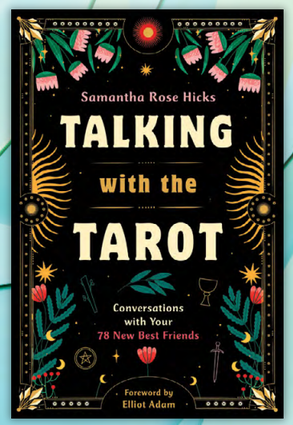

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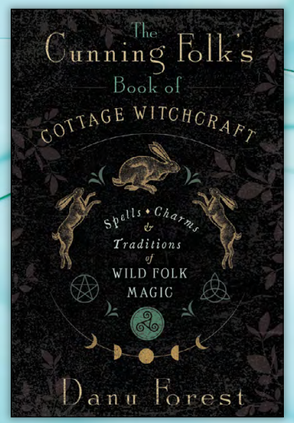
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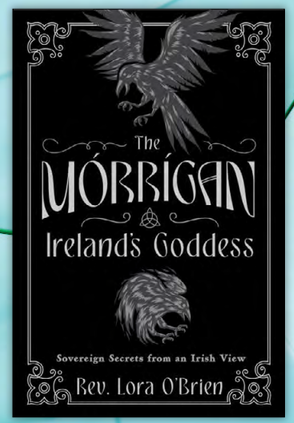
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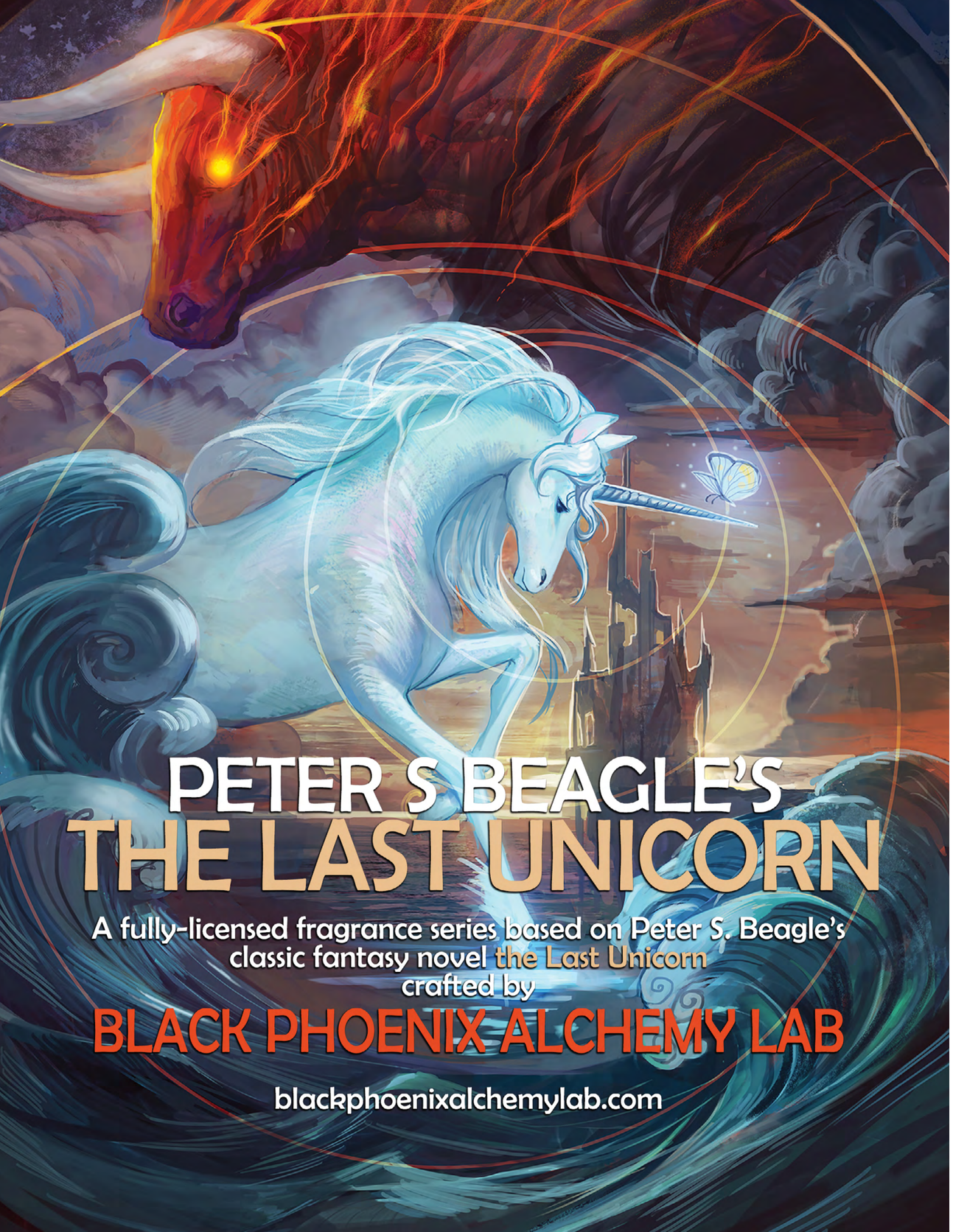
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Summer 2025



The Awakening of the Poet (1899), by Gabriel Ferrier

As the days stretch and expand and fireflies flare up in the evenings, we thought we should devote an entire issue to all things delicate and light and floating—so light they might even be transparent. Like a veil. Here, a sanctuary. *Gossamer*, you might call it. The quality of a spiderweb sparkling with dew, or of a fairy wing lit and made visible by the moon.

Two of our writers attempt to define the slippery yet luminous, even dazzling, theme of this issue. Susann Cokal calls it an "ineffable extra element, the almost-not-there that reminds us not to simply look through the light, the water, the air—everything we would ordinarily call invisible and intangible—but to look *at* them," while Eric Brown calls it "a particularly fine sort of delicateness: something lighter than air, almost insubstantial, and often infused with an otherworldly, ethereal quality." Yes, please. We'll take it.

Let's admire it head-on: the fairies, the iridescent glass, the tattered lace, the casts of light and shadow, the wings and webs and petals. The glimmers in which this gossamer quality expands and spins and in which, as Susann describes, "touch and vision become the same experience, sounds have a taste, colors have smells, and light and lightness entwine everywhere." It's what, one might argue, enchanted living is all about.

And then you can step forward to meet your next challenge with the fortification of magic and light. Because that's also what living enchantedly is about.

But for now, we hope you sink into these pages. We hope you enjoy this issue and that you spend this summer embracing all its gossamer pleasures.

Love,

Carolyn Turgeon



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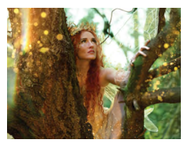
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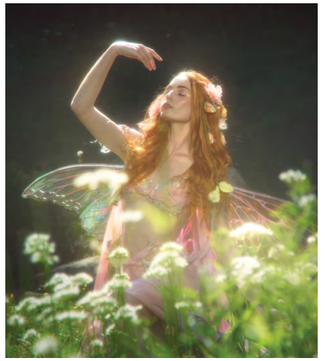
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Enchanted Living's Gossamer Issue



JoEllen Elam Conway

JoEllen Elam Conway is a fantasy fashion designer based in Los Angeles, where she creates ethereal gowns under her label, Firefly Path. Inspired by fairy tales, mythology, and the natural world, her designs blend fine craftsmanship with a sense of otherworldly wonder. She has been crafting bespoke bridal and fantasy attire for more than two decades, with creations that have appeared in music videos, fashion editorials, and enchanted weddings around the world—not to mention in several past issues (and on more than one cover) of *Enchanted Living*. For this issue, she created the rose-colored fairy gown featured on the cover—a piece stitched with nostalgia, silk, and soft magic.



Steele Alexandra Douris

Steele Alexandra Douris is an author, artist, and Victorianist. She holds a Ph.D. in English from Stanford University, and researches all manner of Victorian eccentricity: mesmerism, spiritualism, sensation fiction, and fortune-telling. When she's not combing old newspapers in pursuit of Victorian scandals and urban legends, she can be found writing speculative fiction, building fantasy worlds, and painting creatures from mythology and folklore. She's a staunch believer in the power of creative expression and artistic practice, and as a result keeps way too many journals and sketchbooks. She's also the author of *Spirits, Seers, and Séances*, a compendium of ghost lore, fortune-telling, and spiritualism.



