

# Song of the Sea Bonus Scene

By Deborah Grace White

*Timeline: During the events of Chapter Twenty-Eight*

## Queen Sula

Queen Sula gazed out at the ocean as she waited, her shawl pulled tightly over her hair. She didn't think any of the guests attending the wedding ceremony had recognized her as they passed. She'd taken care to stay back from the road, and not even her sons had looked her way as they'd strolled by, chatting cheerfully.

She could have attended the wedding openly, of course. It wasn't as though she was unwelcome. But it would have turned it into a state affair, in a way that even the attendance of her sons and her daughter-in-law hadn't done. And she knew that the young couple didn't want that.

Sula turned the phrase over in her mind: daughter-in-law. It was strange to comprehend that Farrin was married. Farrin, her carefree, sometimes foolhardy youngest son, who'd been the delight of her life since he was born.

Not that he was carefree anymore, at least not in the same way. Like others, she'd noticed the new heaviness that sat on him since his return from Selvana, the silent weight left by his years of exile and regret. He hid it well most of the time, but she was his mother. She saw. She noticed the anxiety that leaked out when something unexpected happened, or when there was the slightest hint of danger to Bianca. From what Sula had observed, Bianca seemed highly alert to these indicators, which was an encouraging sign. Hopefully Farrin wouldn't hide from his own fears, but would let his new wife help him to work through them. Otherwise they would crush him.

Sula sighed as she scanned the ocean unseeingly. She knew about being crushed by her fears. They all did. It wasn't true to say that Farrin's heavier demeanor sprung solely from his experiences in Selvana. He'd carried a burden for longer than that, since the accident that had caused Emmett's...affliction.

Sula shied from the thought. It had been a long three and a half years since that day, but she didn't want to grapple with that particular fear on what was supposed to be a happy occasion. She had no answer about what they were going to do, but she couldn't let the panic creep in. They would free Emmett somehow. They had to. For the sake of the kingdom as much as her son. Medulle couldn't have a king who was...well, what Emmett was.

He would need to marry one day, as Farrin had done, and provide heirs for the kingdom. But what woman would take him as he was? It was unthinkable. Her heart sank as she remembered that he would have to leave in only a few days for his regular exile to Lernvale. He wouldn't even let her accompany him. She'd tried once or twice, but he was adamant that he didn't want either of his parents to witness his disgrace. Farrin was the only one whose company he'd accept, and Farrin was leaving in the morning. He wouldn't be back in a week like Emmett would, however. He was to make his home in Selvana now, and they would see him only rarely.

Grief lanced through Sula. It stirred the agony that she'd suffered when Farrin had gone missing and they'd all assumed he was dead, and she clutched her middle with one arm in an attempt to hold in the remembered pain. She'd only just gotten her son back, and now she was to lose him again.

She straightened, firmly reminding herself she was being foolish. Farrin wasn't dead. He was going to have a happy life in Selvana, and would be within their reach. There would be no more periods of long silence—she and Johannes were determined to facilitate regular communications between the kingdoms, regardless of the practical challenges. And she liked Bianca. The sweet-natured young queen was good for Farrin. She seemed to keep him grounded, and she clearly adored him, which endeared her to Sula.

But still...one son was leaving forever, the other continued to languish under a terrible curse. Sula's heart was too heavy for a wedding, if truth be told.

Movement caught her eyes, and she realized that the bride was approaching along the cliff, walking all alone with light steps, her eyes shining and her hair flowing free behind her. She looked happy.

Sula remembered the night she'd seen Estelle dancing, and the unspeakable joy she'd sensed in every movement. She'd hardly known what prompted her to ask Estelle to dance at Emmett's birthday celebration. She'd just been overwhelmed by a longing to see that same joy in her son's life. He'd been so somber since Farrin's disappearance.

Sula's eyes sought the groom, and saw the unbridled delight on his face as he watched his bride approach. They were an unusual pair, but well-suited, she thought. They clearly loved one another, and it was hard to see the capable young guard ever letting harm befall his princess.

There was another unusual aspect about the union—Estelle's status as a princess. If Sula was honest with herself, that was what fascinated her most about the young mermaid-turned-human, and what had made her curious enough to come and watch the wedding. She'd been utterly astonished when she'd discovered Estelle's identity, and not just because the sirens of legend were becoming real before her very eyes. The idea that Estelle was a princess by birth, but had actively sought a humbler life, and embraced its increased freedom, was both confusing and intriguing.

Sula's own story had been the complete reverse. She'd been born into the lower end of Medulle's nobility, and had been determined to improve her status. She'd never meant to be grasping or greedy, and she'd always had great admiration for Prince Johannes, as he was then. It had seemed only natural to try to elevate her position as much as possible. Every other girl in the court had certainly also been angling for the honor.

It was only after many years that Sula fully comprehended the cost of her position. The pressure was constant, and at times unendurable. She didn't believe Emmett's affliction would ever have happened if they were a simple peasant family, and Farrin certainly wouldn't be marrying a foreign queen and leaving Medulle for good. And the luxuries of being queen came at a heavy price with the duties that meant no minute of Sula's life was her own.

She wouldn't change it if she could. That idea was much too complicated to pursue, because she wouldn't be who she was with a different life. She wouldn't have the family she had, or the experiences that had shaped her. She wasn't unhappy in her life, especially now her son had been returned from the dead. And she wasn't unhappy with her husband, either. But she did find herself wondering, what made Princess Estelle so sure at only eighteen that she didn't want the life of royalty? What had given her the courage and certainty to fight for a future utterly unlike the one planned for her?

Estelle had reached her groom now, but Sula was too far away to hear the words of the ceremony. Her gaze skimmed over the ocean, and she received a shock. There were forms bobbing in the water, with faces that weren't quite human, and hair that made Estelle's occasional blue streaks look unremarkable. One woman—or mermaid, she must be—had a full head of shocking purple hair. As Sula watched, the mermaid submerged her head below the surface for a moment, then popped up again, for all the world like a human taking a breath before diving into water.

A shiver went over Sula. Things were about to change, that much was certain. Medulle's future was unpredictable with the sudden commencement of diplomatic relations with an empire of merfolk. And there was already too much in Medulle's future that was uncertain. Her eyes rested on the heads of her two sons, one a riot of tawny curls, the other covered with dark brown hair cropped short.

Farrin was provided for. He would help rule a kingdom at his wife's side. It was time to get more serious about resolving Emmett's situation. He was twenty-three now, and at the very least he needed to provide himself with an heir. Grief threatened once again to rise in Sula, but she pushed it down, trying to think unemotionally. Princess Estelle might have the liberty of putting aside royal considerations for more personal ones, but Sula didn't. She needed to think strategically. If it was true that the curse might cut his life short if left to grow unchecked, they needed to focus on the future. Condition or no, Emmett needed to find a wife. Someone who wouldn't ask too many questions, who, like Sula had been, would just be glad to win the position of future queen.

Sula's gaze was sad as it passed from the glowing pair saying their vows to Farrin and Bianca, watching with arms around one another, then on to the lone figure of Emmett. He would probably have to marry for duty rather than love. He wouldn't hesitate to do it. His sense of duty was strong.

And yet, against all logic, an inkling of hope stirred in her heart as she returned her attention to Estelle and her groom. Their love was so sincere and unapologetic, it seemed to cast its light over everyone present. Perhaps there was a chance for Emmett. Perhaps there was a woman out there who could love him in spite of everything. If such a girl could be found, Sula would move mountains to make sure nothing stood in their way.

*Look out for more about Queen Sula and Prince Emmett in Song of Moonrise, the fourth book in The Singer Tales.*