

A Walk in the Dark  
by Kathmandu  
Copyright 2004

This story has a very interesting history. It is a fan fiction story of a fan fiction story that was written by a very good friend of mine, Cheetaur (Mark White). This story is based on his Sabrina Online (an online comic by Eric Schwartz) story arc that starts with “Tale of Two Sabrinas,” “Sabrina Squared” and continues with “Sabrina Cubed” and now the new “Sabrina to the Fourth Power”. I’ve helped him quite a bit on the stories and written and rewritten various sections of them, serving as editor and proof reader. This story is an expansion of a part of “Sabrina Squared” that I helped write. I have almost completely rewritten this so it can stand on its own without having to read the previous stories. I hope you enjoy. The characters Swallow, Titanic, Mother and Alex are © Mark White and are used with his permission.

The egg was enormous; its leathery shell glistened with a combination of gelatinous goo and blood. The mother lay dying on the laboratory table next to it. Her body was not designed to pass such a large abomination thus it had to be surgically removed. The surrogate mother hardly felt the scalpel as it sliced into her belly allowing the huge egg to be removed. The scalpel's sting was nothing compared to the misery the egg caused her as it swelled these last few weeks. In fact, to her death was a blessing and a relief. She could sense her oncoming death each time her reptilian tongue tasted the air in ever slowing flicks.

The 27 ft. anaconda died quietly as another creature worked furiously to save the life within the egg. The 6 ft. tall white weasel dressed in a lab coat and nothing else tried desperately to cut through the leathery shell but it resisted. The life inside stirred and shifted as the weasel made slow progress opening the shell. Soon, though, the shell parted and she smiled as the weasel saw the new life she had created. The white of the weasel's fur was soaked with fluids as she removed it from the shell and set the creature gently on the table. The weasel opened the creature's mouth and inserted a suction tube to remove the fluids within its lungs. Once drained, the weasel placed a breathing bag over the creature's muzzle and began pumping air into its body.

After a few tense minutes, the creature began breathing on its own. It gurgled and coughed as it desperately tried to clear its lungs. Soon its coughing subsided and its breathing became more regular. Its eyes opened for just a moment then closed again as it collapsed from utter exhaustion. Satisfied that the immediate danger was over, the weasel began cleaning it up and examining her latest creation.

What lay on the table was a skunk child that looked to be developmentally two years old. The creature was definitely female and its body was covered in wiry, almost quill-like fur. This strange covering was a total surprise since it was not a part of the original design. The weasel ran her paw through the fur wondering what other surprises her creation contained. That's when she noticed child's temperature. She was burning up. She took the skunk's temperature and found it to be way above normal.

The weasel spent the next hour trying desperately to lower the skunk child's body temperature before it cooked her brain. Nothing she tried worked and soon she resorted to placing the child in a tub of ice water. This came close to killing the little skunk so the weasel basically gave up. It wasn't the first time an experiment had failed and certainly wouldn't be the last. She debated whether to go ahead and euthanize the subject or wait and see if the little skunk would pull through on her own. She decided to wait.

The weasel placed an electric thermal blanket on the skunk's body to warm it back up after the ice bath that had nearly killed it. That's when she noticed something strange. The blanket warmed her body past its previous high and when the weasel pulled off the blanket she noticed the skunk's quill-like fur was standing on end. As she wondered about this new development, she noticed the creature's body temperature quickly dropped to its previous level. At that point the fur dropped back to its normal position. The

weasel was amazed. It seems her creation had a very unique way of maintaining its body temperature. Its quill-like fur acted like cooling fins.

Once the weasel decided this was her normal body temperature and she had stabilized well enough, she continued her examination to see what other surprises awaited. She was not disappointed after she got a look at the little skunk's x-rays. Her internal plumbing was a mess requiring extensive surgery. Oh well, not totally unexpected considering the creature was originally designed to be able to eat live prey larger than herself.

Satisfied that her creation was in no immediate danger, she walked over to the laboratory sink and pulled off her latex gloves and threw them into the refuse container, landing on top of the snake's lifeless body. They were all soon to be dumped into the incinerator when she was done for the day. Seconds later the lab coat joined the gloves in the trash. The weasel's white fur gleamed from the overhead lights as she stood naked next to the sink and washed her paws.

As she lathered the blood and gore from her fur, she thought about her latest creation. She really couldn't call it an absolute success, but then again none of her experiments were ever absolute successes. Genetic manipulation was an art more than it was a science and things go wrong more often than they go right. Oh well, that's why she had an incinerator. It was convenient for disposing of failures and destroying incriminating evidence. She smiled at that. Just about everything she did in this laboratory was highly illegal. Not that that bothered her in the least, in fact, it made what she did even more exciting. That and the idea of creating new life excited her so much that she began rubbing herself with her still damp paws. She knew she could never have children of her own but she could still create life. It was this that drove her to experiment. She was obscenely wealthy, astoundingly brilliant, utterly amoral, and more than just a little insane.

Later that evening in her bedroom she found herself in the arms of her favorite consort, a white tiger who served as her bodyguard when he wasn't sharing her bed. She moved along his body stopping every so often to lick and nip at his rock hard body. As she engaged in foreplay, a part of her mind was considering the little skunk down in her laboratory. She wondered what in the world she was going to name it. She considered and rejected several names. After licking her muzzle clean she had sudden inspiration and found the name she was looking for. It was deliciously clever and very apt since it described her monstrosity perfectly.