Elizabeth Elder

Elizabeth Elder is a fine-art fantasy photographer based in Los Angeles with nearly a decade of experience photographing fantasies. She uses her expertise to craft new worlds and characters with each artwork, and takes inspiration from storybook fairy tales, cinema, and dreams. In the process, she creates visions never before seen and uniquely her own. She's also a co-founder of E&E Creative, a production team that gives others the opportunity to bring their own fantasy dreams to life. For this issue she created the stunning fairy cover with the help of her longtime team in the flower meadows of Mount Rainier National Park. It's her second cover for *Enchanted Living*



Luci Johnson

Kentucky native and lifelong resident Luci Johnson is a paralegal by trade and free spirit at heart. She is embracing her wise-woman era and reclaiming her wild essence. Fascinated and inspired by the natural world, fairy lore, and all things enchanted, she aims to explore and celebrate the simple complexity of love, the most powerful and effective force in the universe. The gossamer web in her short story "Islabel and Spider," she says, "represents love's mystical ability to expand each time it is shared. Love is sticky in a good way." She's honored and thrilled to be published in *Enchanted Living* for the first time. In her spare time, she enjoys playing drums in her husband's rock band.



Stephanie Law

Artist Stephanie Law is based in Oakland, California. Her watercolor works are inspired by the patterns and movements of nature, woven into mythology and folklore. She's the creator of Shadowscapes Tarot (2009) and Verdance Tarot (2025). Her piece *8 of Coins*, featured on page 71 of this issue, is from the Verdance Tarot. "Spider is a symbol of craftsmanship, focus, and systematic pursuit of accomplishment," Law says. "She lays the strands of her web carefully, radiating out across the branches. The dryads hum softly in the fading light of dusk. They've watched her kind since the days when gods first drew forth their sylvan spirits from seeds and sap. They admire the masterpieces that Spider spins."



Emily O'Dette

Emily O'Dette is the co-creator and producer of E&E Creative, a Los Angeles-based fine art fantasy photography production team. She combines creativity and technical skills to execute photoshoots for personal clients as well as for brands. She has also worked as a signed agency model for eight years, which includes time working abroad in Milan. Outside of her professional modeling career, she's also a fantasy model who specializes in creating unique characters. Emily combines her passion for the natural world and her love of classical art and fantasy to craft concepts and build intricate worlds through a storytelling lens. She is also quite possibly an actual fairy.



Image by Victorian fairy artist Amelia Jane Murray (1800–1896)

Gossamer Checklist

BY CAROLYN TURGEON

The idea of gossamer and its sometimes ephemeral, shimmering pleasures seems awfully close to the concept of the "glimmer"—in the sense that author and licensed clinical social worker Deb Dana used it in her 2018 book *The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy*. There, she defined the glimmer as something of anti-trigger, a moment filled not with cues of danger but a spark of feeling safe and good, inviting you to stop and feel fully present in your life.

Here are some moments that might be categorized as glimmers, though the possibilities are quite literally endless:

- The sudden appearance of a dragonfly, its iridescent wings catching in the sun's rays.
- A glittering stone or coin in your pathway, like some token left just for you. (Do you know what it means?)
- A lovely plant you pass by on your walk. Maybe it's an unwieldy fern hanging from a window like Rapunzel's hair, or ivy growing up a tree.
- The rich, comforting scent of baked goods, like zucchini bread or coffee cake or sweet potato pie, just like you loved as a child.
- The smell of the air and earth after a rainstorm, and the sudden, fleeting appearance of a rainbow overhead.
- The feel of a lovestruck cat seeking your affection, then purring under your palm.
- The unexpected pleasure of hearing your favorite song while running the occasional mundane errand, or catching the eye of a mischievous, smiling child. (Or changeling? One can never be too sure.)
- One must, in a gossamer-themed issue, extoll the pleasure of spying dewdrops on a spiderweb during an early morning walk.
- And then the hush of wings fluttering in the distance, as you turn to see what other creature was there beside you, dazzled by that same sight.
- And it's almost always a good idea to remember that the world is full of enchantment, much as it tries sometimes to make us forget.

OUR COVER STORY

Roses AND Gossamer

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ELIZABETH ELDER

@emackphoto

Model: Emily O'Dette *@esodette* *Gown:* Firefly Path *@fireflypath* *Wings:* HelloFaerie *@hellofaerie*
Crown: Fiori Couture *@fioricouture* *Videography:* Griffin Sendek *@griffinsendek*

THE ROSE FAMILY of FAIRIES: ADVICE for GARDENERS

by Theodora Goss

A rose by any other name would smell as sweet, said Mr. Shakespeare, but the rose family (*Rosaceae*) is so large and varied that his poetic statement is not entirely accurate. Of course, that family includes our common garden roses, but also fruit trees and shrubs. Even the strawberry is a kind of rose. Some members of the rose family are sweetly scented, some have no scent at all, but what they do all have is fairies. Members of the rose family fairly swarm with fairies, and when the peach and pear and plum trees are blooming, you may see a fairy sitting on every branch.

Some of these fairies are mild-mannered, but others can be quite pesky, so readers of this magazine may wonder, *How do I deal with fairies in my garden?* Dealing with fairies in an orchard is a separate issue, and I would direct you to "The Problem of Fairies in a Commercial Orchard" by Rev. Edwidg Higginbottom, where he describes what to do if, for example, fairies attack the families that come to pick apples in your orchard, pulling their hair and pinching them in defense of the fruit.

Here I shall deal only with the average urban or suburban garden, which contains perhaps a few rosebushes, a cherry or apricot tree, and a raspberry bush from which the homemaker intends to make jams and preserves. I shall focus specifically on the rose family of fairies, which are by far the most troublesome of the garden fairies, but certainly worth having—just like the plants they care for and defend.

Consider, for example, how easy it is to grow lilacs, peonies, or daffodils. All these have their own fairies, but they give us practically no trouble at all. However, roses must be cared for diligently lest they get black spot or an infestation of aphids. They must be pruned in the right season, as must fruit trees and bushes, if you are to get any fruit. The rose family of fairies are exactly as troublesome as their plants. Let us now discuss them in detail, so you will know what to expect from your particular set of fairies and why you may wish to include them in your garden despite the additional care they require.

Old Rose Fairies

The old rose fairies are as varied as the roses themselves, from the prickly wild roses that scramble through country hedges to the stately bourbons and gallicas that ornament our rose beds. I am always delighted to see a fairy ball in my bed of old roses. Some of the fairies play miniature lutes and pipes and tabors, while others engage in ancient court dances, moving in intricate figures over the grass. They dress in gowns made of rose petals, the albas in pale many-petalled confections, the gallicas in various shades of pink, the damasks wearing mossy green caps. The queen of my garden, the Empress Josephine fairy, sits in state on a toadstool, watching the throng.

Modern Rose Fairies

The modern rose fairies are more troublesome, but great fun. They are the fairies of garden roses hybridized after 1867, and their ancestors come from all over the world—India, China, Japan, and elsewhere. They think the old roses are dull, and on moonlit nights you can see them jitterbugging to a cricket jazz band. Their petal outfits are colorful, from creamy yellow to mauve and deep purple, and they tend to be daringly modern in style. Some of the female fairies even wear trousers!

Fruit Bush and Other Plant Fairies

Fruit bush fairies tend to be shy—the raspberry and blackberry fairies hide in their bushes, so you may scarcely see them. But the strawberry fairies are as bold as their bright red caps, and if you are polite to them, they will show you which of their berries are the ripest and ready for picking.

