



Mother of the Sea

Zetta Elliott

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When her village is raided, a teenage girl finds herself on a brutal journey to the coast of Africa and across the Atlantic. Her only comfort is a small child who clings to her for protection. But once they board the slave ship, the child reveals her rebellious nature and warns that her mother---a fierce warrior---is coming to claim them all.

Mother of the Sea Details

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Author : Zetta Elliott

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From Reader Review Mother of the Sea for online ebook

Kenesha Williams says

Triumph Against the Odds

Mother of the Sea is a supernatural tale of a young woman's triumph over the Middle Passage with the assistance of a supernatural child she is trying to protect while simultaneously being protected by the child. Not just another "slave story" it illustrates an example of the many real slave rebellions forgotten or hidden by time.

Kelso Kappel says

Mother of the Sea is exactly what I want from a novella. The story follows an unnamed character called "the girl" as she is stowed away on a slaver's ship. The slaves are beaten, raped and murdered.

They live in squalor and it isn't uncommon for them to exist in their own waste.

Character wise, the girl had me captivated right away. While most would fall into a survivor's trance and become encumbered by their own will to live, the girl remained compassionate. Her tenacity to help others sparks from meeting a peculiar little girl called Eja-Keke.

The girl witnesses Eja-keke being thrown overboard and is overcome with sadness. When Eja-keke resurfaces on the ship, the girl comes to quickly regard Eja-keke as somebody remarkable.

To say anymore would take away from the stirring ending. This is a beautifully written short novel that was all at once affecting, distressing and benevolent. This book is an easy recommend for anyone looking for a quick and captivating read. I look forward to future works from Zetta Elliott.

Nadia L. Hohn says

Mother of the Sea is a novella by Canadian-born American-based author Zetta Elliott. This the first novella that I read. It tells the story of an African girl on a slaveship with important choices to make. There is also a baby who wreaks havoc and gains awe from the girl, skinless sailors and crew, and powers from the ocean beneath. (Is it the goddess Yemaya?) There are a few characters. This story feels to me like a prequel for an upcoming novel. It will be interesting to see where Zetta Elliott takes this next. I admire this author's diligence and work ethic for getting this story done and appreciate her afterword for this novella. I read it on my kindle.

Jesse Reese says

Vivid and graphic, mysterious, shocking, haunting, mournful, and beautiful. I don't want to say anything more about it, read it for yourself to feel its power.

J.D. Mason says

Oh my how I loved this book! Very, very short read, and it's a YA. great read.

Dixie Keyes says

I'm a big fan of Zetta Elliott AND her books. As a former high school teacher, I wish I would've had this novelette as part of a text set or unit for my 11th grade studies of the Middle Passage...I included the Interesting Narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano, Slave Dancer by Paula Fox, Sharon Draper's Copper Sun, and the picture book In the Time of the Drums by Kim Siegilson and illustrated by Brian Pinkney. Just as these other pieces depict the horrific kidnapping, death, and torture of Africans trafficked across the ocean, then sold to ensure the profits of white Americans and other landowners, Zetta's novelette does that and more. She includes in the plot the mysticism and faiths from specific African cultures, and which in this case, aid in the hope of the main character. There's light in the darkness, and in this story, it originates in the hearts and actions of the black female characters. Even as they are brutalized, they fight for their freedom. Take a deep breath and read this story--and don't hesitate to share it and include it in your curriculum.

Nelo says

An interesting short story based on the Igbo landing but with a twist. The heroine has to be brave and a little mysterious girl will show how to be just that.

The story draws inspiration from Yoruba mythology. It's short but it packs a punch.

Zeze says

“When the skinless men leave, the taste of salt lingers on her lips.”

So begins this short story about a young girl who is abducted from her village to be sold into slavery and endures the brutal journey across the Atlantic with the help of a mischievous child. At just 46 pages, this story moves quickly and details are used economically but efficiently. At no time did I think the story underdeveloped or was the impact and significance of it lost on me.

We immediately get a sense of how much the protagonist's life changed when her village was attacked and she was captured. She was on the cusp of womanhood then, but the arrival of the invaders robbed her of the time to appreciate that transition. Instead, she was exposed to harsh circumstances that made her hide her blossoming features to survive. Shackled and driven like chattel, she was cooped in a dark, dank cell with other women who were preyed on by their captors, who often left the women “badly bruised, and broken inside.” The protagonist barely manages to hold onto her innocence — and to the small child whom she grips close to her chest.