.....

“Swallow, Ti, come here please,” said Mother over her intercom to her creations who were studying in the library. A few moments later the two entered her office and stood quietly in front of her desk. Titanic or ‘Ti’ was the most imposing of the pair; she was almost six foot tall and stoutly built. Swallow was much smaller and wispy thin with the appearance of a young teenager. Mother was impressed by how well they were developing even though they were less than two years old. Ti was not only the larger of the two but also the smarter, her intellect rivaled her own. (secretly she feared she may

even exceed it) She had been born and within minutes she was assisting Mother with her own medical treatment. Swallow on the other hand was closer to normal in her development and intellect. She wasn't stupid by any means but she required learning at a slower pace because her brain was not nearly as modified as Ti's was. Still, she had progressed well considering and making Ti her tutor was a stroke of genius.

The two of them stood nervously waiting for Mother to speak. They were beautiful in their fashion, their fur healthy and shimmering. Ti took to wearing blue jeans and t-shirts simply because with her highly muscled body, anything else looked silly on her, especially something like the skirt and blouse Swallow was wearing. Titanic was a disappointment in regards to her experiments. For one damned thing, she was too smart and powerful to manipulate and she had a far too strong sense of right and wrong to do her bidding reliably. That was where Swallow came in.

Swallow was her trump card when dealing with Ti. Swallow required a great deal of support and training to allow her to live and grow as a person. Mother used the threat of revoking her care as a tool to keep Ti in line. Ti had bonded with her "sister" early on and made it her mission to nurture and protect the little monster. Mother smiled at that; Swallow was indeed a monster although her outward appearance hid the fact well. She was more snake than mammal, designed to be a super soldier/killing machine that could eat its opponent whole. Unfortunately Swallow was a failed experiment as well; she was, in a word, too "nice."

Mother was all too familiar with the problem; she had dealt with it for years. Some furs, like Ti for instance, could be tortured and drugged, eventually turned savage and brutal. Swallow on the other hand would just curl up and die. Although she knew far more about genetics than any other being on the planet, she still had no idea why some furs were like that. Since both experiments resulted in "failure," she had abandoned that element of her research and there wasn't any point in creating uncontrollable beasts or a savage killer genus with the strength of ten. She didn't need the competition. That and she was learning quite a bit from the pair plus she had grown fond of them in a way. It was a shame she had to kill them.

"You called for us?" Ti asked, becoming suspicious just standing there.

"Ti, Swallow, I need you to pack for a trip. You both are taking the yacht to the beach house for the season. I think we need a change of pace. Be ready by tomorrow morning. You both will take the yacht along with Alex and I will fly out to meet you later as I have business to attend to before I can leave. We will have a wonderful time I'm sure."

Ti raised an eyebrow but said nothing. Swallow was excited but Ti was suspicious especially since they had never left the armed and guarded compound before and made only brief day trips on the yacht. Swallow's stutter became more pronounced when she was excited, "W...wh...when...?"

“You will leave with Alex after breakfast. Be sure to pack your swimsuits and summer clothes. We will be there for a few weeks so pack accordingly. Ti, be sure Swallow is ready in time.”

“Yes, of course Mother.”

“Well, go on. I have work to do.”

“Yes, Mother,” Ti said as she took Swallow’s hand and turned to leave. “Come along Swallow, let’s get ready.” She glanced back at Mother and saw something but she didn’t know what it was. It made her uneasy but without information there was little she could do. She knew better to question Mother; she didn’t want to provoke her into hurting Swallow again. It had turned bad a couple of weeks ago and Swallow bore the brunt of some experiments as a result of Ti refusing to do what Mother wanted. It had hurt their relationship but Ti couldn’t do what Mother asked. Although Ti was probably more male in appearance than female, she was not homosexual. She would not willingly submit to Mother, no matter what. It was bad enough to be a creation of this demented fur called Mother; it is quite another thing to be some sort of sexual plaything as well.

Ti was adept at keeping Mother from doing too much to them but she couldn’t stop everything. She fostered friendships with the staff whenever possible in hopes of swaying their actions if Mother ever went too far. She hoped she would never need to test her efforts but with Mother you had to prepare for anything. She shrugged and left to pack, hoping things would turn out in the end.

Mother watched the pair leave, and then called in her assistant, Alex. He entered and smoothly sided up to her at the desk, smelling the strong scent of arousal from his boss. It was nothing unusual; she was continuously “in heat” with the body she wore. Alex slid next to her and she looked up at him. “It’s getting worse; I think I will be going into hibernation soon.”

“I see,” he said.

“Alex, we have to clean up our business here and close down everything. I’ll be slipping into hibernation in the next few days and who knows how long it will last or what I will look like when I emerge. It could last a year or two or span decades, I have no way of knowing. I have prepared for this so it is of no concern to you except I require you to dispose of the experiments. The canisters, the livestock and most importantly, Titanic and Swallow.”

“Are you sure you want to do that? The staff has grown attached to them and may resent their deaths.”

“Alex, I don’t order my creation’s deaths thoughtlessly. Their bodies contain my death sentence if they are ever discovered, they know our operation and they can bring it down with a single x-ray. Ti is dangerous to all of us and without my presence she will do her

best to wreck everything. She is morally opposed to everything we do and only my will and threats to Swallow manage to keep her inline. Killing Swallow is more kindness than anything. She couldn't survive long in the world, her mind is too fragile and her body is monstrous. I need you to take the yacht out and scuttle her, making sure Ti and Swallow perish in the "accident". Their food will be drugged so they will feel nothing Alex, I promise."