Fruit Tree Fairies

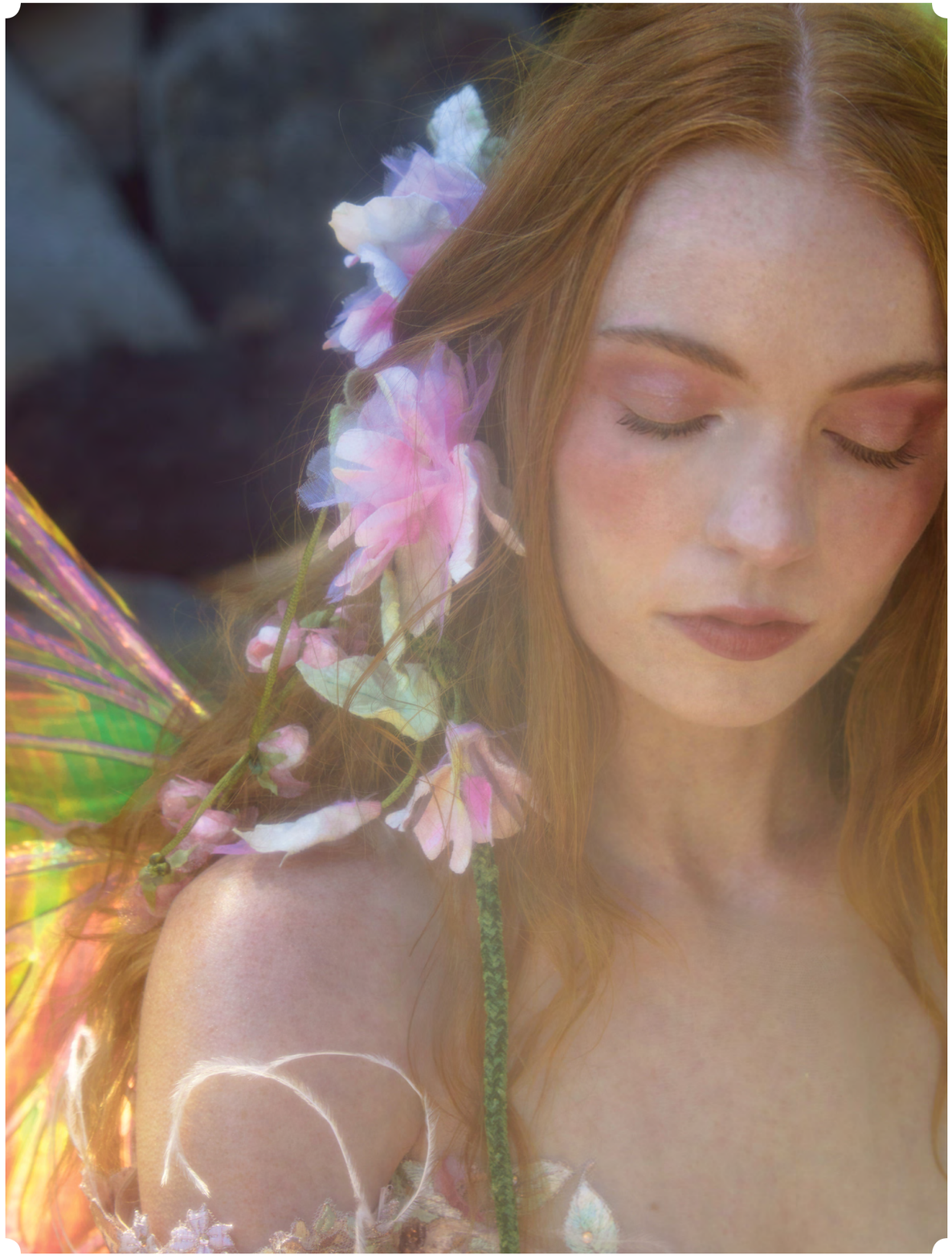
I must confess that the fruit tree fairies are my favorite. In spring, I like to see the peach and plum and apricot fairies sitting on the branches of their trees in delicate pink and white gowns. They are good friends to the birds, helping to build nests and rescuing baby birds that have fallen out of them. The apple blossom fairies can be a bit sour and disagreeable, especially the wild crabs, but they are worth the trouble. If you gain their friendship, you will have a bountiful harvest of apples to keep in your cellar over the winter.

The most beautiful by far, in my opinion at least, are the cherry blossom fairies. In spring you will see them, arrayed in layers of pink tulle, covering their trees so completely that it looks as though they are having a debutante ball. It is a treat seeing them flutter through the air or float down to the grass like pink snow. The trouble you will take in growing a cherry tree will be worth it for the beauty they bring to your garden.

The rose family of plants is not the easiest to grow, and if you have been wounded by the sharp thorn of a protective blackberry fairy or suffered through an invasion of aphids, you may be tempted to give up on them. But I urge you to persevere, for no other fairies bring such beauty and grace to your garden.

Theodora Goss is the World Fantasy, Locus, and Mythopoeic Award-winning author or editor of eleven books, including the short-story and poetry collections The Collected Enchantments *and* Snow White Learns Witchcraft, *as well as her trilogy that began with* The Strange Case of the Alchemist's Daughter *and ended with* The Sinister Mystery of the Mesmerizing Girl. *Follow her on Instagram @theodoragoss.*





CAPTURING GOSSAMER

by Griffin Sendek and Emily O'Dette

Gossamer refers to that which is light, delicate, and insubstantial—and so much of what photographer Elizabeth Elder creates resides within this unquantifiable space. Her goal is to capture what hasn't been seen before, yet to do so with an air of familiarity, an innate nostalgia for the fantasies that danced around our brains when we were young.

These moments don't just happen spontaneously, though. Everything is meticulously planned, and transforming fantasies into reality is never possible alone.

For this shoot, which took place in Washington's Mount Rainier National Park, Emily O'Dette, the producer and model, found one of the most incredible spots in all the surrounding area in front of an ice-capped active volcano. Without visiting the location, she researched the fleeting period when the park's subalpine meadows spring to life with wildflower blooms, relying on blogs, trail guides, videos, and daily park monitoring through AllTrails photos. This perfectly set the stage for our fairy-tale moment, when we flew from California to Washington to shoot in one of our most awe-inspiring locations to date.

Firefly Path and Elizabeth are always drawn to looks delicate and fragile, always preferring dreamy imperfections over total symmetry. From the minds of JoEllen Elam Conway and Alex Prigge, Firefly Path crafted this fairy gown specifically to give the impression that it was handspun by the forest dwellers. Every inch of the gown mirrors the delicacy of nature; the floral lace embodies hand-picked flowers while the gown itself moves like rose petals flowing in the breeze.

HelloFaerie custom-made this stunning pair of wings in ombré pink and green to match the gown and grassy meadow. The iridescent shine of the wings soaked up the sun, giving them a natural glow.



One might think that after such careful planning, everything would come together effortlessly the day of the shoot. But the first photographs lacked a crucial magical quality. It's hard not to feel pressure in such a moment. The light was already shifting, the brief window was closing. When this happens, it's easy to fear missing the shot.

As the seconds passed, the sun slowly scraped its way across the sky, and then something in the air shifted. Through her viewfinder, Elizabeth saw the blooming flowers, the lush forest, and the sunshine beaming through the fine rose-petal pink silk, creating colors unlike anything any of us had ever seen. And then this beautiful summer fairy appeared right before her eyes.

Through her lens, she watched Emily breathe life into this beautiful forest-dwelling fairy. Emily has always emanated a fairylike softness, but those delicate, near imperceptible changes made her seem a fae among us mortals. And as if that weren't enough, throughout the day multiple deer stopped along their paths to greet Emily, their fellow forest kin.

Emily's wings were no longer iridescent film and wire forged of manufactured materials but naturally sprouted from her back. Firefly Path's gown had transformed from silk, needle, and thread to a piece spun of forest fairy magic.

A strange thing happens when a photo shoot comes together: The outside world fades away, and you can live, if only for a moment, in this world you've created.

"I settled amid the flowers while little winged fairylike insects floated on the breeze and a doe peacefully led her fawns by us through the meadow. In the stillness, I felt swept away by a fairy character who called this her home. The flowers no longer felt foreign but like old friends I had spent springs curled up beside. The sound of the creek behind me like my favorite song. My characters are often born of the connection I feel to the natural spaces we shoot in, and without these spaces, our stories would truly be incomplete. So if you find yourself wanting to be swept away into a fairy tale, take a step outside and watch for the quiet magic happening all around us, even in the most hidden places."

—Emily O'Dette





FIREFLY PATH'S INSPIRATION BEHIND THE GOWN

by JoEllen Elam Conway a.k.a. Firefly Path

When I think of the word *gossamer*, what immediately comes to mind are fabrics that float on the wind—airy, pastel, and seemingly weightless. To me, there's nothing more ethereal than silk chiffon. It has an almost magical aversion to gravity, and its texture is unmatched. I've always imagined that fairies would wear only the finest of fabrics—perhaps even woven especially for them by their silkworm companions.

For this gown, I envisioned a fairy who had wrapped herself in the softest rose petals. Delicate clusters of crystals and pearls are scattered like morning dew across the silk, catching the light in just the right way. I like to think fairies collect small, shiny treasures to adorn themselves, so I incorporated embroidered floral lace, tiny crystals, and pearls to shimmer throughout the gown. Between the flower clusters, we strung a dainty chain of hand-beaded trim to add a final touch of fae enchantment.

To create the illusion that rose petals were effortlessly draped around the body, I started with a base of illusion mesh, perfectly matched to Emily's skin tone. It forms an invisible foundation, allowing the silk to appear as if it's floating. The back of the gown features a sheer ribbon laced through a hidden loop track, giving the effect of a floating corset.

The skirt is made from long silk petals, each one cut on the bias to maximize their natural flow. As they overlap and move, they mimic the lightness and motion of real flower petals. I imagined our fairy muse twirling through a meadow, and I wanted the gown to lift and dance with her.

I hesitate to say that seeing Emily in the meadow wearing the gown was "a dream come true"—it felt more like seeing her as her truest self. Some people carry a bit of fairy magic within them, and Emily naturally radiates that energy. She's been a muse for so many of my designs.

As soon as she stepped into the gown during our fitting, I thought, *This isn't just a dress—this is an extension of her ethereal aura.* We even snapped a Polaroid in that moment, and honestly, you can't tell me fairies don't exist. I caught one in my studio.





