

THE LEGEND OF THE QUEEN OF THE BALTIC

Long, long ago, the Baltic Sea was ruled by Jurata, a beautiful queen. She had long golden hair and sea green eyes. Her loveliness caused Perkun, the fierce God of thunder and lightning, to fall in love with her. He would not let his storms disturb the waters of her kingdom.

Jurata was a kind queen. She established laws to protect her sea creatures. One law did not allow anyone to set traps that caught too many fish at one time. Though Jurata liked to eat flounder and had it served at the palace, she ordered her servants to keep only half of each fish and to throw the other half back to the sea. These fish-halves stayed alive because of her magical powers.

On the Baltic Coast lived a bold, free spirited young fisherman who had very little common sense. He knew about Queen Jurata's law, but disobeyed it. He set many traps and caught many, many fish which he sold to people who lived far from the sea. He spent most of his money on fine clothes.

The Queen found out about this fisherman and was very angry with him. Her plan was to swim close to the shore, get the fisherman to go in the water and drown him. Instead, when she saw him in his beautiful clothes, she fell in love with him as he did with her. Every night she would swim to the shore and see her new sweetheart.

Jurata herself had broken a law. The gods said that magical beings could love only magical beings. Perkun got very very mad about this. He went into a rage and with thunderbolts destroyed the amber colored palace while the Queen was inside and chained the young fisherman to the bottom of the sea. They were never seen again. The fisherman can sometimes be heard calling for his love. The only things that remain from Jurata's palace are pieces of amber that sometimes wash up on the beaches of the Baltic Sea.