

Sedna: Goddess of the Sea

or

How Sea Creatures Came To Be


Long, long ago in the ice plains of the north there lived a young girl called Sedna. She shared a quaint home built from wood and fur with her protective parents. Her father laboured and cooked, her mother hunted, and Sedna occupied herself with carving tools and mending clothes. Every day, suitors would come to ask for Sedna's hand in marriage, presenting her with small offerings of food and ivory, but every day she refused them.

One evening, a tall, handsome stranger, half-hidden in a dark cloak embellished with feathers, came to their hut. "I am an expert hunter and I have a magnificent home where you will be waited on," he declared. "Sedna, marry me and I will make your dreams come true!"

Sedna was so impressed with the stranger's claims that she accepted his offer, and the two were married that very night. As the sun broke over the horizon, Sedna and the mysterious man paddled away in his boat. After a few hours of strenuous effort, the man took off his cloak. Sedna was astonished to see that instead of skin her new husband was covered in glossy black feathers. He was no man! He was a bird — a raven — in human form!

When they finally arrived at his home, she was confronted by a nest made of twigs and moss perched on a large, damp boulder. Was this the beautiful home he had promised her? She had been tricked! Overhead she heard the screeching din of thousands of birds as they welcomed their brother home.

Try as she might, Sedna could not escape the rock. It was completely surrounded by the icy depths of the Arctic. Every morning her husband would fly away to hunt and every evening he would bring her back raw fish to eat. After a few days, she could stand it no longer. She was so distressed that she howled out for her father to come and rescue her. Over the ice and snow her anguish echoed and was heard across the land.



As soon as he heard her cry, Sedna's father jumped into his boat and began a desperate search. After countless days, he finally came upon the nest. He concealed himself in a cove until the raven had flown away to hunt, and then he slowly approached the nest. Sedna was overjoyed to see him, but very frail. He gently carried his weary, shivering daughter to his boat. He paddled rapidly, but they soon spotted a looming dark shape on the horizon. They could not escape the vengeful raven, who had returned to find his wife had been stolen.

The sky darkened as storm clouds of black birds swooped down over the tiny boat, engulfing it in ferociously flapping feathers. The beating of thousands of wings caused the sea to churn and boil. Huge waves tossed the fragile craft high into the air and it was in constant danger of capsizing. Suddenly, Sedna was knocked overboard, but before she sank into the icy water, she managed to grasp the side of the boat with her fingertips. "Help me, Father!" Sedna pleaded.

But the boat lurched so violently that her father could not reach her. Seeing that he could not help her, she burst into tears of despair. As the first tear fell into the deep, slate sea, it merged with the salt and came alive as a grey seal. The next tear struck the turbulent water and transformed into a wonderful walrus with long curved tusks. Another tear floated down below the surface and became a gigantic blue whale. Her tears kept on flowing and as each tear fell, a new sea creature came to life.

Sedna could hold on no longer. She slipped below the waves and was lost forever. However, she did not perish, but was reborn as the Goddess of the Sea, ruler of all the animals that live below the waves.

Even today, the fishermen of the north throw back a part of their catch in gratitude to Sedna for giving them food. They still fear her wrath, which they blame for the vicious storms that batter the seas in that part of the world.