World Turtle Pendant

A realm within reach

Featured design: Celestial Isle Shell & World Turtle Pendant Base

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Funeral of a Fairy (1888), by Maxmilián Pirner

The Picture Art Collection / Alamy Stock Photo

Ceramic Floristry
WITH JULIA OLEYNIK

Gazing at these photos, with the delicate, silken petals so slight they're nearly translucent, one can almost smell the perfume of the fresh-picked blooms. Full blooms at the height of their glory, before their inevitable decay. We were careful to choose images that showcase Ukrainian artist Julia Oleynik at work, because the truth is so astonishing: These flowers will never decay, because they're not real at all, but hand-fashioned, petal by petal, in Oleynik's home in Latvia, where she creates these delicate beauties from clay and teaches others around the world how to do the same.

Below, she tells us more about this exquisite art form.

Enchanted Living: How did you begin working with clay in this way?
Julia Oleynik: Flowers, painting, and sculpture have always inspired me—they've been an essential part of my artistic background. At some point, that inspiration came together in a modern form of art: ceramic floristry. It was there that realistic flowers began to emerge from simple pieces of white clay in my hands: flowers that never wilt. This idea became incredibly captivating. By using fine artist-grade oil paints, I'm able to achieve nuanced tones that bring the clay flower even closer to the look of a real one.

EL: What are you trying to achieve through your work?
JO: I'm happy to share my experience with women from many different countries. Through my work, I hope to introduce more people to this beautiful form of art—one that captivates you from the very first moment. And with time, who knows, it may become a beloved hobby for some.

I continue to explore the creative possibilities of this craft, making flowers not only for interior pieces, but also for fashion brands, where my blooms become part of a dress or serve as floral accessories.

EL: Can you tell us about your love for flowers and recreating them?
JO: I love studying each flower and its uniqueness—it's like reading the thoughts of nature. I'm in awe of its imagination: every flower has its own color palette, shape, grace, and personality. These are unique forms that reflect the individuality of each bloom.

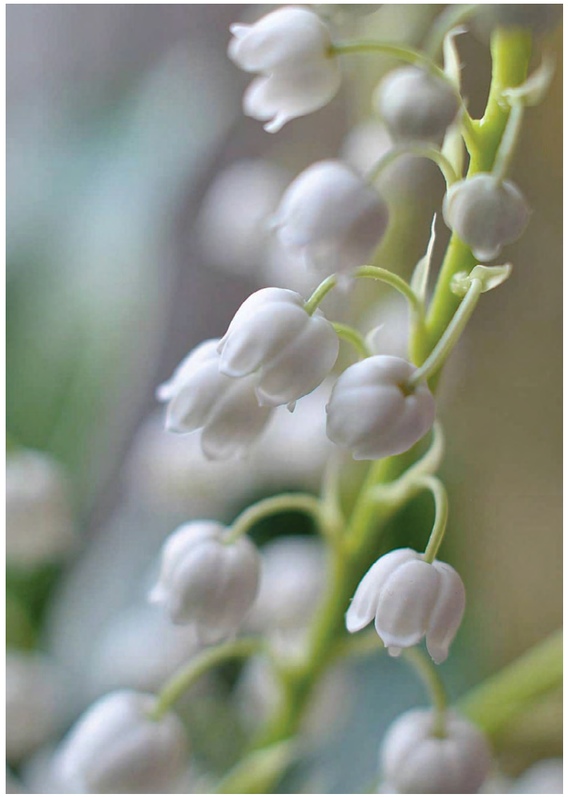
EL: What inspires you?
JO: Nature inspires me. So do talented florists, and my students, who share their beautiful results with me. And of course, I'm deeply inspired by the projects I work on, especially when I see them come to life as part of a wedding brand's collection.

EL: How do you manage to preserve that sense of magic?
JO: I simply love the creative process with all my heart. I enjoy expressing myself through my work. What inspires me most is the act of shaping each flower—and the feeling of joy when I see a bloom that will never fade, crafted from a humble piece of clay in my own hands.

Follow Julia on Instagram @julia_ok8.









The Fantastical Art of JOHN SIMMONS

BY KIRSTY STONELL WALKER



When fairy fever struck the Victorians, they never recovered. Many would say thank goodness for that, as this fever created some of the most beautiful art to float gently on the breezes of the 19th century, art that still captures our imagination today. One of the most impactful yet mysteriously unknown proponents of this fashion for fae was a modest young artist from the southwest of England. This is the story of John Simmons (1823–1876).

By the time Simmons found his forte in fairyland, it had already been in fashion for over a decade. On stage and canvas, Shakespeare was always a commercial favorite, and *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* fit the fashion for the supernatural. At the end of the previous century, fantasy artist Henry Fuseli (1741–1825) produced influential and popular illustrations for a folio of the Bard's plays that enabled them to be reproduced and sold to a greater audience. His classical yet raucous images of Titania and Bottom paved the way for a genre of art that could be literary and still pleasingly nude. This foreshadowed what was to follow in the 19th century's years of fairies, with artists such as Richard Dadd, who offered his interpretation of midsummer madness with *Puck* from 1841 and *Contradiction: Oberon and Titania* from 1854–58.

A Midsummer Night's Dream also held sway on the stage, delighting audiences during this period. Its poetic language, lack of tragedy, and fantasy elements lifted audiences from the industrial modern world they inhabited. Samuel Phelps's production at Sadler's Wells in 1853 used layers of green and blue gauze to create a dreamlike separation from fairyland, close to us but still beyond our grasp. Opera singer and producer Lucia Elizabeth Vestris (1797–1856) drew her audience into fairyland in her 1840 revival of the play at Covent Garden, using flittering lights around the theater to suggest the fairies when Oberon proclaimed that they "through the house give glimmering light." With her background not only in grand opera but also in burlesque, Vestris also knew how to tread the fine line between fairy costume and scantily clad scandal, which would become pertinent in the paintings that followed.

This experience with the fantasy of fairyland and the human yearning for it drew artists to create canvases that brought this specific Shakespeare play to an artistic audience. The plays beguiled the public, but more importantly, they ensnared the imagination of artists, drawing them deeper into this world. John Simmons had been a portrait and miniature artist, making a modest living in Bristol, in the crevice of Southwest England, across the water from Wales. Miles from the Royal Academy, he painted local dignitaries but did not create any ripples in the art world at large. These earnest and dignified works earned him membership in the Bristol Academy of Fine Arts, where he also taught. All in all, he was a well-respected man by both his pupils and peers and regarded as kindhearted, congenial, and an encouraging teacher. His marriage in the 1850s and the four children who arrived in quick succession in the 1860s seem to have coincided with his change from portraits to fairies, a reckless and inspired move that brought him fame, if only for a while.