Alex was not entirely surprised by Mother's orders but her words still stung. He had done things that would earn him his own corner in hell but he wasn't in the habit of killing children, especially Ti and Swallow. He also knew that he was dead if he didn't carry out the order; Mother never tolerates disobedience... ever. "I will see to it if that is what you wish." He sighed and turned to leave.

"Wait a moment Alex, can you stay and ..." Mother whispered huskily as she once again became aroused and in need.

"I'm sorry, I want to my dear but I'm afraid the body isn't up to it tonight. I'm sure you can understand, just this once."

"I don't understand but I will accept your refusal. I'm sure Philippe and perhaps Janet can join me instead although I would prefer it to be my Alex..."

"Life is like that sometimes, the flesh is weak although the spirit is willing." Alex said as he walked out of the door.

.....

Ti awoke slowly, her head spinning as if drugged. Knowing Mother, she likely had been. She opened her eyes and looked around the cabin. She remembered getting on the yacht but not much else. The cabin was beautiful in every detail save one; it had about 10 cm of water sloshing on the deck. The bloody boat was sinking! She jumped up and tried to get out of the cabin but found she was chained to the bed. She pulled and because of her exceptional strength the chain parted easily. She stood and went for the door but found something tied to her leg. It was a string. She pulled on it and parted it easily, following it to a canvas bag on the other end of the bed. She opened it and found it contained an auto inflating raft and a note from Alex. She scanned it quickly as she carried the raft to the cabin door.

It said Mother had ordered their deaths and he had no choice but to carry out her orders. She never said he couldn't leave a raft for them nor did she specify how strong the chains had to be. Besides, it probably didn't matter since she would probably made arrangements to eliminate him as well and he would likely be dead by the time she read the letter. It then went on to say Swallow was in the cabin across the hall and reminded her time would be short. He then closed the note by saying he was sorry he couldn't do more for them.

She threw down the note and crashed through the cabin door, splintering it like dry toothpicks. She cried out for her sister as she smashed Swallow's cabin door. She entered and saw she was chained to the bed just as she had been and she was very groggy. Ti grabbed the chain and broke it with little more than a tug. She had to hurry as the yacht was sinking quickly. She grabbed Swallow and half carried, half drug her out of the cabin.

They made their way to the main deck and found a disheartening sight; the water was rough and was going to make getting off the yacht a lot harder. She stood Swallow next to the rail as she put the raft into the water and it inflated as soon as it hit the ocean. Ti grabbed Swallow and jumped in next to the raft. The water woke Swallow and she struggled in Ti's grasp. Ti swam as hard as she could to the surface, the weight of Swallow turning out to be a bit more than she expected. She was tired, the cold and the drugs sapped her energy quickly and it became more and more of a struggle to hold on to the struggling weight of her sister. That's when the unthinkable happened and Swallow slipped from her grasp.

Ti's heart skipped a beat in horror as she felt her drop from her grasp as she tried to keep them both on the surface and heading for the raft. She grabbed for her quickly sinking sister and missed. She took a partial breath and dove for her as she sank into the murk. A silvery stream of bubbles was the only clue Ti had of where she might be and she desperately swam to catch up with her rapidly sinking body. She swam as hard as she could and searched the gloom with her water-blurred vision for any sign of her but found nothing. Her lungs were burning for air yet she kept going, the terror of what was happening driving her ever deeper. She reached her limit and beyond, a normal fur would surely have drowned by this point and Ti was not far from it herself. She could go no further, her arms were becoming numb and the darkness was overpowering. She had to return to the surface or join her sister in death at that point, it might already too late.

She drove to the surface as hard as she could, grey blotches swam before her eyes as the water became lighter but the surface was still so far away. Her mind couldn't hold but two thoughts, the burning need for life giving air and the horror of failing her sister. The loss was ripping at her more than the lack of air and she was on the verge of crying out and drowning anyway.

Moments later and she broke the surface with a huge ragged breath followed by a cry filled with horror and regret, loss and hopelessness. The waves battered her as she struggled on the surface catching her breath. She was tired, so tired and cold. She spotted the raft and with the last of her reserves she swam to it. She pulled herself in and passed out. The last thought before oblivion took her was the look of hopeless terror on Swallow's face as she slipped into the darkness.

.....

Swallow awoke to a sound of wood breaking and her sister Ti calling her name. She tried to open her eyes but they refused to open more than a bit and it was blurry and

unfocused. Her mind spun in a groggy fog as she tried to wake up. She could hear water sloshing and suddenly she felt someone grab her hand then something breaking. She had an impression of a shiny rope but she wasn't sure.

Ti's voice was far away but insistent. She said the boat was sinking. Swallow was confused by that because as far as she knew she was back at the mansion. She could hear the water as Ti sloshed through it but it reminded her of the upstairs bathroom when it broke and overflowed. Why were we upstairs, their room was on the ground floor? Ti grabbed her and made her stand. She could feel the cold water on her feet but it was just the cold tile of the mansion on bare paws. She staggered as Ti pulled her along, dragging her more than anything.