It's a harrowing experience that only gets worse once the girl boards a ship to cross the Middle Passage. Elliott provides just enough details for the reader to understand how horrible such a journey was for slaves: stacked like goods and unable to move in the bowels of the ship; stacked atop each other so that the excrement of those above trickles down to those below; only allowed on deck a few times where the women are preyed on by the sailors. I kept wondering how such a story would end. What would become of the girl? Does this story lead to the Americas or another fate? How is the fantastical element worked in?

Well, how it wraps up was totally unexpected, but I liked it. It's a mermaid story that includes the Yoruba deity Yemoja (or Yemaya in the Americas), a water spirit. Elliott began working on this mermaid story in 2012, when she began researching her Caribbean roots. She later further developed the story when she was commissioned "to write a science fiction/fantasy narrative for an eighth-grade English Language Arts curriculum." Her intention with this story is not only to teach about the Middle Passage, but to provide a strong Black heroine for teens:

"When teens in the U.S. look for a Black woman superhero, their options are fairly limited; I hope Yemoja can stand alongside Storm as a symbol of African female power."

I liked the story for several reasons:

- The historical significance
- The development of the protagonist and that we don't learn her name until the end
- For showing that children have power
- For showing that a young girl can start a rebellion
- The presence of the Yoruba deity

But despite these reasons, or maybe because of them, I was disappointed at how short the story is and wished it was longer. The story sparked my interest and made me want to know more, want to know what happens next. It made me want to go find another similar story to read.

Overall: ★★★?? ½

I recommend it and think it's worth a read, whether or not you are interested in YA fantasy.

As posted on Zeezee with Books.

Tim Childree says

Brilliant

This was a phenomenal novelette that made me want to steal time in its pages until it was done. The blending of myth and history creates a devastating story, and the author's note at the end is well worth the read in its own right.

Ceillie Simkiss says

Read my full review [HERE!](#)

Patricia says

This story was absolutely amazing. The afterwords by the author were almost as great as the story. Thank you Ms. Elliott. We need more novellas about African mermaids.

Monica **can't read fast enough** says

I don't read and review very many novellas or short stories simply because I am a greedy reader who enjoys a longer story that I can settle into and take my time with. However, Zetta Elliott has provided a story that not only throws her reader into a horrific journey to slavery, but does it in a way that once you read the first sentence, you know that the story unfolding will be a difficult one to shake free. *Mother of the Sea* gripped me in a way that there is no way that I would have put this story down until the end. I read this story with my hand over my mouth for most of it and I teared up at the end. Elliott provided everything that was necessary for this novella to feel like a complete story and I really couldn't have asked for anything more. Yet, being who I am I would have loved for it to have been longer and gotten more details, but that's just asking for what's unnecessary; it's perfect just as it is. Naturally, *Mother of the Sea* is going on my favorites list.

I first saw *Mother of the Sea* on Njeri's Youtube channel Onyx Pages. If you don't follow her already and would like to learn more about Afrofuturism she is a must follow! I don't know if I would have discovered Zetta Elliott if I hadn't seen Njeri's review and that is why I love following an eclectic mix of readers. Ms. Elliott has just gained a new follower in me and although I keep saying that I am not a fan of Teen/YA stories I am a fan of damned good writing and Zetta Elliott is damned good!

You can find me at:

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Twitter: [@MonlatReader](#)

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Facebook: [Monica Reeds](#)

Goodreads Group: [The Black Bookcase](#)

Leah says

The first story I've read with a Black mermaid. I could stare at this cover for hours! Normally I'm not one for people on covers because I like to imagine the characters as they're created in my mind by the author's words as opposed to the artist's eye/vision. But, in this case for instance, the smile on little Eja-keke's face allowed me to immerse even further in the story because I could really *see* her all-knowing look in various scenes when Aduke wasn't sure what Eja-keke was up to.

4 stars

(And I'll be looking for Elliott's 20-some other books. How am I just now hearing about her?!)

Kay says

Rich with Yoruba religion. Wish it were longer which would have possibly resulted in more character development.

Savina Tsataros says

Mother of the Sea was a lovely little novelette in celebration of African people's, female power, foreign (atleast to myself) worship, to name a few. I really enjoyed reading about our girl Adun, the protagonist as she is shackled, tortured and boarded onto a wooden craft that floats across climatic seas, this story is alike the dynamic of losing everything and gaining the world. Rich with African spirituality, consciousness and love, we see Adun becoming one with herself, intentions, intuition and the sea. I loved the characters, the setting, the mercilessness and brutality of it. I love the naivety of this story and raw unknown quality to it. I would read more of this authors work especially because not only did uplift me as a female, but also because I know how many women of all ages and of colour would appreciate and love this more than I ever could fathom or understand. We need more authors like Zetta, the writing style was lovely. also the album art - WOW !
