

## Sam Fairway / Shiny Fin

### **Backstory**

**Species:** Human/incubus merperson

**Sex:** Intersex, Non-binary (AMAB), he/they pronouns

**Age:** 33 (stopped ageing due to demonic transformation)

**Height:** 5ft 9in

**Weight:** 185lbs

**Siblings:** Lucy, sister (6 years older)



Sam Fairway is an original character who was originally created for the *Monster Hunter World* universe. They are creative, mild-mannered, but interested in human rights. They transformed into a demon in order to live indefinitely like their partner, Gene Taring, and the demon they turned into happened to be a merperson. Since then Sam has lived on a Turkish island chain raising their demonic offspring, the Salt-Sneezers, with Gene, and is known as Shiny Fin.

### Trust & Confidence

*(newborn)*

Sam was the second of their parents' children, and unplanned. Their mother was a sales rep who worked from home, and their father was a retail manager.

At first Sam's sonographer identified them as female, and as Sam already had an older sister, their parents assumed that they could dress Sam in hand-me-downs. The parents had the same sonographer at every check-up so the gender error wasn't picked up until Sam was born.

When Sam born it became clear that they were intersex. The mum was still happy to use Sam's sister's hand-me-downs to dress them, but the dad found this difficult to accept, as he felt this was an insult to Sam's masculinity.

Sam's mother talked him around as best she could, but her efforts achieved a reluctant reaction at best. Between Sam being dressed in Lucy's clothes, their name not being changed to something exclusively masculine (it was purely by happy accident that 'Sam' worked as a male and female name), and their mother having an easy-going attitude to

whether Sam would prefer to present as male or female, Sam's father shunned Sam and before too long it became clear that the mother had to choose between her husband and Sam.

There was no contest: she chose Sam, and Sam's father left.

All of this serves as a great illustration of how Sam's mum treated Sam, and how close the pair bonded. She adored Sam and felt utterly determined from the start to give them the best possible start in life. She worked from home in a job that could demand the best of her interpersonal energy and skills so there were times when she had to divert her attention to this, but she took pride in the fact that she was giving her best to get the best for her two children.

From Sam's perspective, they absolutely soaked up the strong, intense loving attention she gave them and learned that 'downtime meant downtime' - when mum was unavailable because she was working, Sam slept. They learned to feel that 'mum is strong'.

### **Freedom & Self-Determination**

*(toddlerhood)*

Sam grew big enough to begin separating a little from mum, and coming out of that potent and supportive symbiosis that the pair had been in together, but they remained close, thanks to mum working from home. Sam explored the room mum worked in, and sometimes the rooms beyond. For Sam, there was something so strong about her that they felt they could explore and know exactly where to return to, to find her.

Sam's mum's strong voice and vocal approach to saleswomanship helped with this!

This was when Sam became more consciously aware of a third person in the house. That third person was Lucy, Sam's sister. Lucy had their mother's forthright attitude and she loved her little sibling. Lucy delighted in playing with Sam, teaching them, feeding them, and doing anything else that would make Sam grow bigger and stronger.

Despite this happy, enthusiastic onslaught, Sam developed as a gentle-spirited child. Sam had access to toys and games, but what they enjoyed most of all was being read to. Lucy read to Sam often, to the point where, if they felt like disappearing into a world

of fantasy for a while, Sam would simply pick up a book, take it to Lucy, and plonk themselves down to wait for a reading.

When it came to discipline, Sam quickly developed a 'go with the flow' attitude towards life. It was easier doing this with a bossy mum and big sister, and their attention was so pleasantly overwhelming that Sam seldom wanted to break free of it. By the time Sam grew into a small child they had learned to get what they wanted from others by being sweet and passive, and waiting to be given it - both of the women in Sam's life were pretty eager to give Sam what they needed.

### **Ambition**

*(young childhood)*

Starting at school was a harder experience for Sam than it was for any of their class-mates. Sam's mother identified him as male for the sake of getting him enrolled in school, but it was already fairly clear to anyone who saw Sam that he was not entirely male. He came in for a certain amount of teasing for looking 'too' feminine.

Thankfully, Sam was a likeable child and earned a few good friends. The other children were happy to play with him, talk with him, and provide moral support (as much as small children can. Sam got a lot of hugs).

Public understanding of the intersex condition was still rather lacking during this decade. Sam's mum came in for criticism from them about this: the teachers assumed that she had made her own decision to call Sam a boy but that he might be a girl instead.