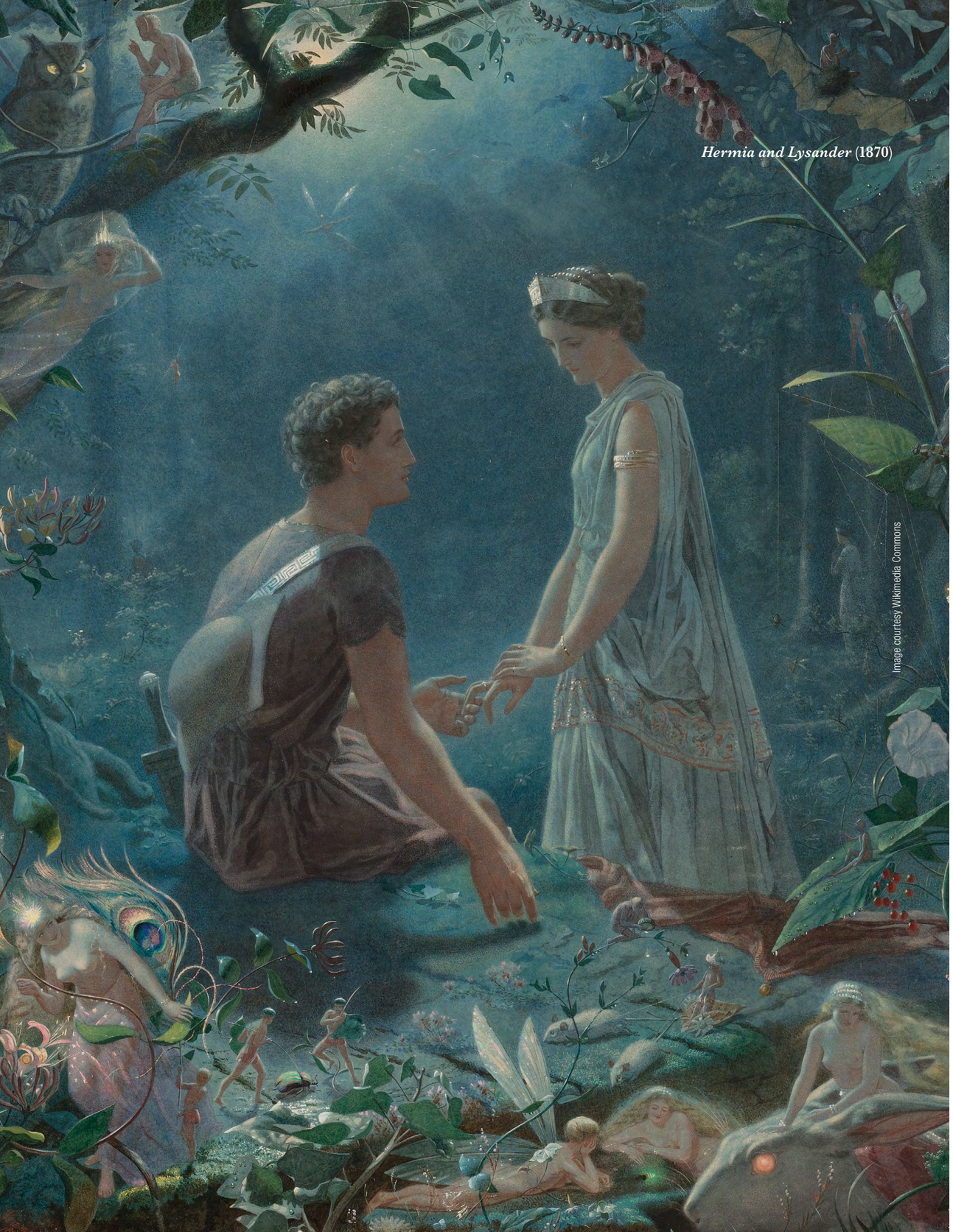
His training as a miniaturist was surely a gift for a man entering the delicate world of the fae. Each of his visions was executed with clarity, detail, and a smooth finish as if it'd been brushed onto glass. His dreams of fairyland were both innocent yet alluring, free of any mischief and malice that crept into some fae imagery of the time. Instead, Simmons found his ideal of womanhood in the peerless Titania, statuesque and naked. In this he drew an interesting parallel to Vestris's performances. Sharing the high art is all very well, but everyone would want to sneak a look at a beautiful naked lady. Take, for example, *The Honey Bee Steals From the Bumble Bees* (opposite), where we see a woman with pale moth wings regarding an errant bee caught taking pollen from a drowsy bumble bee. As the title references a line from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we know it is the figure of Titania who is shining a light on this theft, the pinprick of bright burning from the tip of her hair-thin wand as she looks on admonishingly. Pale,

Photo © The Maas Gallery, London / Bridgeman Images

***The Honey Bee Steals From the Bumble Bees* (1823–1876)**

A Scene From 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' (1873)

Image courtesy Wikimedia Commons



***Hermia and Lysander* (1870)**

Image courtesy Wikimedia Commons

Kirsty Stonell Walker

with a cascade of platinum blonde hair, our Fairy Queen is naked but for the thinnest veil of gauze that seems to swoop from her waist to cover her modesty but very little else. It is debatable whether we are meant to feel titillated by this ivory queen or to await her judgement of our own misdeeds.

The same figure with powder-soft wings appears in one of Simmons's best-known paintings, *Titania* (1866) (not shown here). On the frame is inscribed the repeated motto: "The honey bags steal from the humblebees." The fairy queen once more glows in her spiderweb-thin gown, a spectral orb among the flowers and foliage. Echoing her pallor are the convolvulus or small field bindweed blooms, their meaning possibly hinting at the humility she'll feel as she succumbs to the play's spell and falls in love with Bottom. Her absorption with the natural world around her also speaks of her fascination with transience and mortality, which she, as an immortal being, can never possess.

Often in Victorian art of this genre, the fairy world seems within reach of our own, if we could only be aware of it. In Simmons's 1870 *Hermia and Lysander* (opposite page), the mortal protagonists of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* appear lost in a wood, unaware of the fae folk who surround them. In contrast to the flimsily clad fairies, Hermia's robes are modest and her hair neatly bound. The couple is so absorbed with each other that Lysander doesn't notice the fairy riding a mouse-powered chariot by his hand, nor the naked beauty atop the white hare with glowing eyes. Just beyond them, another stunning nude dances in the pollen of the honeysuckle while being fanned with a peacock feather. Any one of those extraordinary vignettes should be enough to catch even the most ardent of lovers' eye, so either our couple is devoted beyond measure or *extremely* shortsighted.

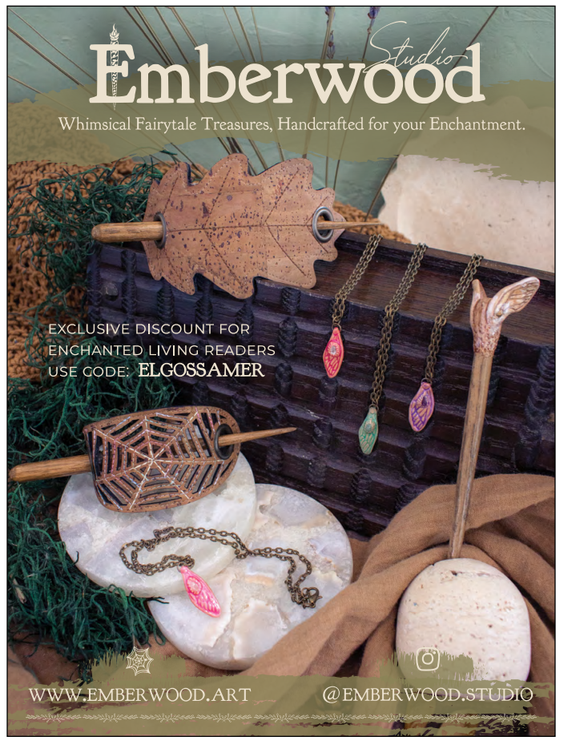
Another explanation for our ignorance of the magical world just beyond our fingertips is that we are quite literally unconscious of it. In his 1873 *A Scene From 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'* (see pages 30-31), Simmons shows the sleeping figures of Hermia and Titania, watched by the fairies. Around them climb the bindweed flowers, but if the blooms are read as woodbines, they have a narcotic inference. Couple that with the foxgloves present in his other works, and there is a hint of drugging and dreams. As in John Austen Fitzgerald's *The Dream After the Masked Ball*, also known as *The Stuff Dreams Are Made Of* (1864), or his 1858 painting *The Nightmare*, the Victorians were aware of the presence, welcome or otherwise, of fae folk as they slept. The overt drugging of the figures in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* may well have chimed with the use, and misuse, of opiates in the 19th century and the hallucinations that could arise. It is easy to believe in the magical world that surrounds you if you must be deeply slumbering for it to manifest. Also, the presence of such light and fleeting beauty when life becomes dark and difficult brings a comfort of its own.

Simmons's art was embraced by critics and public alike. He was praised in the newspapers for his poetical treatment and cited as a talented and rising star, but his glory was too brief to be of great financial benefit. He died suddenly, at only 51. Such was the shock and sorrow felt in Bristol that a subscription was raised within the artistic world to save his widow and four young children who were left penniless. Despite his brief career and modest number of small canvases, the paintings Simmons left were to join the canon of the fairy genre that brought pinpricks of light to the modern certainties of the 19th century.

Sometimes life seems beyond our control and without hope, but take comfort in the fact that just beyond your peripheral vision, a fairy is racing by in a mouse chariot … and be glad.



Kirsty Stonell Walker is a writer and researcher whose passion is bringing forward the stories of women who might have otherwise vanished in history. She's the author of Pre-Raphaelite Girl Gang *and* Light and Love *and* Stunner, *a biography of Pre-Raphaelite superstar Fanny Cornforth. Visit her on Instagram @kstonellwalker.*





Photography by
DANNIELLA JAINE
@danniellajaine



KAREN KAY'S FAIRY WHISPERING

Author and fairy expert Karen Kay has been hearing fairy whispers since she was a young girl—and it started in her grandmother's wild, rose-filled garden. Kay would gather up the fallen rose petals, place them in a bowl with water, and crush them to make perfume for the flower fairies she knew inhabited that enchanted space. She'd leave the perfume out overnight, and it would always (of course) be gone in the morning. She saw the fairies, she writes, as tiny points of vibrant light, out of the corner of her eye, piercing through from the fairy realm into this one—and she does to this day.

And now she's written a book about them. *Fairy Whispering*, which was published by Hay House last November, contains 111 ways to connect with the fairies through magical practices, including gorgeous rituals, spells, meditations, incantations, and visualizations. One of these spells, based on that most alluring and gossamer of fairy plays, is below.