Was she going to see Mother? "I... I don't want... want to see her, she... scares me..." Swallow said but Ti couldn't hear. Swallow was still upset with Mother over her making her eat those live bunnies. The trauma of that was still with her, the torment of eating her pets, one by one. She cried out as the experience came back to her but it came out as a low moan. She was confused, why was she here and not in the cell? Wait, Mother had let her out when the last rabbit was gone... Why were her feet wet? She felt nauseous and dizzy; the floor was moving as Ti helped her walk out onto the upper deck of the yacht. Why were they on the yacht?

Swallow's mind cleared a little as did her vision as they half ran/ half swam out of the cabin. She could see a grey sky and a rough sea. The yacht was sitting in the water at an odd angle and she could only stare dumbfounded at the situation as Ti threw something into the water. She and Ti were suddenly swimming as the deck went out from under them. Ti dragged her over the rails and into the sea.

The sudden shock of being underwater cleared some of the cobwebs out of her mind as she struggled in Ti's grasp. She couldn't breathe and the open ocean terrified her. Suddenly she was panicking in Ti's grasp, struggling in blind terror. Suddenly she was free but instead of going to the surface, she sank. Her terror was overpowering her, the panic forcing what little thought there was aside as she thrashed the water. She could see Ti swim for her but she sank so fast she only caught a glimpse of her horrified face before she dropped into the blue murky depths and forever out of her sister's grasp.

Swallow fell. The air trapped in her fur would bubble free leaving a trail she could watch as she dropped toward the bottom. It grew darker and darker as she fell and her terror and hopeless caused her to cry out, losing what little air she had left causing her to sink even faster. She was drowning, her drug befuddled mind told her as she sank into the depths.

She knew from her studies with Ti she was going to drown, she wasn't aquatic. Neither of her genetic source stock, skunk or snake, could live in the sea. She knew it was hopeless, her heavy body dragging her to her doom. The cold was horrible as the light of the surface dimmed and darkness shrouded her. The terror was too much and she passed into oblivion, her body falling into the gloom like a slow motion skydiver with no hope of a parachute.

.....

Swallow woke sometime later, her body lying on the bottom of the deep sea. Waking up was a big surprise for her since she knew she should be dead. It occurred to her that perhaps she was dead and this was the afterlife. It was certainly cold and dark enough to be some pit in hell but no, she felt alive. She could feel the cold currents of water flowing around her as she moved. She picked herself up off the bottom and sat up.

She was surrounded by darkness, she thought it was complete at first but a few moments of really looking she noticed there were small lights everywhere. There were areas of greenish blue glowing in every direction. The lights were constantly moving, darting in and out and around her. She could tell they were fish, but like no fish she had ever seen in books or TV. She screamed as one came close to her face and she scrambled away from it.

Her movement had scared off the curious fish but Swallow was more terrified when she discovered her scream was silent. That was when she noticed that her body was flooded and she was breathing water in and out of her. She was about to slip into panic until she thought about it and took stock of her situation. She was cold, very cold but it didn't affect her except make her uncomfortable. She was able to move without pain or stiffness. Her fur tingled as it did when she fed on big meals but it wasn't anything she couldn't handle, wasn't even uncomfortable really. She could see, after a fashion, and the longer she looked around the better her eyes were at seeing in the blue green glow of the sea life around her. Her panic subsided, a little anyway.

She was breathing underwater; something she knew was fantastic and should have been impossible. She tried to speak but nothing came out. She then tried holding her breath and she noticed it didn't make any difference at all. She held it so long the water warmed inside her and didn't feel so cold. It helped, a little, so she stopped breathing the cold seawater. How she was breathing was beyond her, why she was still alive she had no doubt. She was a monster, a monster created in a lab.

Before, she knew she was different but it never occurred to her before that she wasn't just different. She was monstrous in ways no one could imagine. She cried then, silently and what tears there were washed away by the cold sea. She curled into a ball and cried herself to sleep on the bottom of the ocean.

.....

The one thing Swallow learned there that first day on the bottom of the sea was that you can be terrified and feel sorry for yourself only so long. Since dying wasn't on her agenda anytime in the near future and there didn't seem to be anything to really be afraid of except the darkness, the mind and body can be paralyzed in fear for a relatively short time.

She had no idea of the passage of time, how could she? She figured it may have been a while though since she was becoming hungry. Since she had eaten a big meal two days

ago and that she was hungry now told her she had been in the sea around 24 hours or more. She sat up and looked around trying to think what to do. She knew swimming up would be no use; she was just so dense that she would sink instantly. She tried it anyway and she could swim up well enough but she could only swim for so long before her arms tired and as soon as she rested she would sink back to the bottom. She cried again; defeated.

As she stood on the bottom, swirls of sand would block what little light she had so she stepped out of the cloud. It was difficult and awkward but it could be done. She tried it again and she found she could shuffle well enough. She thought about it a bit and tried hopping along the bottom and found it wasn't impossible to guide herself along. She tried making great leaps and found that it did work. She couldn't see what she was jumping into and it scared her to do it more than a few times. This proved to herself she could move about and wasn't totally helpless.

The hopping gait she adopted didn't take much energy and she knew she was covering more distance than she could on land, she also realized she had no idea which way to go. Hell, she didn't even know what ocean she was in for that matter. Mother made sure no one knew their exact location; she made her two creations stay indoors on clear nights just so Ti couldn't find their position using the stars. Thinking of Ti made her sad; she was so smart and strong compared to her. She would think she was dead and would be so sad because of it. She didn't want Ti to be sad.