His mum handled this criticism with the strength one might expect from a salesperson: she fought Sam's corner with vigour. While that was happening, Sam quietly made friends, weathered a level of bullying, and got through school without making any more ripples than he had to.

Regarding Sam's mum's choice of school, she weighed up several options but ultimately chose to put him into a state school on the basis that it was the most 'normal' environment she could take him to (more so than any private school). Sam made a handful of friends there.

In his own way, Sam blossomed with these friends. He evolved on from his previously passive persona and began to talk, laugh, and play more.

### **Productivity**

*(older childhood)*

School remained a double-edged sword for Sam, with snide comments about his light build and feminine looks on the one hand, and a cluster of rigorously protective friends who loved his gentle spirit and whimsical manner on the other. Lucy, as ever, was among them. On this note, Sam continued to enjoy fantasy, imagination, and anything creative. He loved dragons, drawing, and drawing dragons. Sometimes he wrote fantasy stories too.

By this time Sam had been in school for several years and had acclimatised to the more general social environment there. They re-evaluated their gender identity, as much as a child of their age could. It just didn't feel right for Sam to go into school pretending to be a boy, so they decided to leave the question of their gender identity as unanswered as possible. That led to some extra teasing, which in turn led to one of Sam's teachers having a quiet word with Sam's mum.

The talk was along the lines of, "Have you considered taking Sam to martial arts lessons? It's wonderful for kids' self-esteem and confidence, and it's great when they're being bullied because they learn to stand up for themselves. Sam will be able to protect themselves, you can sleep more easily at night, and everyone will be happy." Sam's mum didn't take long to decide to take Sam in for an introductory class.

Sam loved it! Their instructor taught hand-to-hand combat but also introduced the class to various weapons. Sam's favourite was the bo staff, and they became proficient in its use. While the classes didn't turn Sam into a bold character at school, they did learn how to quietly yet firmly deflect bullying.

Lucy moved onto secondary school, which meant that she wasn't around to protect Sam if anybody teased them, and that meant that Sam truly had responsibility for themselves.

With all of this going on, Sam scraped by academically in school. Overall they were a B-C student.

## **Child to Adult Transition**

*(adolescence)*

Adolescence was always going to be a tricky time for Sam, but once again, Lucy helped, albeit unknowingly at first. Sam began to take an interest in make-up and feminine clothing. This started with wearing Lucy's high heels in secret, and discovering how it felt to walk in them. Sam was certainly a quick learner when it came to this and learned to rock a pair of heels.

One day Lucy caught Sam doing this and, while this led to a certain amount of embarrassment from Sam, she was supportive and gave Sam her blessing to keep practising in her shoes. When Sam turned 14 Lucy showed them several make-up tutorials that she had found online and trusted, and let Sam experiment with her make-up.

This time of life was inevitably difficult for Sam, with the mental, emotional, and physical changes that came with puberty. They found that cross-dressing left them feeling comforted and confident, and this helped during this deeply confusing time in Sam's life.

Sam found their early to mid teens difficult for so many reasons: sex-ed classes didn't quite fit with the experiences Sam was having, they didn't dare to even consider dating, either from a perspective of "will anyone want to date me?" or a "who do I want to be with anyway?", and they strongly suspected that their interest in cross-dressing would become a point of ridicule if it were ever revealed.

Lucy never revealed a word about it to anybody, which Sam appreciated greatly.

Throughout this time Sam kept their head down, got through secondary school, and studied for their GCSEs. They also started paying attention to the LGBT rights movement. While Sam had little idea of who they were attracted to and how their attractions could even be expressed in LGBT terms, this seemed to be the scene that most closely catered for Sam's identity.

Eventually Sam left secondary school, went to college to study politics.

## **Closeness in Relationships**

*(young adulthood)*

College offered Sam all sorts of opportunities to grow as a person. They met Gene Taring, a fellow politics student who didn't look gay but made no secret of the fact that he was. Gene had an interest in LGBT rights too, which Sam found reassuring.

Up until this time in their life, Sam had been unsure who they were attracted to: men or women. As Sam spent more time around Gene they developed a crush, and this helped Sam to make more sense of their sexuality. Between them they had an obvious loud vs. quiet dynamic and Sam found that they fitted in easily with Gene's natural tendency to be loud, but there was something else too.

As they got to know each other better Gene described his family situation to Sam. More specifically, he described his parents' commercial success - his mother was a boutique seamstress, and his father, a telecoms mogul of some kind - and their wildly differing outlooks about politics, which had recently led to them splitting up. As Gene told these stories Sam couldn't help but think that Gene's story was desperately sad.

