her superiors. Complete information was known only to a select few, and orders were passed on down the ranks to the front-line soldiers.

I was one of those soldiers. Corysta had been commanded to seduce a nobleman and bear his child; she was instructed to feel no love for him or for the baby. Against her natural, inborn instincts she was supposed to shut off her emotions and perform the task. She was no more than a vessel carrying genetic material forward, eventually turning over the contents to the Sisterhood. Just a container of sperm and ovum, germinating something her superiors needed.

Inadvertently she had won half the battle; she hadn't cared at all about the man. Oh, he'd been handsome enough, but his spoiled and petulant personality had soured her even as she seduced him. She had gone away without ever telling him that she carried his child.

But the other half of the battle that came later was far more difficult. After carrying the baby for nine months, nourishing it from her own body, Corysta knew she would be unable to turn it over to Monaya. Shortly before her due date, she had sneaked away into seclusion, where all alone she gave birth to a daughter.

Only hours into the baby's life, before Corysta had time to know her own child, Sisters stormed in like a flock of angry black crows. Stern-faced Monaya took the newborn herself and spirited her away to be used for their own secret

purposes. Still weak from giving birth, Corysta knew she would never see her daughter again, that she could never call it her own. Despite all she tried to feel for the girl child, the baby daughter had never belonged to her, and she'd only been able to steal moments with it. Even her womb was not her own.

Of course Corysta had been foolish in running, in trying to keep the baby for herself. Her punishment, as expected, had been severe. She'd been exiled to Buzzell, where other Sisters in her situation were sent, all of them guilty of crimes of love the Sisterhood could not tolerate... "crimes of humanity."

How peculiar to label love a crime. The universe should hate disintegrated long ago without love, shattered by immense wars. To Corysta, it seemed inhuman for Bene Gesserit leadership to take such a position. The Sisters were, in their own way, compassionate, caring people, but Reverend Mothers and Breeding Mistresses spoke of "love" only in derogatory or clinical terms.

The Sisterhood reveled in defying compartmentalization, in espousing an odd juxtaposition of beliefs. Despite their apparent inhumanity in running roughshod over desires of the heart, the Sisters considered themselves expert at key aspects of being human. Similarly, the indoctrinated women professed to have no religion, but behaved as if they did anyway, adopting a strong moral and ethical base and rituals that could only be classified as religious.

Thus the complex, enigmatic Sisters were simultaneously human and inhuman, loving and unloving, secular and religious... an ancient society that operated within its narrow rules and belief systems, walking tightropes they had suspended over deep chasms.

To her misfortune, Corysta had fallen off one of the tightropes, plunging her into darkness.

And in her punishment, she had been sent here to Buzzell. To this strange sea child...

* * *

As a storm whipped across the waters, ruffling the sea into whitecaps, Honored Matres dragged the surviving Bene Gesserits in front of the commandeered administrative buildings. The damp wind felt bitter on Corysta's face as she stood on an expanse of grass that was growing too long, since no one tended it. She dared to lift her chin, her own small act of defiance.

The Honored Matres were lean and wolfish, their facets sharp, their eyes feral orange from the adrenaline-based spice substitute they consumed. Their

bodies were all sinew and reflexes, their hands and feet edged with hard calluses that could be as deadly as any weapon. The whores wore clinging garments over their figures, bright leotards and capes adorned with fine stitching. They flaunted themselves like peacocks, used sex to dominate and enslave the male population on worlds they conquered.

“So few of you witches remain,” said Matre Skira as she stood before the assembled Sisters. “So few...” The sharp-featured leader of the whores on Buzzell, she had long nails, compact breasts like clenched fists, and knotted limbs with all the softness of petrified wood. She was of an indeterminate age: Corysta detected subtle behavioral hints that Skira assumed everyone believed she was much younger than she actually was. “How many more of you must we torture before someone reveals what we need to know?” Her voice bore an artificial undertone of honey, yet it burned like acid.

Jaena, the Sister standing next to Corysta, blurted, “All of us. No Bene Gesserit will ever tell you where Chapterhouse is.”

Without warning, the Honored Matre struck out with a powerful kick of her leg, flashing like a whip. Before Jaena could even draw back, the hard side of Skira’s bare foot danced across the outspoken Sister’s forehead with a blur of speed.

“Trying to provoke me into killing you?” Skira asked in a surprisingly calm voice, landing back with the perfect balance and grace of a ballerina.

Skira had displayed precise control, delivering a blow just sufficient to cut the skin on Jaena’s forehead. She left a bloody gash that looked remarkably similar to the mark of rejection on Corysta’s sea child.

The injured Sister dropped, clutching her forehead. Blood streamed between her fingers, while her attacker chuckled. “Your stubbornness amuses us. Even if you don’t provide us with the information we desire, you are at least a source of entertainment.” Other Honored Matres laughed with her.