She decided to walk. She had no idea which way to go or even if she could do more than walk in circles but she would try for her little sister. She smiled at the idea of Ti as her little sister. Ti was a few hours younger than her but she was born with full memories and was very, very smart. She was also huge and strong, like a man but was still a girl. Ti treated her like a little sister, helping her learn, study and keep Mother from doing horrible things to her. She knew that she was far from stupid herself but she had to learn everything from scratch. She was just a few years old but she was like a young teenager in her development because Ti helped her learn quickly.

Swallow picked a direction and hopped. She knew it might take a long time to walk to shore but she would try for her sister so she wouldn't be sad. Besides it was better than just sitting around doing nothing. She settled into a rhythm after a while, her mind not thinking of anything particular, just running on automatic. She would hop for a few hours then just walk to break up the monotony. She would walk along, trying not to think of how impossible this was but also to keep from being scared. The darkness, the shapes moving in the dark, the fact she couldn't see where she was stepping most of the time, the terror of being so lost and beyond anyone's help terrified her if she thought about it, so she tried not to think at all, become numb instead and keep going. She knew there was another side to her, the snake side. She hated that side of her, the snake, the monster. It took over sometimes, usually when she was eating something large. It knew what to do and she was all too happy to let it take control. The snake was far more at home in the water than the skunk, her snake ancestors spent most of their time in the murky water of South America so it didn't mind so much.

As she walked the bottom, she grew more and more hungry. The snake took over that as well. Swallow was shambling across the sea floor, her mind lost in that foggy place that she went when she did unpleasant or really boring things. Without warning, she lunged out and snapped up a fish swimming by. It startled her, and it also scared one part of her thinking she would do something like that without thinking of it; another part of her wasn't hungry anymore. She cried.

.....

She had no idea how long she had been in the sea, she just knew it had been a long time. Her clothes had long ago rotted off of her. She had settled into a routine, move along the bottom until she was tired then stop and rest. She had grown accustomed to her life in the ocean. It wasn't bad really, just very lonely. She had long ago grown used to the cold and the semi-darkness. She wasn't ever completely in the dark anymore; she had picked up a coating of glowing green algae on her fur. It provided a bit of light and attracted plenty of curious fish for her to eat.

She wasn't completely alone down there, sometimes larger fish would follow her around to eat the fish she would attract but couldn't eat herself. A glowing blue-green jellyfish followed her around too, which she liked because it lit up the water around her quite nicely. She soon named it "Edison" since it lit up the darkness like a lightbulb. She wondered why it followed her at first since it didn't seem to eat fish. She found out when she woke up unexpectedly to find Edison feeding off of her. Ed's tentacles would pass over her glowing fur and would catch tiny floating things that were in her fur. She didn't mind, if he stayed around to make a light show for her she wouldn't begrudge him a meal. Not that she could stop him if she did mind, she had to sleep sometime. Her fur wouldn't let the stinging tentacles hurt her so she soon learned to ignore Ed while she slept.

As she walked along she realized something she hadn't noticed before, it was gradually growing brighter. Not a lot, and it was so gradual that she didn't notice until she thought about it. She could be going up a slope but since she was hopping and moon walking underwater, she wouldn't notice unless it was fairly steep. She could see more of what was around her in the deep blue murk but it was significantly better than the inky blackness of when she first fell in. It made her feel hopeful and she picked up her pace a little.

It wasn't a few days later that Edison disappeared as she slept. She was heartbroken, he had been with her for a long time and she missed him. She considered his disappearance as she walked and really felt miserable for a long time afterward. It came to her as she realized there were no glowing fish anymore. She figured she was too shallow for Ed and he would die if he followed. She felt better then, not a lot, but some.

.....

It was day, she knew that. She was happy. There was night and day now, something she had not seen in...how long? It seemed like a year? Maybe three? She had no idea. In the daytime she could almost see the bottom although there wasn't much to see really. She was looking ahead of her, not really paying attention when she saw... a footprint in the sand. It was a trail of them in fact. They were like heavy boot prints in the silt. She followed them, looking to see if the owner of the boots was still around.

She didn't find the print maker but she did find out why they were there. She almost crashed into the wellhead of the deep sea oil well. It was large and covered with pipes and machinery. She was in a state of shock since it was the first made thing she had seen in a very long time. She was afraid at first because it was so alien compared to what she had been seeing for so long. She looked at it for a while, memories of machines and vehicles returned to her as she circled the thing.

She didn't quite know what it was other than it was from the surface. Her examination also showed her something else; the wellhead was connected to the surface by a pipe, a rather large one in fact. She hopped up on top of the equipment and examined the pipe a bit closer. She could put her arms around it and lock her fingers easy enough. She tried climbing it and found it wasn't too difficult if she locked her fingers together and pushed up with her feet much like Pacific Islanders climb coconut trees. The problem was when she would become tired and needed to rest, if she lost her grip she would fall back down to the bottom like a stone. She knew she wouldn't make it to the surface without something to help hold her.

She let go of the pipe and pushed with her legs so she would land away from the machinery. She did a slow fall to the sea floor and settled a few yards away in a small cloud of silt. She had a hunch she might find something or perhaps think of something to help her climb the beanstalk. She walked around the wellhead in ever expanding circles searching the sea floor. She found a lot of things, thousands of inch-long metal welding rods, coffee cups, rusted metal parts and bits of cable and wire. The wire was what she figured she needed but none of what she found was more than a couple of inches long or the copper had corroded into brittle uselessness. She was about to give up since she was far away from the equipment and the trash thinned to almost nothing.