Knowing Gene's history helped Sam to recognise that Gene's loudness was a way of looking after himself by making sure he got heard. Sam had met many loud people throughout their years but had never thought about it all that much. Up until now, Sam had been too busy coping with the confusion of being intersex, unsure of what sexuality meant to them, of being so 'different' from other people, and the difficulties that came with being bullied for their differences. Up until now, Sam had had their hands full. Now, with friends, they felt peaceful enough to be able to listen more closely.

This was how Sam fell in love with Gene, and how Gene finally met somebody who would listen to him, who didn't mind whether he was being loud and proud or quiet. With Sam, he no longer had to shout to get noticed.

They started a relationship together, and Sam had their first sexual experience. Between them they had little in the way of a 'blueprint' to work from so they had to work things out for themselves, but they took the time to understand each other and that helped them to make it work.

During the earlier stages of their relationship Sam felt that they had their hands full just getting to grips with sexuality, but as the weeks and months went by they began to consider opening up about their cross-dressing. Sam generally opted to dress in a more masculine way when in public but as time went on it started to rankle, but they worried about the reaction that dressing in a way that felt natural would get. Sam introduced their cross-dressing cautiously and gradually, introducing smaller or less obviously feminine pieces into their wardrobe at first and waiting for Gene to show curiosity.

Inevitably Gene did just that, and they had a conversation about it that helped Sam to feel more reassured about dressing in feminine clothing. It helped that Gene was bisexual.

But Gene went further than this. One day he said to Sam, "I know somebody who's active in the LGBT rights and drag communities. I think I should introduce you two and see if he can help you."

This was how Sam met Mark (although they never learned his surname). Mark was a drag queen who went by the stage name Feathers, and whose trademark was neon-coloured ostrich feathers. Like Gene, Mark had a loud voice and a kind heart.

Mark introduced Sam to the drag community in general and in no time at all, Sam found themselves at the centre of a surrogate family. The drag queens were creative and kind-hearted.

They were also fierce when performing on-stage! Sam believed that, since they were a part of the drag community, perhaps they were destined to perform too! They tried, but calling attention to themselves and the pressure to be entertaining didn't suit Sam. They found this upsetting and the community of drag queens gathered around them to see how they could help.

Having worked through their self-development this far, Sam had begun to think more seriously about their career prospects. It was increasingly obvious that politics wasn't their natural environment: the requirement to be seen, to speak up clearly and loudly, didn't suit them. They cared a great deal about human rights, but raising their voice about anything, even this, didn't come naturally.

What Sam absolutely loved was history, and this is where they found a solution to both the performance art problem and their career: they transferred to a history diploma.

Sam began to think about what they would like to do with their diploma. The idea of working in a museum appealed a great deal. In particular, Sam liked the idea of becoming a tour guide, ideally to children or teenagers on school trips. This became a soft career goal for Sam.

The deep discussion about Sam's aspirations and identity led to a final slotting in of a piece into the puzzle: after a discussion with the drag queens, Sam finally stumbled on a gender identity that worked for them: non-binary.

All of this was quite the triumph for Sam, but just as they became clear about their gender identity, their professional direction, and the place of cross-dressing, performance, and art in their life, Gene became more hard-line about human rights.

Sam understood that Gene cared about them, that all Gene wanted was for Sam to be able to protect themselves, to "find their own voice". Gene worked tirelessly to impress on Sam that speaking up for their human rights was important, but speaking up so loudly and brazenly just wasn't Sam's style. Sam dug their heels in during Gene's pushier moments; Gene pushed all the harder, just as he had always done when he thought he wasn't being heard.

Between them they began to tire one another out so much that one day Sam realised that they couldn't tolerate it anymore. They split up - sadly and with great regret, for their earliest days together had been wonderfully mutually supportive.

Sam graduated and entered the world of work. They kept alert for any history and museum-related jobs and applied for those whenever they came up, and eventually got a role as a tour guide, just as they had wanted.

During their early to mid twenties Sam got into a new relationship. Sam considered supportive relationships to be ideal for them so did their best to settle down with a person who was supportive of their dreams and goals. As far as Sam was concerned, this time they would watch out for the "you must protect yourself at all costs!" messages that Gene had resorted to. And yet, this relationship felt like a weak repeat of their relationship with Gene and only ever reminded Sam of Gene. The relationship lasted around a year before dissolving.