After returning from the Scattering, legions of whores used economics, military weapons, and sexual bondage against the human populations they encountered. They hunted the Bene Gesserits like prey, taking advantage of the Sisterhood’s lack of strong political leadership or effective military forces. But still the Honored Matres feared them, knowing the Bene Gesserits remained capable of real resistance as long as their leadership remained in hiding.

As the storm continued to build out on the ocean, whipping chilly winds and rain across the narrow strip of land where the women stood, Matre Skira proceeded to question Jaena and two other Sisters, screaming at them and beat-

ing them... but letting them live. Thus far, Corysta—ever quiet and alert as she shivered in the cold—had avoided the brunt of her captors anger. In the past she'd been interrogated like the others, but not with the severity she had feared. Now the regular proceedings had evolved into light entertainment for the whores, who conducted them more out of habit than from any realistic hope of acquiring vital knowledge. But violence always simmered beneath the surface, and the young Sister knew a massacre could occur at any moment.

The rain let up, and Corysta wiped moisture from her face. Despite the punishment and exile the Bene Gesserit had imposed, she remained loyal to the Sisterhood. She would kill herself before revealing the location of Chapterhouse.

Finally Skira and the other Honored Matres returned to the comfort and warmth of their administrative buildings. With a swirl of patterned capes over damp leotards, the whores left Corysta and her companions to make their way back through the rain to their squalid daily lives, supporting their wounded Sisters.

Hurrying along a cliffside trail that led to her hut after she had left the others, Corysta watched the surf crashing against rocks below and wondered if the phibians were looking up at her through the stippled surface of waves. Did the amphibious creatures even think about the child they had marked and then abandoned to the sea? They must assume it to be dead.

Glad to have survived another interrogation, she ran home and dipped into her primitive dwelling where the baby waited now healthier and stronger.

* * *

Corysta knew she could not keep the phibian child forever.

Her moments of happiness were often ephemeral, like fleeting flashes of light in the gloom of a dark chamber. She had learned to accept the precious moments for what they were—just moments.

Though she wanted to clutch the sea child to her breast and keep it safe, she knew that was not possible. Corysta wasn't safe herself—how could she hope to keep a child safe? She could only protect the baby temporarily, giving him shelter until he grew strong enough to go off on his own. She would have to release him back into the sea. From the phibian child's rapid rate of growth, she felt certain that he would become self-sufficient faster than a human could.

One evening, Corysta did something she'd been dreading. As darkness set in, she made her way down to her hidden cove along the familiar path, taking the

child with her. Though she could not always see the way in the gloom, she was surprised at how surefooted she was.

Wading out into the cold water, she cradled the child securely in her arms, and heard him whimper as the water touched his legs and lower body. She'd hidden and cared for her sea child for almost two months now, and already he was the size of a human toddler. His blotchy, prominent birthmark bothered her not at all, but she knew his own people had cast him out because of it. The terrifying prospect of this evening had been on her mind for weeks, and she'd feared that the phibian would just swim away and never look back at her. Corysta knew his connection with the ocean was inevitable.

"I am here," she said in a gentle voice. "Do not be afraid." With its webbed hands, the child clung to her arms, refusing to let go. The rapidly humming pulse of his skin against hers revealed the baby's silent terror.

Corysta waded back to the shallows, where the water was only a few inches deep, and sat there on the sand, letting the waves wash over her legs and the baby's. The water was warmer than the cool evening air, and felt good as it touched her. Out to sea; the water glowed faintly phosphorescent, so that the bullet-shaped head was profiled against the horizon. The darkness of the small shape reminded her of the mysteries contained within him, and in the ocean beyond...

Each evening thereafter, Corysta developed a routine. As darkness set in, she would go to her hidden cove and dip into the water, taking the tiny phibian along. Soon the creature she called Sea Child was walking alongside her and swimming in shallow water on his own.

Corysta wished she could be a phibian herself and swim out there, to the farthest reaches of this ocean world, escaping the brutal Honored Matres and taking her sea child with her. She wondered what it would be like to dive deep into the ocean, even if she did so on an unseen tether. At least there she might experience a familial bond that was stronger than anything she felt toward her Bene Gesserit Sisters.

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Corysta prodded Sea Child to speak, but the phibian succeeded only in making primitive and unformed sounds from an undeveloped larynx.

"I'm sorry I can't teach you properly," she said, looking down at the toddler as he played on the stone floor of her hut, moving on his webbed hands and

feet. She was about to prepare breakfast, combining crustaceans with native herbs she had collected from between the rocks.

The child looked at her without apparent comprehension. He was surrounded by crude toys she had made for him, shells and woody kelp knobs on which she had marked smiling faces. Some of the faces were human, while others she'd made to look like Sea Child's own people. Curiously, he showed more interest in the ones that least resembled him.

The toddler stared into the carved human face on the largest piece of wood, picking it up with clumsy fingers. Then he looked up in sudden alarm, toward the door of the hut, peeling back his thick lips to expose tiny sharp teeth.