She hopped around looking and examining anything that might help her reach the surface. She considered trying to break the machine to get them to send someone down to fix it but it seemed to be built so that nothing could break it. At least nothing with her strength and lack of tools. She figured she might hang around a while and see if they send someone down to look at it but it might be months between inspections. Food was plentiful around the wellhead so it wouldn't be a hardship to stay near it. She was considering that option when she was suddenly tangled in something. She looked at her feet and found a length of wire wrapped around her foot.

It was a length of aluminum wire a few feet long twisted loosely around her. She untangled the wire and straightened it out. It was long enough to wrap around her arm a couple of times and twist it securely and go around the pipe and have enough to hold

onto. She hopped back to the machinery and swam up to the pipe. She twisted the wire around her left wrist and secured it so her hand couldn't slip through. She then reached around the pipe and grabbed the wire then leaned back.

She pushed with her legs and moved the wire up along the pipe, similar to a power pole lineman. She was able to easily move up the pipe this way and stop and rest if she needed to. She tried it and she was amazed at how far she could move up with each push. She had a good start already so she just kept going. Up and up she went, stopping to rest occasionally then going on. She did this for hours on end, the water growing lighter as she climbed.

Something happened to her as she climbed, something she hadn't had in a very long time. She had hope; hope that this nightmare would end. She thought about seeing the sun again, breathing air and talking to another person again. She was happy for the first time since falling in, she couldn't wait to get to the surface and it made her climb a bit faster.

She was discovering something else as she neared the surface, there were currents, water moving roughly around her. The pipe moved a little as she climbed, swaying from the movement of water. She had felt currents on the bottom but they were normally gentle and moved along the bottom. Here they swirled around her in all directions; it was a novel sensation for her. She moved toward the daylight in her slow methodical way buffeted by the currents.

Hours later the light from the surface changed, it grew dimmer as she moved upward. At first she was afraid until she remembered that it was probably night on the surface. Day and night were something she would have to get used to again when she returned to the air, people and the sky.

She was getting close, she could hear the surface. There was the sound of surf and splashing all around her as she climbed. She was surprised by the amount of movement and noise as she came closer to the air. It was dark again, night on the surface but she didn't care, she knew darkness and this was nothing. She was concerned by the buffeting she was getting as she climbed. She held onto the wire tightly as currents would sweep over her then subside. Sometimes the current would push her upwards and she would use it to rise along the pipe a long way. The noise was deafening.

Then it happened, she was in the air. There was this sudden up-rush of water that pushed her up then receded. She felt the wire bite into her flesh as the water pulled at her as she hung onto the pipe. Suddenly the water was gone and she was hanging onto the pipe with all the strength she had. She felt the wind bite into her and the rain pelt her like thrown gravel. It was a storm, a terrible one from what she could tell. She looked around and could dimly see lights from the offshore oil rig but the rain and blown surf made it nothing but bright spots in the grey blackness.

She knew this was a bad time to be on the surface so she decided to go back down and wait out the storm. She looked down in time to see the monstrous wave rise out of the sea

and swallow her. Once again she was underwater but she was also out of the wind and stinging rain. The water tore at her body as she clung to the pipe. She eased her grip on the wire and let the current pull her down into the sea so she could rest and wait until the storm was over.

As the sea pulled her down, the wire was dragging across the pipe as she slid down. Unfortunately the pipe wasn't smooth, there were welded seams at certain spots along the pipe and each one she passed nicked the wire and as she pulled on the wire to slow herself down, it parted. She wasn't too worried at first, there was still plenty of wire left and she wasn't dropping too fast. She swam and slowed herself but then she realized the current and waves were dragging her away from the pipe. It was dark and only the lights from the oil rig provided illumination and it wasn't enough. Within moments she lost sight of the pipe and began to panic. She remembered the lights and struggled to swim to the surface so she could see the platform and hopefully keep it in sight.

She struggled to the surface and was battered relentlessly by the waves and rain. She looked around but because of the storm and huge waves, she couldn't see the rig at all. She cried out in frustration and loss, water spraying from her mouth since her body was flooded and not a sound emerged. Before she could take a breath, a wave towered over her and pulled her under. She swam as hard as she could but she knew it would be hopeless. She was just too heavy to reach the surface again as she was tiring and sinking further and further into the storm raged sea. She curled up and cried as she sank back into the deep; tossed and carried miles away from the oil rig.

.....

Months had passed since her encounter with the oil rig. It had taken her days to land on the sea floor and resume her slow trudge across the bottom. There had been a significant change in her surroundings from the time she landed. The bottom was tilted. Not a lot, but she could tell and it gave her a direction to hop/walk in. She could also tell it was getting shallower with each day of travel. Not a lot but it was far better than the abyssal plain she had started her journey on.

It was day when she saw them. She could see quite well in the daylight that filtered through the deep water. To anyone on the surface it would still be a dark blue dimness but to her it was like a bright, sunny day. She heard them first, their calling an eerie clicking. She had heard the sounds often enough in the past but she had no idea what made the noise. Today she found out.

