



A Song of the Sea
Urania Sarri

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The Sword of an Angel Prequel
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SYNOPSIS

A water tomb in the Aegean Sea...

A fishing boat sailing on the path of the rising sun...

A life that must be saved...

A boy, who will never grow to be a man, on the first and the last day of his real life.

Stavros has always known that he is no ordinary boy. It was an undisclosed mission that brought him to the human world. His life has been nothing more than a preparation for this day. The moment of illumination has come, but at what cost?

In the Song of the Sea miracles *do* happen, but not without reason.

Nature by some deep mystery constrained,
Shone forth in beauty and forgot the wrath.
No breath of wind touched sea or sky...
...something at once unraveled there and look,
before me was a woman clothed in moonlight...
...and from the unruffled surface of the sea,
a cypress tree, ethereal, she rose,
reached out a lover's arms, but humbly too,
all radiant with beauty and with goodness.

The Cretan, by Dionysios Slomos
(translated by Roderick Beaton)

The crimson light of the rising sun refracted on the water bringing tears to Stavros' eyes. It created a sparkling, golden path to the horizon that he knew he had to follow. Stavros knew these waters well; every reef, every menacing sea current. Still, it took a lot of effort to keep his fishing boat on route. His muscles had already started to burn, but he kept rowing. After all, he was just a little boy.

Although he could not see him, he felt his grandpa's presence sitting on the stern thwart as always, watching him with that lingering smile on his sundried lips.

The small rock island of Stephani was still far. Stavros had to keep rowing.

With every push, every splash, he remembered.

"Some day you will have to come here on your own."

"Where will you be grandpa?"

"I'll always be around, but you won't see me."

Stavros had so many questions. Something in his grandpa's stern look gave those words an irrevocable meaning that he found frightening; but not as frightening as the answers he might get.

"When will that be grandpa?" he had only asked.

"You will know when it's time."

It had been two months since they buried grandpa in Saint Marina's cemetery. For Stavros, grandpa's funeral was not a time for mourning. It was an event that had triggered some kind of a countdown; like when you start organizing a trip. One with no return.

Stavros had spent all last night by the window watching the roaring sea, anticipating the golden path of dawn. His mother was still sleeping when he pushed grandpa's boat into the water just before the first light of day. It wasn't an easy job for a twelve-year old boy, but he'd done it before. His grandpa had shown him how.

Stavros had no wish for goodbyes to his mother. But neither did she. She'd known for a long time that her son was not an ordinary child. He wouldn't play soccer in the lanes. He wouldn't go diving from the pier with the neighbourhood children. He'd never do things that made her angry either. He was just taking his time, preparing for his Call. Grandpa had been his only company throughout the years; like the father he'd never met.

Stavros could feel his mother's love and it pained him to be incapable of expressing his love for her. Whatever was hiding inside him was too massive to leave any room for emotion to grow. Love, sadness and anger were suppressed in a tiny little corner inside him, so tiny he could barely feel it. His mother knew that. She always accepted it with a rueful smile. Smile by smile, a bleak wall was built between them as he grew. It separated a mother from her only child.

There was only room for fear in Stavros' heart. Fear that he might not be able to accomplish his mission. The fear of a soldier before the final battle.

There had been few times he wondered what that meant for his mother. He didn't want to cause her anymore pain. Yet, somehow he knew pain in his case would be unavoidable. One day, when it got really dark before they made it to the shore through a storm, he'd asked his grandpa if this time his mother would be worried.

"She knows what you are," grandpa had said. "She made her peace with that a long time ago."

Stavros himself could not tell what he was exactly. He just knew that everything that had happened during these twelve years he'd spent on this world had taken him here: on this day, on this boat, alone, rowing towards the desolate, rock island of Stephani.

"You will have to make a choice. It won't be easy, but you'll know what to do.

Choose right. Remember you can't save them all."

The dark rock of Stephani was now a black spot on the endless blue of the Aegean. It interrupted the golden path to the sun, like a stain that had to be removed.

Just a little more rowing and I'll be closer, he thought.

The rock cast its shadow on the little boat and Stavros braced himself for whatever was coming. He stopped rowing and waited for a sign. The only thing he could hear was the sea singing her own song, invitingly swaying the fishing boat in its rhythm. It was a song of mourning and death. A song of despair, its melody speeding up wave by wave.

It felt like he was in the right place now; still, nothing happened.

Grabbing the oars again Stavros started rowing around the barren rock island. His breath grew faster and his arms were burning from his calloused palms up to his shoulder blades. A tight knot in his stomach pushed into his lungs. But Stavros had no time to deal with that. An adrenaline rush gave him the strength to keep rowing faster and faster.

"Don't get too close to the rock. It will crush you," grandpa had warned.

Stephani was a rock the size of a stadium encircled in steep, sharp cliffs. It had got its name from its shape. Round, in the shape of a crown, only the opening to its inner circle was too narrow. Strong currents made their way inside where you could find a natural harbor. The narrow opening that led to it was a deathly trap for fishermen and divers. Unless you knew its secrets.

"When you make it through, you will know it's almost over".

He'd never make it through with Argo, grandpa's boat. He would have to swim.

"You will lose Argo on these rocks. But don't look back."

Salty air whipped his face. He was now behind the rock island. Standing still again, he concentrated on the mourning song of the sea. He stood up, carefully balancing his body on the weathered thwart.

There were now too many dark stains smearing his golden path. The sea danced on them, hiding them inside her ripples and freeing them again. The first time he'd seen so many drowned people had been a year ago. Grandpa had told him that a boat carrying refugees from a faraway country had capsized. Since then, too many boats had sunk; too many souls had been lost. But some had been saved. His grandpa had always been among the fishermen who went back and forth saving those who'd made it close to the shore.

"What is this grandpa?" Stavros had asked standing in front of a heap of orange life jackets stacked like pieces of wood for a bonfire on the beach.

"This is our world changing," grandpa had said.

"And the people? Those you saved?"

"Poor souls running from one hell to another."

"Which hell is worse grandpa?"

"My boy, the worst hell is the one human souls carry inside them. It's unrelenting.

Once it's there, it's hard to uproot. That's why you are important."

"Why didn't you take me with you then?"

Grandpa had patted his head playfully, a broad smile brightening his face. "Your time will come. Be patient."

Stavros shaded his eyes with his hand, taking in the swelling sea around him. He looked at the narrow opening on his left. *Not too far, but still...*

The ripples had now given way to an ominous swell, but Stavros did not care. He'd always been a good swimmer. Mainly because he was aware of the risks. He'd never underestimated danger. This is how he'd made it that far. Till this day.

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About the author



Urania Sarri lives in Korinthia, Greece with her husband and sons. She holds a BA in English Language and Literature and an Msc in Teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL). She is now finishing her studies for a PhD in Linguistics. She specializes in teaching English to children and young adults and she totally adores her job. While doing so, she takes any opportunity to convey to her students the passion of reading. She is fascinated by paranormal stories and appreciates good romance whenever she gets her hands on it!

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