Corysta became aware of sounds outside and felt a bitter, sinking sensation. She barely had time to gather up the child and hold him against her before the door burst open in a hail of splinters.

Matre Skira loomed in the doorway. "What sort of witchery is this?"

"Stay away from us! Please."

Sinewy women in tight leotards and black capes surrounded her. One of them tore the phibian child from her grasp; another beat her to the floor in a flurry of fists and sharp kicks. At first Corysta tried to fight back, but her efforts were hopeless, and she covered her face. The blows still got through. One broke her nose, and another shattered her arm. She cried out in pain, knowing that was what the whores wanted, but her physical discomfort didn't compare with the terrible anguish she felt over losing a child. *Another* child.

Sea Child was hidden from her view, but she heard the baby phibian make his own terrible sounds, high-pitched squeals that chilled her to the bone. Were the Honored Matres hurting him? Anger surged through her, but she could not fight back against their numbers.

These whores from the Scattering—were they offshoots of the Bene Gesserit, descendants of Reverend Mothers who had fled into space centuries ago? They returned to the old Imperium like evil doppelgangers. And now, despite the dramatic differences between Honored Matres and Bene Gesserit, both groups had taken a child from Corysta.

She screamed in frustration and rage. "Don't hurt him! Please. I'll do anything, just let me keep him."

"How touching." Matre Skira rounded on her, feral eyes narrowing. "But do you mean it? You'll do anything? Very well, tell us the location of Chapter-house, and we will let you keep the brat."

Corysta froze, and nausea welled up inside her. "I can't."

Sea Child let out a very human-sounding cry.

The Honored Matres scowled viciously. “Choose—Chapterhouse, or the child.”

She couldn't! Or could she? She'd been trained as a Bene Gesserit, sworn her loyalty to the Sisterhood... which had, in turn, punished her for a simple human emotion. They had exiled her here because she dared to feel love for a child, for her own child.

Sea Child was not like her, but he did not care about Corysta's shame, nor did she care about a patch of discoloration on his skin. He had clung to her, the only mother he had ever known.

But she was a Bene Gesserit. The Sisterhood ran through every cell of her body, through a succession of Other Laves descending through the endless chain of ancestors whom she had discovered upon becoming a Reverend Mother. Once a Bene Gesserit, always a Bene Gesserit... even after what the Sisterhood had done to her. They had already taught her what to do with her emotions.

“I can't.” she said again.

Skira sneered. “I knew you were too weak.” She delivered a kick the side of Corysta's head.

A black wave of darkness approached, but Corysta used her Bene Gesserit bodily control to maintain her consciousness. Abruptly, she was jerked to her feet and dragged down to the cove, where the women threw her onto the spray-dick rocks.

Struggling to her knees, Corysta fought the pain of her injuries. To her horror she saw Skira wade into shallow water with Sea Child. The little phibian snuggled against her and kept looking toward Corysta, crying out eerily for mother.

Her own baby had not known her so well, snatched from her arms only hours after birth. Corysta had never gotten to know her own little daughter, never learned how her life had been, what she had accomplished. Corysta had known this poor, inhuman baby much more closely. She had been a real mother, for just a little while.

Restrained by two strong women, Corysta saw froth in the sea just offshore, and presently she made out hundreds of swimming shapes in the water. *Phibians*. Half a dozen adults emerged from the ocean and approached Matre Skira, dripping water from their unclothed bodies.

Sea Child cried out again, and reached back toward Corysta, but Skira held his arms and blocked his view with her own body.

Corysta watched helplessly as the adult phibians studied the mark of rejection on the struggling child's forehead. Would they just kill him now? Trying to remain strong, Corysta wailed when the phibians took her child with them and swam out to sea.

Would they try to kill him again, cast him out like a tainted chick from a nest, pecked to death and cast out? Corysta already longed to see him—if the phibians were going to kill him, and if the whores were going to murder her, she wanted at least to cling to him. Her Sea Child!

Instead, she saw a remarkable thing. The phibians who had originally rejected the child, who had made their bloody mark on the baby's forehead, were now clearly helping him to swim. Supporting him, taking him with them. They did not reject him!

Her vision hampered by tears, she saw the phibians disappear beneath the waves. "Good-bye, my darling," she said, with a final wave. She wondered if she would ever see him again... or if the whores would just break her neck with a swift blow now, leaving her body on the shore.

Matre Skira made a gesture, and the other Honored Matres released their hold, letting Corysta drop to the ground. The evil women looked at one another, thoroughly amused by her misery. They turned about and left her there.

She and Sea Child were still prisoners of the Honored Matres, but at least she had made the phibian stronger, and his people would raise him. He would prove the phibians wrong for ever marking him.

She had given him life after all... the true maternal gift. With a mother's love, Corysta hoped her little one would thrive in deep and uncertain waters.