They came from above, moving slowly toward her following a cloud of shrimp she had walked through earlier. The whales were huge and terrifying, the largest things she had seen since falling in. She stared at them as they glided by, both scared and in awe as they swooped through the shrimp. She didn't know what they were except they were some sort of whale. One came so close she could see the barnacles crusting parts of its body. It made her think of the glowing algae on her own body and could sympathize a little. The whale swam by scooping up shrimp with its mouth open taking no notice of her as it fed.

She was amazed at the size of the creatures and reminded her of how small and vulnerable she was. She had been relatively unmolested in her trek across the ocean but she knew it was probably just because she didn't look like food to most things in the sea.

Soon the whales had their fill or grew bored and moved on; their clicking calls still to be heard but growing faint with distance. She smiled some as she continued on, glad to have seen the magnificent beasts. It was a welcomed diversion in her very dull routine. She got herself together and continued on.

A few hours later she came across something on the sea floor she was quite unprepared for. At first she ran into an inky black cloud blocking what little light there was available at the depth she was at. She walked around it, trying to avoid the cloud as best she could. She was curious about what it was, she had seen some creatures produce ink clouds to escape danger but they were small clouds. This was huge and she thought at first it might be an oil seep. She had run into them occasionally, crude oil would seep up out of the sea floor creating similar clouds but it always tasted like oil and would cling to her fur.

This was different, it actually tasted good. It seemed familiar in fact but she couldn't place it. She kept the cloud to her right as she walked around it, looking to perhaps see its source. A few steps later the ink cleared and she nearly walked into this huge eye. She stumbled back in terror as she watched this huge eye stare at her. The ink obscured whatever it was except for this eye the size of a dinner plate. If she could have screamed she would have but there was just this silent movement of water out of her body. She swam and ran as best she could away from the nightmarish eye and evil black cloud.

She scurried away from the creature as fast as she could, her heart pounding in her chest. She looked behind her to see if there was any pursuit but found there was none. She slowed then stopped as she was growing tired. Swimming and hopping took a lot out of her if she did it too fast, probably due to how she was breathing.. or not as the case may be. She watched the eye from a safe distance trying to calm herself before she passed out.

The ink cleared as she rested and she saw what the eye belonged to, it was a squid the size of a school bus. Its tentacles were wrapped around something she couldn't see in the gloom but it was struggling. She could also see it was bleeding into the water. Swallow had seen plenty of squids on her journey and had eaten her share of them. She knew they had hard beaks at the center of their tentacles that could inflict serious bites into whatever got near enough. This huge squid had something in its grip that was almost as big as it was and the beast was inflicting terrible wounds into whatever it was attacking.

Moments later she saw what it was and her heart sank as she saw it was one of the whales she had seen earlier. The giant squid had its tentacles wrapped around the whale's mouth and was taking bites out of the whale's side. The whale was trying to scrape the monster off of itself by using the bottom but the silt was too soft. It would struggle then grow quiet then try again. It then tried to swim up but the squid would fight it and force it back to the bottom.

Swallow watched in horror as the two titans struggled for life at the bottom of the sea. They would struggle for a while then fall back, and then the whale tried again, this time putting all its energy into scraping the monster off. In doing so it swam close to where Swallow was standing and she made herself into a ball and dropped to the seafloor hoping she wouldn't be crushed. They landed near her, silt rising as they fought.

Swallow didn't know much about whales, she had only cursory knowledge of them really. She had only been two years old when she fell in and she was still learning to read and write. To her they were just another type of fish in the sea. That is until she looked up and saw the whale's eye. They had landed so close that when she looked up the two of them were just a few yards from where she cowered. In contrast to the emotionless eye of the squid, the whale was plainly in terror and pain. She knew all about terror and pain and she could see the spark of a greater intelligence behind the whale's eye.

She couldn't just stand there and do nothing, seeing the absolute terror in the whale's eye but what could she do? She was too small and weak to do anything; the two monsters could crush her like a grape. She watched the giant squid, its tentacles wrapped around the whale, both almost motionless. The squid merely had to wait for the air breathing whale to drown and was in no hurry to do anything, the whale growing weak from the bites, lack of air and the struggle to free itself. Swallow watched the huge eye of the squid for a moment then came across an idea on how to influence the fight in the whale's favor.

She unwrapped the aluminum wire she had found near the oil rig that she had wrapped around her waist like a belt and doubled it over then folded the wire until it formed a handle. The result was a two tined fork she could use like a knife. The wire was thick and strong enough to do some damage, especially to delicate tissue. She hopped closer to the fighting creatures then she bunched herself in preparation watching and timing her move. Suddenly she sprang up from the bottom using her powerful legs to make herself into a torpedo and leaped at the great squid's huge eye.

The squid could see the glowing creature dart toward its eye but could do nothing since its tentacles were currently wrapped around its enemy. The creature stuck its eye with its stinger and it was in terrible pain. It forgot all about the whale and its only impulse was to protect its eye and stop the attack. It let go of the whale and snaked its two powerful long feeding tentacles toward the new menace. It grabbed the glowing creature and tried to use its powerful suckers to grip it and tear it apart but it couldn't gain a surface to produce suction. It was slippery and the best the squid could do was try to crush it but that didn't work either since it was too small to really wrap around and crush. The squid held onto it and decided it could use its beak to bite it.