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM SPELL

Many of us are familiar with William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—a play telling the tale of fairies playing games with humans on this most enchanted of nights! Midsummer's Eve is certainly a potent and magical time, during which fairies pierce the veil into our realm. This makes it the perfect time to connect with fairies.

This spell can be done indoors or outdoors. I always say that doing it outside is best. However, I know that this is not always possible, and doing it inside works equally well.

You'll need some fairy dust (biodegradable glitter), a white or light-colored candle (ideally unscented), a small jar or lantern if going outside, and some rose essential oil and rose petals to represent midsummer. The spell is to be performed any time between dusk and midnight on Midsummer's Eve.

Place a few drops of the rose essential oil in your palm and put a small dab onto your third eye area (between your eyebrows). Then pick up your candle and, using your index finger and thumb, rub the oil from the top to the bottom. As you do this, say:

I call upon Oberon and Titania, king and queen of the fairies, to help me to love all that I see, and to accept with good grace what life gives to me. I call also on Puck, to bring me good luck and good fortune forever more. I am knocking upon your fairy door.

Next, light your candle, and say:

With this flame I ignite this spell, for the highest good of all, wishing everyone well.

Then sprinkle your fairy dust over the flame. Hear it crackle and pop as the energy rises. Take care when doing this and keep your face and eyes at a distance.

Next, take your rose petals, hold them up high, and allow them to fall gently over your head, energizing you with their sweetly scented energy.

While you are doing all of this, hold the intention of inviting the king and queen of the fairies to connect with you. Be mindful that Puck can and probably will play games, as he is prone to do!

Follow Karen Kay on Instagram @karenkayfairy and find Fairy Whispering *wherever books are sold.*



Handmade glass vases
by Evan Chambers Objects

Light, Fantastic, Gossamer

SOLSTICE OBSERVATIONS OF THINGS IRIDESCENT, WEIGHTLESS, WINGED, AND AIRY

BY SUSANN COKAL

It is coming on fast: one of the year's most magical moments, a gossamer bubble of time entranced within the ordinary. And so you plan a soirée that will *radiate* for the solstice.

You'll celebrate light and lightness among shadows in a backyard meadow packed with daisies. Think a bit like a daisy yourself, perhaps like Gatsby's dashing flapper Daisy Buchanan, who is famous for asking, "Do you always watch for the longest day of the year and then miss it? I always watch for the longest day of the year and then miss it."

Your interest is the year's shortest night. You won't miss a minute.

You plan to begin as the daisies close their petals at dusk and end when they open again in the light. In between, diaphanous dresses will swirl through the brief hours of darkness; iridescent glassware and beads will shimmer in light from the sunset, candles, bonfire, twinkle lights, dawn.

The gossamer is an ineffable extra element, the almost-not-there that reminds us not to simply look through the light, the water, the air—everything we would ordinarily call invisible and intangible—but to look *at* them. Touch them. Even air can take on body and substance. In its strict definition, the word *gossamer* refers to a loose weave of very thin fabric, like the cotton gauze with which it might share etymology (*goss*-amer, *gauze*). Or it can refer to that thin, shimmery film that covers things like spiderwebs. But when have things gossamer ever been strict? The term is about expansion and release, shining light and being light—meaning both brightness and almost-weightlessness. It can gather all the senses and spin them into a cloud of synesthesia, so touch and vision become the same experience, sounds have a taste, colors have smells, and light and lightness entwine everywhere.

You probably need a few things, which means you have a most delightful mission to complete. It could start with a dragonfly wing or a peacock feather you find on a walk. Then a trip to the flea market, the thrift store, a friend's attic, even a rare maybe-this-time visit to a fancy antiques mall and art gallery as you hunt for a blue glass bowl that color-shifts and shimmers as you fill it with flowers. And a veil of lace, a linen chemise, a silk dress. You'll honor time itself when you bring in a few special somethings to transform your space … and perhaps even yourself. The gossamer glints from the shadows or floats down from above, light as air. It is, most of all, what surprises us.

A Look at Light From Both Sides Now

Iridescence, for example, always seems to catch us off guard. A damselfly's glassy wing is all but invisible against the light as it wavers past to a riverbank and then settles in with a mere gleam of icy blue. Or a serendipitous bubble floats away, swirling pink and blue, when you set down your bottle of dish soap.

The wing and the bubble contain a gossamer secret. They are transparent and almost colorless in themselves, but we still see color on them, and the color moves and changes according to the angle from which we see. Our eyes perceive color and shimmer because we're looking at two nearly invisible layers, and they make light start to fight itself.

Most of what we see, we see because it reflects light: Light hits the object and bounces back from the surface, sending information about shape and color back to us. With transparent or translucent objects, we might also see by refraction—meaning that a wave of light enters the object and is bent or redirected, as in a prism. This happens a lot with glass, including crystals cut especially for the job, but it's more common elsewhere than it might sound at first.

Take that errant soap bubble. It's a sphere with air at the core, enclosed by an extremely thin wall of water with a smidge of glycerol (about one-tenth the thickness of a single hair), wrapped again by the air. When light hits the bubble, some of it stops at the outside layer and some makes it through to the back of that very thin wall. So we see it bouncing off two surfaces at once. And the angles send different color signals; in true scientific parlance, they then "interfere" with each other—basically, they fight, and we get the rapidly shifting colors we love. Finally, the layer of water is under constant pressure from the air inside and out, so its thickness never stops changing—which produces the movement that activates the shimmer … until, eventually, the bubble bursts.

When you study a clear insect wing, too, you're looking at outside and inside at the same time. The wing is composed of two layers of chitin, the same tough, translucent material that makes up your fingernails. As a damselfly or dragonfly hovers, you perceive light bouncing off both layers, and the waves interfere with each other again. Ordinary flies' wings do the same trick. So why don't all transparent insect wings shimmer in this way?

Actually, they do, according to a coterie of researchers. About fifteen years ago, one group suddenly realized that they'd been looking at insect wings all wrong. When a scientist holds one up to the light, she tends to study the veins between colorless layers of chitin. When she lowers that wing and takes a moment to let a light shine *on* it, she understands magic.

Light interference also puts a faint shine to the transparent

Light, Fantastic, Gossamer

Susann Cokal

wings of grasshoppers. And cockroaches. And fairies. It excites the eye and inspires the heart.

Luminous Accidents

Your solstice soirée demands glassware: candlesticks, goblets, vases for daisies. And it has to shimmer. It reminds us that the elements are connected, because air and solid and light dance together on that thin surface—a romance that would not be possible without the application of another element: fire.

As a species, we've had glass in our lives since we started using rocks as tools. First came obsidian, which is technically both rock and glass formed from lava. It was great for knife blades, dark mirrors, and necklaces, but it didn't *glow.* About 3,600 years ago, we decided to try making something similar—but prettier, more versatile, more ours. One theory runs that in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and northern Syria, stand-alone glass may have developed out of pottery glazes. Or you might prefer the origin story from 16th century German scholar Georgius Agricola: Glassmaking was invented when a ship carrying a soft white mineral called niter stopped so those aboard could make dinner on a white-sand beach. The sailors put a few lumps of niter in their fires to hold up their pots and kettles; when it heated, it fused with the sand and formed liquid glass—magical to see for the first time, very versatile when the happy (and probably fictional) accident was repeated on purpose. Then around 100 BCE, somebody decided to see if blowing air into molten glass through a hollow pipe would yield anything good, and an art form took off.

The recipe and the chemistry have remained basically the same: Glass is made of silica (usually sand), an alkali flux (like wood potash or soda) that lowers the silica's melting temperature, a stabilizer such as lime, and potential colorants, mix-ins, and sprays for effect. It's blown and cut and flattened and rolled with hand tools, pressed into molds, pulled like taffy, snipped like cloth, and cooled down in an annealing oven. As is so often the case, the most glamorous effects come from sweaty hard work.

We had to wait a long time for colorful shimmer and shine, and when it came, it had a dizzying array of names attached: You'll find glimmering glass officially listed as luster, rainbow, fumed, pearlescent, iridescent, and more—and that's just for the handmade varieties also known as art glass. The first iridescent form was Venetian opaline, white with a faint blue gleam. Invented during the 1500s, it was pretty much the only option until the 1800s. Then the century's enthusiastic archaeologists and amateur treasure hunters began digging up Roman glasswork with the most alluringly prismatic surfaces—the result of having been buried in wet ground for a thousand years. Pale pink over yellowish, very pretty; intense turquoise, amazing! Why couldn't we make those effects *now*? Why not try?