Sam spent a long time reviewing what had happened with Gene, trying to understand what had gone wrong. Sometimes they even talked it through with other people, but instantly lost interest in anyone who bad-mouthed Gene.



Sam drifted through the following ten years or so. Like many people they considered the universal question of "Do I ever want to have kids?" but for Sam the answer was always a resounding "no".

Everything was quite ordinary in Sam's world until one day when a woman called them, out of the blue. Her name was Nadine. Sam had no reason to expect such a call but what she said to them made them sit up and take notice. She said: "Did you once know a Gene Taring? Oh you did? Good! I'm his PA and he's asked to see you. He needs your help. Why? ...I can't really explain, but can you come?"

Sam had never expected to see or hear from Gene again, but the moment they got this phone call they felt as if maybe, just maybe, they could reconnect. Whether that would mean a relationship or not was impossible to guess at this time, but Sam was eager to see him anyway.

When Sam got to Gene's office they couldn't believe their eyes: Gene had turned himself into a dragon, and his office was in disarray!

Sam asked him what had happened. Gene told Sam that he had been given an invocation for the demon Lilith, but had no idea by whom. He had used it and asked her for power to further his political career, but Lilith had cheated him and turned him into a monster instead.

Sam didn't buy this. They asked why Lilith would do such a thing. Gene's retort was because Lilith obviously had a warped sense of humour. This led to them disagreeing over whether a demon would resort to such pettiness, but this very argument is what led to them learning that they had common ground: at last, Sam had the fortitude and the strength of will to argue their corner. While Gene was still highly assertive - he had been a politician for years, after all - he couldn't stay angry at Sam and the argument turned into a tender reunion.

The pair of them settled into a relationship once again. It was a strange one: they couldn't publicly become a couple because Gene couldn't show up in public in his new, monstrous form. Gene was also deeply preoccupied with his career, which suddenly looked like it was over.

During the time they spent together they fell back on their old habit of being honest with each other. They both felt that they had 'come home' to one another. One day, Gene

pointed out that as a demon he would outlive Sam - that was, unless Sam became a demon also.

There was another reason that Gene was keen for Sam to turn into a demon: Sam's safety. As a demon himself, Gene occasionally attracted the attention of other demons. Demons were territorial and there was always a risk that Sam would find themselves cornered. Gene determined that Sam would be safer if they were a demon too.

Sam took a while to come to terms with the idea. To become a demon would mean to say a permanent goodbye to their family. Neither Sam nor Gene believed that it was a good idea to introduce Gene (or the demonhood idea) to Sam's mum and Lucy, so ultimately they decided against telling them.

They used Gene's paper spell to summon Lilith. Gene did this with a certain amount of trepidation, as he had called upon Lilith to return him to human form during the earliest stage of his transformation only for her to temporarily transform his body into a quadruped form. To his surprise however, she was cordial to Sam.

It was Lilith who made the decision about what to turn Sam into: she turned them into a hybrid combination of a merperson and an incubus.

Sam came to terms with the changes faster than Gene expected them to: after all, unlike Gene Sam had known beforehand that they would be transformed into something supernatural. Sam discovered that they had the ability to enter, and participate in, peoples' dreams. They used this power to talk or otherwise interact with anybody whose dreams they saw, where they believed the person had a problem they were grappling with. It became a satisfying and rewarding 'job' and made up for the fact that Sam's mobility had become so restricted - a merperson's tail made it difficult for them to travel on land.

### **Passing on Responsibilities**

*(older adulthood)*

In the longer term, Gene and Sam both found that it would be easier to disappear. Gene, who was rather rich and had the financial clout to do pretty much anything he wanted, thought of it first: he suggested that they buy an island and live there. Sam agreed with this idea. Gene bought an island chain off the coast of Turkey and they travelled there under their own power.

Sam figured that they would need supplies, so suggested that they spin a folk tale to alert people to the idea that there were demons on the island. Gene worked with them to refine the idea and together, they came up with a final plan that they both liked. People were unlikely to believe that the tale was true, but it would also serve to mobilise a few superstitious people to provide them with most of the things they would need. Gene used his remaining contacts with Nadine and the rest of his team to spin that folk tale.

By the time they retreated to the island, Gene, Nadine, and a few other members of Gene's old team had stimulated the local fishermen to leave regular offerings of food on the island to make sure that the monster that lived there would never come ashore to find food himself. Sam and Gene settled on the island and for all the world, Sam believed that this would be their happy ever after.

