

The soul mated couple had made it home safe and sound. Their bond even stronger now that they were connected in more ways than one.

Kaida had found herself wandering down to the beach more often than not, sitting with her feet buried in the sand while she watched the tide go out. It was early morning, the sun was just peeking over ocean.

She found herself thinking of the day of their soul ritual, humming softly to herself. After they were blessed by Qing, he had turned to her and said "There is something else you wish to ask of me.." How he knew, she would never be able to guess, but he was her clan leader, he knew his children, or it was just intuition. Kaida had bowed her head and asked a favor of her Elder. And he granted it. He cured her of her illness without hesitation. She would forever be in his debt.

So now Kaida sat on the beach, early in the morning, staring off into nothing. She hadn't tested the theory that her illness was gone, didn't want to be disappointed if it didn't work. She didn't mean to doubt Qing's healing abilities, but she had no one else to talk to, to see if it did work. All she had to do was go for a swim, yet here she sat, hesitating..

The early morning sun had just started to fill the home with light when Muireann slowly woke, reaching out for her love like she normally does, only to realize she wasn't there. Sitting up and rubbing the sleep from her eyes, Muireann looks around, before slipping out of bed and heading for the kitchen to see if Kaida was in there. Being slightly concerned, but still feeling her bond in her mind, Muireann looks out the window while making a cup of tea, and spots her mate sitting at the water's edge.

Carrying her tea, and a spare cup filled with Kaida's favorite, Muireann steps outside and slowly approaches her love, being careful not to spill the drinks, and sits beside her, offering her the cup. "What a beautiful morning... and the ocean looks nice to. Though I believe the best part of it is here beside me." Giving her a soft smile, Muireann turns back to the ocean to just sit, letting Kaida talk if she wants, but being supportive of her anyway.

Kaida was so lost in thought she jumped when her mate sat down beside her on the sand, bearing tea. She offered her a grateful smile, automatically leaning to steal her mate's warmth. Muireann's words comforted her like a blanket, wrapping around her to keep her warm. "I'm worried it didn't work. I don't mean to doubt Elder Qing and his healing magic, but what if I'm still sick? How will I carry our children if I tire so easily?" She had her knees pulled to her chest, tail laying limp in the sand behind her. Her forearms rested on her updrawn knee caps, hands cupped around the warm mug of tea. "It's easy.. Get in the water. I've never been scared of water before.. But now I am."

Leaning back against Kaida, Muireann listens quietly. Giving a small sway, to press against her, Muireann looks out over the beautiful ocean. "It is scary, to be faced with a big change you have been hoping for.. something you have been dreaming of, for your entire life, and it suddenly just falls into your lap? It does seem scary, to be suddenly healed from something that's been

following you for a long time... But you know what? You're one of the bravest Shiji I know, handling it day in and day out with a smile on your face, still seeing the beauty of life. If you can make it through all of that.. I know you can take the next step.."

Leaning in to kiss Kaida on the cheek, Muireann sets down her tea on a divet in the sand, having finished it in her talk, and stands up, before turning to offer her hand. "Do you trust me? that if you're not healed I will keep you safe if your heart does give you issues while swimming?"

Kaida listened to her mate, her words warming her up further, even if the doubt was niggling. "Of course I trust you. It's myself I don't trust." She muttered the last part more to herself, before she rested her hand in Muireann's and allowed her to pull her to her feet, knowing she would take her into the water. "Okay.. Let's see what happens. Sink or swim my ma would say."

Giving an encouraging smile, Muireann backs into to the water, pulling Kaida with her. "I believe in you, mate o'mine. We will face this together, and your trust in yourself will be proven. You worked hard to get to Qing, to ask, and this is your reward for that work and trust."

Needing to swim well before Kaida due to her height, Muireann back pedals, swimming backwards while never letting go of her hand, murmuring encouragements the whole way, till they were right over their favorite dive spot that they rarely visit.

Kaida gave an audible eyeroll, yes, there was definitely sound. "I didn't work that hard.. He was in Tianshu for once." She snorted at her own dry humor. But she put it aside as they wandered slowly into the sea, which was calm for once, lazy waves flowing gently along the surface. It was like Shengdao knew she needed today to be calm as she was at war with herself.

Once she was about chest deep, she sucked in some air and kicked off the bottom of the ocean, swimming towards her mate who was being an amazing supporter. Muireann was there with her every swim stroke.

Letting out a chuckle at the exasperated eyeroll, Muireann swims steadily, before treading the water. "Remember that dive spot you loved, that we picked our house for as it was the closest place to it, that you showed me on one of our first dates? How you rarely visited it because just getting out here was a strain..? Kaida, love, look down.." Knowing they were right over the beautiful reef, Muireann keeps her eyes on Kaida, smiling her soft smile, ready for her to be shocked and amazed, and to believe in herself.