The first step was another accident. According to glass doyen Gregory Merkel, on one special holiday in 1856, someone at a Central European glasswork decided to stash the fireworks in an annealing oven that still held cooling glassware. This would not normally have gone down as an act of genius, but the results of the explosion made it seem divinely inspired: a lovely shimmer spread unevenly over the pieces that survived. We now had a technique—albeit not a very safe or efficient one—for creating that lovely Roman sheen. In a talk on iridescence available through the Neustadt Collection at Queens Museum (a necessary pilgrimage for lovers of Tiffany glass), Merkel said that nobody knows how the factory's chemist decided on the next step either—adding metal salts to the oven, as either a spray or a heap that would vaporize with heat. A probably mild to moderate shimmer was achieved. But there was plenty more to come … and within about thirty years, we'd have Tiffany windows.

Industry and the Novelty of Nouveau

So much of what we love in things gossamer is a study in contrasts—the shift of color against color, light against dark, matte vs. shiny, soft and flowing vs. smooth and sharp, technology vs. old-fashioned handmade technique.

Gossamer as we celebrate it is not a relic of the past, or at least not to everyone. The two Industrial Revolutions (1760 to 1840, then 1870 to 1914) brought innovations in chemistry, engineering, and the general running of factories that led to some of the creations we've collected in these pages; they also helped produce these pages themselves. With waterwheels, then steam engines, machine tools, electricity, internal combustion, the power loom, trains, cars, chemical dyes, and so much more—in short, *mass production*—it seemed almost anything could be achieved in a laboratory … except the personal touch and animating spirit of handicrafts.

Machined consistency married handmade individuality around the 1890s, when the brief, glorious art nouveau era combined the Industrial Age and the Arts and Crafts movement to make *objets d'art et de vertu* accessible to people who weren't rich or particularly gifted with artistic talent. We cannot even think about gossamer without alighting here.

To love art nouveau is first of all to prize not only painting and statuary but also pottery, glasswork, embroidery, furniture making, and all manner of items both useful and beauteous. Art nouveau also means favoring natural shapes and effects: the dragonfly's delicacy and shine, a Mucha girl's long locks and filmy gown, sinuous metalwork, asymmetrical handles, wood carving that echoes the vines growing up the old trees outside your window. There is a special thrill when you turn on a lamp over a ceramic base and the glaze radiates like a hummingbird's throat, or you hold a candle to one of Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh's bas-relief embroideries, gleaming with silk and metallic threads, or your hostess serves from a glimmering punch set that makes everything taste like champagne and elderflower. Even handmade works of art might use techniques and materials that would not have been possible before the century's explosion of scientific discovery and innovation.

When collecting, some people favor the traces of technology through history: machine lace, synthetic dyes, factory-made carnival glass. Some cherish the variations that come from the human hand at work; a purist rejects everything except naturally derived materials and timeworn techniques. You can set your own rules—or just embrace gossamer wherever you find it. This night is your artwork.

The Brilliance of the Peacock

Now we simply *must* talk about peacocks. Together with dragonflies, they are the darlings of art nouveau aesthetic—but then again, there has never really been a time when European artists were not in love with the peacock.

The peafowl who live in my neighborhood are indisputably its most popular residents. We think they are perfect simply because they exist, and then they surprise us with more: the long, slim lines of the train (a regal term for the tail) suddenly shake and lift to fan out in seconds into a half-circle of about 200 long feathers studded with stylized eyes. They watch us as we watch them. They watch themselves too, posturing beside a shiny black car (mine, hello), pecking at their own reflections to chase competition away. They are not exactly smart birds (I have filmed them trying to make love to a squirrel, a cat, and a flowerpot), but they never stop trying. And physically, they are brilliant, from their ornamented tails down to their tiniest neck feathers, the size of a blunt pencil tip.

The iridescence of a peacock feather isn't exactly the same as what we see on the dragonfly's wing or a soap bubble. A peacock feather is not clear, but it isn't colored the way most people think either. Instead of blue or green, its pigment is brown. It gets color from its structure, because it's covered in microscopic prisms that crowd its fuzzy bits and refract the light that shines through them. So, again, a prism changes the angle of the light wave, which in turn changes our eyes' perception of color, and then the light waves interfere with each other and create a sense of movement. So the neck of our neighborhood's Indian blue peacock shifts among shades from sapphire to teal to turquoise, midnight blue-black, violet, and emerald, depending on where he stands.



Achieving a mutable effect such as that multishaded blue was a major challenge for glass artists and the chemists who enabled them. They brought all the scientific insight and technical know-how of the late 19th century to bear when they started producing strong, lush colors tricked out with metal trim



Loïe Fuller Dancing, Samuel Joshua Beckett, c. 1900

Penta Springs Limited / Alamy Stock Photo

Light, Fantastic, Gossamer

Susann Cokal

and angular, twining handles that also played with light. But for true iridescence, we had to wait for Louis Comfort Tiffany, the glass magnate (and son of the jewelry Tiffany). He instructed his chief chemist, Arthur Nash, to re-create the effects of the most colorful Roman glass.

After truly thousands of experiments, Nash found that the trick was adding multiple metals: silver nitrate went into the molten glass, followed by a spray of tin salt (stannous chloride) to the exterior once the piece was shaped. The technique works because the silver moves to the surface, where the tin salt layer produces a luster over base shades, with color changes to satisfy any old Roman soul. From 1896 onward, Favrile glass (a lovely name derived from a word meaning *handcrafted*) was Tiffany's most sought-after offering, used in everything from stained-glass windows to vases to faux scarab beetles for jewelry making. The Steuben company added another step to make Aurene—a gold-tinted art glass—by applying a spray of iron salt (ferric chloride) after the tin. Contemporary artists keep pushing the nouveau spirit of experimentation further for new effects.

One question remains, my fae friend, and it's a big one: How do our eyes perceive that iridescent color and movement on glass? When light reaches your favorite vase, does it bounce back right away in a reflection or bend in refraction?

Various people will give you *definitive* answers one way or the other and will be absolutely certain they are telling you the truth. The refraction people say that light waves interfere with each other again; the light jackknifes through very thin prismatic layers before it reflects off the far edge. The reflection people say no, iridescence is just a beautiful surface effect that light does not penetrate. What we have here, I have concluded, is some sound-wave interference, but neither side is bending. (My money's on refraction.)

Some down-market cousins of art glass are made in factories rather than studios. These include carnival glass (which has a half-dozen other names itself), mercury glass, dichroic glass, and Swarovski's innovation, aurora borealis rhinestones and beads, which shimmied into our jewelry boxes in 1955 and never left.

Honestly, we love it all. Especially that glorious peacock's-neck blue.

Glass artist Evan Chambers (see his work on page 36) considers the iridescence of his creations to be a color in its own right, the most beautiful shade we have yet imagined. "To find it on something like glass," he says, "something that doesn't crumble and decompose, is *very* special. Very human. It's magic that humans can create."

We Clothe Ourselves in Spiderwebs

So you've brought home that beautiful peacock's throat of a vase and a set of carnival glass goblets. But are you going to let your glassware outshine what *you* wear? I think we know the answer.

You've been planning something all along, a filmy costume of linen, lawn, and lace—or silk and lace—anyway, an airy confection for which you've been collecting Victorian nightgowns, Edwardian lace lingerie dresses, maybe an art deco slip or two. This is an intimate part of your creed: In the most cobwebby, delicate, but fundamentally resilient fibers of your being, you flirt with the edge between shadow and substance, and you commit yourself, again, to both sides. So whether you're a fairy, goth, or witch at heart, you play with weight and volume, light and shadow, in what you put on your body. Your closet is packed with thin linen and silk, lace, embroidery, fringe, satin, shot cotton, changeable taffeta, gelatin sequins, sparkling rhinestones that give shape and weight to light … gauze, of course … the textiles and trims that flow around your body and reflect the candlelight, or fill with wind and sunshine outdoors.

This was not always possible or even conceivable. At the start, our clothes were anything but lightweight. We wore leather animal skins and, later, cloth made from scratchy little sheep. The oldest known piece of human-made textile is a scrap of felt discovered in Anatolia (Turkey) that dates to about 6500 BCE and no doubt inspired many a rash.

It must have felt like both revelation and revolution when the ancient Egyptians discovered that flax plants could be broken, beaten, and combed into fibers (really, how do people stumble onto these processes?) that could then be spun into thread and woven into … underwear. Ah. That was around 5000 BCE, and cotton followed sometime in the next 2,000 years. Although these textiles would not keep you warm, now you could slip into basically a big T of woven linen with long sleeves, nicely protecting all your tender skin from the roughness of wool or the slap of the leather that was still worn as skirts, jackets, and more. And just imagine being able to put a sheet between yourself and the you-should-be-so-lucky blanket under which you slept …

Outerwear evolved a lot over the centuries, but unders still maintain that T shape. Linen remained *the* fiber for anything approaching softness, and its importance survives in the related word *lingerie*. Linen sleeves were the only sleeves for peasant classes, and gradually, as aristocratic necklines lowered, chemises began to come out of hiding and greet the day. They also began to sport trimmings such as lace.

