A Femme Fatal S Tragedy Essay, Research Paper

A femme fatal s tragedy:

Women s mundane life

In “Siren Song

Many of Margaret Atwood s heroines are independent, strong, and self serving. Those same characteristics are evident in “Siren Song.” In “Siren Song,” Margaret Atwood paints the picture of a mythical femme fatal who lures men to their deaths. The “siren” in the poem is contemplating her ability to seduce and lure men. But the end of the poem, she proves that her song, though somewhat of a clich , never fails.

The poem it lures the reader in, just as a siren lures men. The poem opens by identifying itself as “one song everyone/ would like to learn: the song/ that is irresistible” (lines 1-3). The song the siren refers to is so powerful that men disregard the warning signs of “beached skulls” (line 6), and leap overboard. Then, in the third stanza, she warns us that anyone who has heard the song is dead. This is a warning similar to the beached skulls, telling the reader that death awaits the reader at the end of the song. However, the reader continues to the next stanza, without a second thought, like the siren s sailor victims.

The siren lures the reader on by treating him like a confidant, someone special. In a confessional tone, she admits she “doesn t enjoy it here/ squatting on this island” (lines 13-14). She says that she will tell the reader a secret “only to you” (line 20) if he comes closer. Portraying herself as helpless, stranded, and in desperate need of aid, she receives sympathy from the reader. In addition, she makes the reader feel special, “only you can” (line 23) rescue her and “you are unique” (line 24). Finally, without warning, she says, “at last” (line 15) like a sudden, but sly attack.

The siren feels trapped and unsatisfied in her role as a femme fatal. She has the ability to attract men easily. But, once she gets them, they are meaningless to her. On a broader spectrum, the poem seems to be referring to women s role in society. In society, women go out of their way to look “picturesque” (line 15) in order to attract men. The siren in this poem is tired of dressing up and flirting to get men. But she does anyway, admitting, “it is a boring song/ but it works every time” (lines 26-27).

This poem is very characteristic of Margaret Atwood s work in that it portrays women as something other than angelic and harmless. Atwood typically writes about women who are analyzing and reviewing their lives. The siren in this poem reviews her life and its purpose, which it simply to attract men. But, in the end, she cannot change. She will always be singing her song, “fatal and valuable” (line 19).