They both got more than they bargained for when Sam fell pregnant. At first they weren't sure what was happening, just that Sam felt out of sorts. As time progressed they began behaving in a way that confused both Sam and Gene. During high tide Sam would seek out a place where rock pools would develop at low tide, and use their fins to sweep sand into the future rock pool. They remained there as the tide went out until they found themselves stranded in a shallow bowl of water.

Sam was still mystified by their own behaviour but felt oddly satisfied to keep doing this. They had only done this two or three times when Sam laid a clutch of eggs. They found this unsettling, but also instinctively wanted to look after them. Sam and Gene summoned Lilith for help, advice, or at least some information about what had just happened. However, she refused to materialise.

All of the eggs hatched into dark-scaled dragons. Sam and Gene were stunned to have become parents and Sam in particular loved it! They raised their babies with love, and watched them grow.

Once the dragon babies grew to a certain size, they started foraging in the sea for themselves and began sneezing salt crystals. Sam was worried at first. Soon enough they worked out that this was normal for the babies. They dubbed their clutch 'Salt-Sneezers', and the name stuck.

The Salt-Sneezers thrived on the island. They learned to speak, although their speech was basic. They bred, albeit at a slow rate, and they formed into tribes. Before long Gene and Sam found that they had an entire population under their care, and this

brought with it a range of problems: how would they prevent the Salt-Sneezers from striking out beyond the island? How would they manage their growing need for food? How should they position themselves in this new, developing community?

The community accepted Gene and Sam, as they spent much time around them. They called Gene Great Grandfather Dragon, and Sam, Shiny Fin.

As the population became more settled on the island, Gene suggested that they use their demonic appearances to become deity-like figures to the Salt-Sneezers as a way to create leverage to control the population if needed. Sam hated the idea and rejected it.

Sam continued to look after the babies, which took up all of their time and attention. It took a while for them to realise that Gene was a little less involved than he had previously been. He didn't desert them by any means, but more than half of the work of looking after the Salt-Sneezers fell to Sam. This annoyed Sam, but they didn't want to argue about it. They occasionally ribbed him about it as a way of passively managing the problem, and when that didn't work, challenged Gene about it more directly. When challenged, Gene said that he preferred the idea of hanging out with the Salt-Sneezers when they were bigger, bolder, and more independent, which they showed little sign of becoming. This caused a few disagreements between Sam and Gene but ultimately nothing much changed.

Then, one day, one of the tribes invaded another, bringing fire-lit torches to scare the defending tribe. There was an accident and half the tribe's camp was burned down.

This was when Gene reasserted himself on the scene. He came to Sam while Sam was still in shock, and the two talked. Gene explained what he had been doing. At first Sam was furious that Gene had been so calculated: Gene had begun to cultivate a belief among the Salt-Sneezers that he was a demi-god, and wanted to use that belief to command the Salt-Sneezers never to burn down one of each others' camps again. Sam and Gene had a serious exchange of views about this. Sam hadn't quite forgiven Gene when they went to meet with the Salt-Sneezers.

Gene did an excellent job of presenting a supernatural, 'displeased God' front to the Salt-Sneezers and they became truly regretful of their actions. As Gene wound up his speech, Sam saw that he had laid a path for Sam to chime in about forgiveness, and to invite the Salt-Sneezers to move forward with love for one another. Sam did just that.

After this, the two talked some more and, with some reluctance, Sam took up Gene's suggestion that they keep up the demi-god act. However, Sam remained the more approachable of the two deities and, while Gene occasionally voiced his doubts that that was a good idea, the Salt-Sneezers continued to treat them both with reverence.

In the following decades Lilith did, in fact, intervene but neither Sam nor Gene ever knew about it. She controlled the fertility of the Sneezers so that the population never grew so big that the Salt-Sneezers might think to leave the island. She also made sure to increase their fertility when their numbers dropped so that they would never die out, either.

### **End of Life**

*(old age)*

Sam is very happy to live their life indefinitely. They don't know whether demons can genuinely live forever - as in, continue to live after the Earth has become uninhabitable forever - but Sam knows that they can take a way out if need be, and in the meantime, can enjoy as much of this life as they want.

### **Credits**

Based on theory by:

Erikson, E., (1951) 'Childhood and Society', W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. chapter 7.

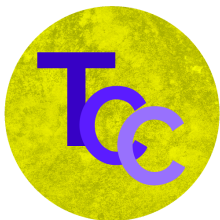
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~ Hayley, Founder of The Character Consultancy

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