

The Fairy and the Seaweed Garden

By Landere Naisbitt

There was once a fairy named *Chondrus Crispus*. She lived where the currents were fast flowing and the mussel beds abundant and the eider ducks a favorite winter visitor. She didn't have wings like land fairy's do, but instead her arms were so strong that she practically flew through the water. She wore a brownish red tunic with fan-shaped ruffles and shoes made out of tiny slipper shells.

Chondrus had many friends in her underwater neighborhood. The mussels lived right next door and she knew them very well. She would sing to the beds of baby mussels and play with the eider ducks who dove down to eat the older mussels. She also lived near a lovely kelp forest, sea anemones that waved their star-like crowns, and spiky sea urchins clinging to the rocks.

Every morning Chondrus went for a swim to visit all of her friends, but then the rest of the day she worked in her seaweed garden. It was a beautiful garden of brownish red seaweed that clung with its holdfasts to the rocks and waved its delicate fronds in the current. She had a special mixture that she fed to the seaweed that helped them grow strong holdfasts to the rocks so that they wouldn't be torn off in a strong wave. She brought the most nutrient rich water to her seaweeds so they would absorb it and grow healthy. And she made sure they always got enough sunlight. If a piece of driftwood fell on them she would move it aside. She also sang to her seaweed when she wasn't doing anything else.

She loved her seaweed garden and spent many happy hours swimming among the fronds and under the water with the sunlight streaming down. And when the tide receded she would sit on the rocks near the seaweed and talk to the Big Blue Sky who was also her friend. Blue Sky was also the friend of everyone else under the sea. Every year around March 1st he would give the sea a gift. No one knew what it was going to be or where it would be found. But it always came nevertheless and everyone living under the sea got very excited at this time of year.

One year he gave the mussels their beautiful blue skin and another year he borrowed some sparkles from the moon and made the mica rocks silver and shimmering.

One day when Chondrus was visiting her friends the mussels, she heard some of the elders talking about the Sea Monster. As kind as Blue Sky was above, below the Sea Monster was equally as mean. She had heard tales of this monster and knew that some of her friends who had lived a long time had even seen the monster and knew how destructive he could be. One time he had come to their ecosystem and eaten all the mussels but one and it took many years for them to grow back. Another time he ate all the eider ducks in sight and they had practically gone extinct from the earth. Chondrus had never seen the monster or what he could do. He was more like a legend than reality to her.

But just then she heard the old mussel whisper, "he has been seen lurking at the south end of the kelp forest just this week! We must prepare for the worst." Chondrus shuddered and lay large pieces of seaweed over the baby mussels so they wouldn't hear their elders talking.

That night as Chondrus ate her seaweed pudding made from the carrageenan that was inside the seaweed and she drank a glass of boiled seaweed and honey, she thought more about the monster. Why did he want to destroy so much? What hardness inside of him made him that way and made his actions so dark? She couldn't think of why, can you?

The next morning Chondrus went for a swim in the kelp forest and when she returned to her seaweed garden.... a horrible sight met her eyes! All of the beautiful seaweed fronds were ragged and torn from their rocks floating on the surface of the water, wilted and dead. All except for one small plant in the corner of the garden which Chondrus didn't notice. As soon as Chondrus saw this she knew that the Sea Monster had paid her a visit. She quickly hid behind a large rock and whispered to herself, "I wonder where he is now!" She hid for quite some time but when nothing appeared, she swam out and over to her mussel friends to tell them the bad news.

What Chondrus didn't know was that the Sea Monster had actually been right near her and *she hadn't even noticed!*

Meanwhile, Blue Sky looked down to see where he would bestow his gift and he saw Chondrus crying and saw her beautiful seaweed garden all torn up except for one last little branch. He knew then what he needed to do. He bent down and put a little bit of his bright blue into the last frond of the seaweed in her garden.

When she returned later that day she stopped and stared. There was one last seaweed branch after all, and oh my it looked quite bright and shimmering! Now it was not only a beautiful red, but when the sun fell on it through the water, it had a blue iridescent glow, that made it look like a shining jewel. Chondrus was overjoyed and knew that Blue Sky had been to visit her. She swam up to the surface and called out a huge, "thank you" to the Sky then swam back under to tell her friends. And soon her seaweed garden grew back and from then on her seaweed and all seaweed that came to be known as *Chondrus crispus*, has an iridescent glow when the light from the sky is just right. And what became of the monster? When he saw the bright blue iridescent glow he was so blinded that he turned into a giant rock and he is now home to many of the barnacles that live in the fairy's underwater neighborhood.

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