Swallow was in trouble. The squid had done what she had intended and let the whale go but it moved so quickly it managed to catch her in its tentacle. It tried to use its suckers to latch onto her flesh like it did on the whale and tear out chunks of skin but her fur prevented the squid from gaining a seal to rip her apart. It then wrapped its tentacle

around her several turns and tried to squeeze but Swallow was too small for it to do much. She struggled in its grip wishing she still had her aluminum wire fork but it was still in the eye of the squid where she left it only a moment ago. Her stubby claws were useless as she tried to scratch at the tentacle.

She looked and saw she was being drawn to the squid's mouth and terrible beak. The fear in her caused her to lose control and dislocate her jaw bone and try to bite at the tentacle in desperation. Although she could open her mouth wide enough to swallow a person whole, she couldn't bite down very hard, not enough to tear chunks of flesh like she wished she could at that moment. She was close enough now the other, shorter tentacles were writhing on her, trying to hurt her but not able to get a grip to do it. She could see she was only a few feet away from the beak and she was struggling hard to get away but it was no use, it was like she had a boa constrictor around her. She closed her eyes as she knew any second the giant squid's beak would bite into her, ripping her apart.

She felt a great surge of water and suddenly there was nothing. She opened her eyes and saw a black wall in front of her for a fraction of a second then stillness. She looked around and saw the squid's two long tentacles and a few of the shorter ones floating around her but no sign of the rest of the squid. She extracted herself from the disembodied tentacle and swam away from it as fast as she could. A movement in the corner of her eye caused her to look up to see the blurry shape of the sperm whale heading for the surface. Soon she could hear its calling and the far off clicks of the others. She smiled as she saw it speed to the surface, soon lost in the murky blue of the deep.

She rested a few minutes on the bottom collecting herself. She watched the severed tentacles slowly drift to the bottom with her. Soon scavengers would swarm to them and so would sharks. She recovered enough after a few minutes to start to swim off but thought about it a second. She turned around and gathered some of the tentacles, the smaller ones, and ate them. Since they were thicker than her arm, she had to dislocate her jaw to swallow the three she had gathered. No use letting them go to waste and she felt she had earned the meal.

She bounded away as soon as she had finished so she could put some distance between her and the scavenger's buffet. She reflected on how close a call that was and how in the long run it was rather foolish. Didn't gain much other than a meal and that wasn't ever really a problem in her journey anyway. As she bounded along the bottom lost in thought she noticed dark shapes all around her, pacing her slow progress. Could it be more of the giant squids, lurking in the dark waiting to strike? Her heart was in her throat as she looked desperately to find a hiding place. There was nothing but the loose silt of the bottom all around her. She stopped and tried to see what was following her but there was nothing but quiet dark shapes all around her. She began to shake in terror.

She stopped and turned trying to see what new danger was about to spring out at her. The shapes circled a few times then one approached in front of her. The dim green light from her algae threw a meager circle of light around her and from the dark emerged the huge snout of a whale. It turned and glided near her so that its great eye could look at her. She

hunkered down in fright as the huge animal hovered next to her. Soon it moved on and a second whale took its place regarding her. It hovered slowly by then it too was gone.

She straightened and looked around, realizing they weren't out to hurt her. A few moments later a third whale entered her circle of light and she recognized it as the one she had rescued. She could see the wounds from the fight, sucker marks and a shallow series of bite marks along the snout. The wounds looked bad but were not likely to be life threatening. The huge beast came close and stopped to look at her.

She was glad to see it had survived and she was amazed at the display the whales were giving. They seemed almost intelligent as they looked at her but she knew from her studies they were just animals. The whale stayed perfectly still and after a while Swallow grew bold enough to reach out and touch the rubbery, prune-like skin of the magnificent animal in front of her. The whale only watched as she touched it, staying perfectly still.

She touched the skin for a moment then stepped back to see what the whale would do. A few moments later the great jaw opened and the huge tongue moved around and then a metallic object fell from its mouth onto the silt near her feet. She looked down and saw it was her piece of wire, still in the shape of a two tined fork; the only difference being the spotless shine the aluminum had now. She picked it up and examined it, amazed that it had been returned to her. She took the wire and then bowed her head to the whale, acknowledging the expression of thanks the beast was giving her. She looked up from her bow and they were gone, a series of clicks emitted from several of the whales as they swam for the surface and went about their lives.

She stood there on the bottom still in shock as they swam away; a swirl of disturbed silt all that remained of their presence. Later, no one would ever believe her story of her encounter with the whales since everyone knew they were nothing more than animals, clever perhaps but still animals. Of course no one believed her story of walking for years on the bottom of the ocean in any event either. A long while after she encountered the whales and the oil rig, she finally did walk out of the ocean onto the shore of the Bahamas some five years after falling in. She had been unable to speak for so long that when she tried to talk she was unable to. She had forgotten how over the time she had been in the sea.

Many years later she recovered from her ordeal and learned to speak again this time without the stutter from an elderly fur who took her in. After he died, she roamed America looking for her sister Ti and nearly twenty years after she fell into the sea, she found her again in a joyful reunion. Not long after seeing her sister again they both ended up fighting for their lives battling the creature that created her and venturing into space to eventually find the love of her life. As she thought of her life and her life-mate, she twirled the bracelet she wore on her left arm, a small piece of aluminum wire she looped around her wrist and never removed.

The end

If you want to find out the rest of the story, check out the Sabrina fan fiction Tail of Two Sabrinas, Sabrina Squared, Sabrina Cubed and the new Sabrina to the Fourth Power by Mark White, aka Cheetaur.

David White, aka Kathmandu November 14, 2004