

Testing A Theory

By: DankeDonuts

<https://www.furaffinity.net/user/dankedonuts/>

Tidebreak's stout body and short but powerful tail musled through the heavy seawater. Two muscular arms pressed to her sides, undulating in time with her torso. Though the surface waves far above were bathed in the light of a noontime sun, the waters at these depths were never any lighter than a blue twilight. To the young mer, the very notion of a sun was little more than a myth. Surely, something above was bringing the gift of light into part of every day. But no one in her tribe's living memory had ever seen what.

Golden light danced at the periphery of her form. Casting a protective aura around her, which allowed her to get closer to her destination than any before her. Again, in living memory. Magic was coming back into the tribe. Mer by mer. Youngling by youngling. Thought Tidebreak was well into adulthood, she was still a relative child compared to the elders of her people. Those that were honored for having survived the most in this often bleak seascape. A world of meagerness pockmarked with plumes of life where everything and everyone competed for their next meal.

Billowing clouds of sediment pumped out from the thin, red-orange lines she was closing in on. The molten rock of the Broken Mountain was too hot for anything to approach directly. But nearby, plumes of life. Slimy mats of very simple life, converting caustic brine into nutrients, formed the start of a food chain that high enough to form a vast colony of glowing, star-shaped corals. And out from that colony there were snails, eels, long-armed lobsters, translucent worms, and countless other beings looking for their place at the bounty. Many of them glowing with their own internal light; sending threats, casting disguises, calling for mates.

Though vital to her people's food chain, area was too hot, too toxic, for mers to Survive in for longer than a few moments. Except, of course, for Tidebreak, since she had come into the shielding magic that earned her the new tribe-name. Which she was still getting used to. The heat and acidity no longer bothered her, not so long as she could maintain the protective energy coursing around her.

But she wasn't here this day to scrounge for food or the sharp, crystalline rocks that her people used to fashion tools and weapons. Kicking her tail once more, she rose above the luminous veins. Her huge eyes absorbing every scrap of sealight, picking out every important landmark on the mountain's incline. She leveled out in water that while still very warm and somewhat bitter of taste was tolerable without magical protection. Tidebreak allowed her shield to fade and dissipate.

It was there that she centered herself, floating amongst the bioluminescent shrimp and fish. Which, regardless of her non-hostile intent, gave the mer a wide berth. Steadying her position with coordinated flicks of her teardrop-shaped side fins, she closed her large, highly reflective, eyes and focused. Inward, on herself and the 'trick' that she had been teaching herself for the past several darks.

If I can keep in heat, I can keep in pressure! The words, not 'spoken,' were instead displayed upon the length of her body in flashes of color. Bursts of white, cyan, yellow-green -- electric in their intensity -- from within her otherwise colorless scales.

Re-activating her magical protection, she turned her power in on itself. Rather than pushing 'out' against her world, she pushed it. It... didn't feel any different. Water still moved through her gills. Her rounded back-fin -- quite annoyingly ticklish -- wasn't twitching with irritation.

Another batch of light displays displayed the words 'Only one way to know for sure, then.' She paddled upward. Far enough away from the red lines that she could no longer distinguish their individual debris clouds. High enough that she should have felt the familiar nibble of cold water.

The shielder found to her delight that, though away from the hot lines below, she was still quite warm. Heat from the lines, and more importantly the water-pressure around them, was remaining constant! Held firm by the shield pushing back at them!

A surge of bioluminescent colors running along her large, circular head-fin announced Tidebreak's excitement to the world as she continued following the slope of the submerged volcano up, up and up. Past the core of life that clung to the molten rock. Past the natural pressure-boundaries that made anyone sick from 'thin water'. Past the spot, marked by two large lava-boulders, where her a lost sibling had contracted a lethal case of the bends while evading circle-biter shark. Past the shallows wherein the fishermen cast up their floating nets. Past everything her kin knew and into a realm of light brighter than any elf alive had ever seen.

Yes, this power came with responsibilities. The elders had been very clear about that. A place among the top tier of warriors and hunters was essentially chosen for her. But this power residing inside her very spirit could be so much *more*! If only she could show them!

There weren't just legends of a weird light above. There were old tales of *other mers*. This power, this gift, could be the means of finding them! That dream, as much as her own desire to improve herself, drove Tidebreak higher and higher still. Up where the sloping stone started to fill with life again. Corals, fish shells, weird squiggly things the likes of which she'd never seen before.

Up where the sky was a shade of blue she'd only seen on the glowing bodies of the beings that populated her dusky world. More-than-twilight. Less-than-bright. Part of which, a large, circular blob straight up, looked just a bit lighter than the rest.

A flash of sheer delight lit up the young mer's entire head-fin. There was exploring to do!