Kaida swam with Muireann, easily keeping up, her chest didn't tighten one bit, nor did she feel out of breath at all. Once Muireann pointed out where they had managed to swim to, she didn't believe her until she looked down into the water. The beautiful coral reef glowed beneath the rising sun, fish and other sea life swam about. She gasped softly at her mate, shock and in awe. "Oh my God, Muireann! I.. I did it! We did it!" She treaded water, laughing, even gently splashing towards her mate.

Laughing her bell like laugh, Muireann gives a broad grin. "You did it Kaida, and you did amazingly. I'm so proud of you for facing that fear." Yelping at the splash, though still laughing, Muireann ducks down to swim behind her mate to splash back as grabs in a hug, careful to not take them under, but to enjoy the moment together pressed close.

"You know, I can only think of one way to make this day any better... Kaida love, would you like to exchange scales? Here, on the day you are free from the troubles of yesterday?"

"Thank you for helping me face my fears." She smiled at her other half, hugging her in return and still managing to float, obviously their tails lead a big part in propelling them to stay above water. Her head shook to get water out of her eyes, staring at Muireann in shock. She absolutely forgot about the scale exchange only because she was so wrapped up in her fears.

"Yes. Oh gosh yes, let's go to the beach and do that right now. I can't believe how wrapped up in my head I was. I am so sorry." They slowly swam to the shore, Kaida not wanting to overdue it.

Swimming next to Kaida, Muireann lets out a chuckle. "Next time we go to the reef, wanna race to see who can get there first?"

Stepping up onto the sandbank at the beach, Muireann stretches before dramatically flopping on the sand. Looking up at Kaida, Muireann pats the sand invitingly, so they can sit and exchange scales comfortably.

"I'll win, tails down!" She teased gently as they made it back to the beach. A smile lit up her face when Muireann flopped on the beach, ever so elegantly. Kaida knelt beside her lover, humming as she did when she was nervous. But it was a good nervous energy. This was a big step for them. "What scales do you want, cutie? Just costs a few of your own."

Letting out a hum, Muireann thought for a moment. "How about we exchange scales on our left ribs? That way it's close to the heart, and also protected... and the meaning for us goes both ways"

Blushing some, she looks up at her mate with a shy smile, wondering what Kaida might think of the sentimental thought.

"I think that is a perfect idea!" She grinned at her blush, nodding her head in agreement, it was absolutely perfect. Because they were at home, on their own private beach, Kaida was indeed nude. She usually swam nude unless they were out in public somewhere. She did have some decency. Sitting up a little more, Kaida reached to her left side and began pulling scales off of her body. There was a little hum of magic in the air, as if her body knew what was happening between the soul mated pair, so it didn't hurt. In fact, it was almost like a magnetic force, her scales literally wanted to be put to Muireann's body.

Smiling at Kaida's excitement, Muireann pulls her light coverings to the side. Unlike Kaida, she normally had a covering to swim to prevent her from going any lighter from sunbleaching. Feeling the magic hum, Muireann slowly pulls off the scales, to leave room for her mate's lovely

scales. Once she finished pulling a handful off, Muireann offers them to Kaida, to start putting on her own body, while taking Kaida's.

Taking a deep breath, Muireann starts placing the scales, giggling some at the ticklish magic sticking her partner's scales to her. She couldn't wait to see what she looked like after it was all said and done. She was so excited to have part of Kaida physically with her all the time, and she sends all the love and emotion she can down the bond, so Kaida can feel all she feels for her.

Kaida accepted Muireann's scales, holding them as if she was holding precious glass, scared of dropping them. Her pale scales would look beautiful along her ribs, and was a perfect reminder of the honor bestowed on her by her mate. Things were going so well. Kaida couldn't be anymore happier at this very moment.

Carefully, she brought those pale scales to her ribcage and gently put them on her body where her own scales were missing. The magic surrounded those little scales, holding them in place. Eventually they would integrate with her other scales, but that would take a little bit of time. Her head shot up at the wave of love and emotion sent to her from her mate, gently returning the feelings.

Giving a bright smile. Muireann pulls Kaida close to kiss deeply, loving the fact Kaida's blue would stand out against her, proudly showcasing her scales. What a great way to start their lives together.

Kaida wrapped her arms around her mate, kissing her in return, literally toppling them over in the sand. It was an easy task after all, her mate was small and adorable. She cooed happily, like shiji-long do, and laid contently with Muireann on the sand.