Tethering the Light

Lace binds light to our bodies. Whether it's knitted or woven by hand, perhaps re-embroidered, we love the ethereal play of airy lightness and secret strength. So you might cover your hair with a mantilla or sew some narrow insertion lace onto an antique cotton-lawn blouse. Drape your windows in crocheted Irish filet, or consider an art deco gown made of sapphire Chantilly lace over a matching slip.

Lace has taken a long journey from underclothes to daywear to everywhere. As we kept questing for comfort as much as





At left: *Marie Antoinette With a Rose* (1783), by Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun. At right: The Rainbow Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I (c. 1600 and c. 1603), attributed to Isaac Oliver and Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger. Images courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

for beauty in everything we wore, the linen chemise remained the gold standard, and we began to consider what could be done with that blocky T. Well, we thought, the edge could be softer, and it would be a shame to leave so much real estate unadorned … So lace came into vogue, as a luxurious, rare sort of thing that required hours (months! years!) of painstaking work, keen eyesight, and artistic flair; all of this meant, naturally, money, because lace was one of the most labor-intensive and coveted treasures with which to adorn your own precious body (and still is).

Things in Europe finally began to get diaphanous in the Renaissance, at least for those who could pay. Traders brought in silk and cotton, spun with finer and finer threads, weaving them so tightly but thinly that they barely register as clothing in art of the era. If you look closely at a noblewoman's portrait from the 1500s, you'll see gossamer textiles traceable in the slight shading over what appears at first glance to be a daringly bare bosom. That hint of white is a chemise leaving its home base and conquering a garment's outside.

In the 1500s, also, we started seeing lace emerge from underneath, along with the very thinnest of supposed undergarments: a wispy edge slipping out of a heavier sleeve, a little sheer netting at the neck. Lace came into its own around the 1570s, when those enormous ruffs made of linen, lawn, and silk doubled and tripled in reach and then added trims, then wires, and then anything goes. Would Queen Elizabeth I have been quite as much a Gloriana without the diaphanous arches and curves around her face and head? Just look at the so-called Rainbow Portrait, painted in the last years of her life (see above): The arcs of her standing collars create a nimbus, trapping light

Light, Fantastic, Gossamer

Susann Cokal

and air and reminding us that even as the heavy fabrics and jewels that signify wealth and power pull our girl toward the earth, her command bears her heavenward.

Fun fact break: While the restoration work done on those Renaissance paintings may make linens and laces appear uniformly white, they were often dyed a range of pale hues. We have always craved color, as much as we've longed for sparkle and shine.

Although the fashion for the most extreme uses of lace faded after Elizabeth died, lace itself has never left us. From time to time, it swells out of our clothing and becomes the look of the day, and then it retreats coyly. But it almost never disappears entirely. Look at Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun's portrait of Marie Antoinette in a gown trimmed with lace unabashedly ruffling over the bodice (page 41), or Queen Victoria's all-white, all-lace wedding gown. Designed to bring support to England's languishing lace industry, it has been the standard for wedding dresses ever since. And then came the lingerie dress I mentioned earlier, the frock beloved of modern filmmakers who set their action in the Edwardian era. It's that long, flouncy, usually lacy cotton dress with high neck and waist that looks so good in a picnic scene. It's white in the movies, but in real life it might have had a color—or you could wear it over a colorful slip. Odds are that a few guests at your solstice soirée will be in lingerie dresses. Perfectly proper, of course; lingerie as we think of it mostly came along after 1920 … and in 1990, it cycled into street clothes.

If lace has a cousin in the glassblower's studio, it is cameo glass, an elegant art form in which two different types of glass are fused and the top layer, usually white and matte, is cut or etched away to reveal a glossier, darker layer. This type, too, dates back to the Romans, and it also became popular in the art nouveau era, thanks to masters like Emile Gallé of France. Tiffany made a few pieces too. The result is remarkably refined and airy-feeling, just like your favorite Victorian lace shawl. The contemporary version is usually etched with acid and finished with drill work that, again, would not have been possible before this era. Some creators are now using 3D printers and digital models, just as some textile makers now create lace using lasers—and hands-on purists rebel against all technological "cheating" … So the arts continue to evolve and become new again—just as you've done with your gown. Just as you'll do with your solstice ritual.

Prisms of Silk

By now your bedroom's a shambles—scraps of linen and cotton everywhere, knots of ribbon, lace that your cat decided to help return to its natural state, maybe (alas) a glass goblet shattered on the floor and sparkling with jagged edges. Your sewing machine is out of thread. But you've made yourself a wonderfully diaphanous blouse foaming with lace, and an enormous Victorian petticoat, and even a veil to cover yourself head to toe.

But … sigh. None of it *gleams*. It doesn't *unfurl.* Think of Loïe Fuller, whose Fire Dance using yards of billowing fabric enchanted Parisians in the belle epoque. (See her in action on page 39.) Then consider wearing silk tonight. It is both as light as a spiderweb and as strong, so it's appropriate for everything from whisper-thin skivvies to carpets and parachutes. It can be so fine that you barely feel its touch on your body, or—as one of the strongest natural fibers on earth—woven so tightly that it cups a cushion of air for a parachute that will bear you safely toward the ground. And it is intrinsically bright: A good piece of silk is as subtly iridescent as Favrile glass. Just look again at the Rainbow Portrait and at Marie Antoinette. There's simply nowhere else a dress can get that kind of glow.

Many insects produce a version of silk in their webs and cocoons, but the kind that humans harvest comes from the cocoons of the cultivated mulberry silkworm, *Bombyx mori.* In China, Ground Zero for sericulture, or silkworm raising, archaeologists have found silk protein dating back 8,500 years, and a woven textile from around 3630 BCE. Historically, silk was reserved for Chinese royalty and nobles. Then, starting around 550 CE, foreign visitors smuggled *Bombyx mori* eggs out of China, so sericulture and silk-spinning centers developed wherever mulberry leaves would grow.

Silk is the dragonfly wing and peacock neck of fibers; it is iridescence made supple and soft and wearable. It's soft because the strands are extremely thin, generally less than one-fifth the thickness of the hairs on your head. It's bright because each strand is made up of thousands of prisms in an unusual triangular shape. When light reaches the prisms, it is refracted (bent, broken, flogged as if it were linen) in several angles at once, resulting in an otherworldly effect that seems to shed more light than it absorbs. Each silk thread has thousands of prisms refracting in all possible directions at once, and thus its color changes from second to second.

We associate lace and silk with a bit of private life, a "slip into something more (or less) comfortable"—because we bear a cultural memory of privacy, relief from discomfort, and awe at something so delicate and yet so resilient. So maybe you want to show off the intricacies of handmade trim on an otherwise plain-looking silk flapper slip: These days, in the vintage community, those slips are simply called dresses, and it's a delight to see them shimmering down the street.

Light and Lightness

But if you are true Daisy Buchanan, a magpie of a person who loves to glisten as much as to drape and float, you want a little more jazz to the dress that you slip over that slip. Color-change taffeta, woven with different-hued threads for warp and weft? Maybe. It would make a fabulous 1950s fit-and-flare. But you want something light—and something *light*, to send light dancing through the meadow flowers. You probably have two or three



Meadow Elves (1850), by Nils Blommér

Image courtesy Wikimedia Commons

tattered frocks from the 1920s that you bought at a bargain and have always intended to restore (or maybe a dozen, or maybe it's best not to count, as I may or may not have learned personally). They're in your closet, simply crumbling away like time.

Flapper party frocks made of silk crepe and crepe de chine are some of the most ethereal, and now most fragile, garments still circulating. That was always meant to be their nature. In the 1920s, ruffles and pleats fell out of favor while dresses became as close to two-dimensional as possible. Instead, beading and embroidery built the illusion of structural richness, and they brought light close to the body.

Nothing is indestructible, nor should it be. By the time silk crepe is a half-century old, it tends to dry out and shatter—meaning it dissolves—and the weight of glass beads is an unbearable strain. Each tiny bead weighs almost nothing; a microbead is a millimeter wide or smaller. Taken together, they add up. So your century-old dress may have just one evening left. And it *wants* that evening.

Who would dare to suggest that it was a mistake to stitch a heavy material onto a diaphanous one? A fleeting beauty is perhaps even more to be cherished because we know she will shatter again; such is the risk that comes with things gossamer.

So gather your scattered beads. Stitch them back on with a needle that pinches shut as its eye passes through the bead's hole. Someday the silk and the glass, too, will become something else: lining a bird's nest, returning to sand, sparkling at the bottom of a stream. It's all part of the same changes marked by the solstice. Even the glassware you've collected for candles at night and daisies at dawn might break, but then you can make a mosaic tabletop.

Now … slip into something a little more special. Light the candles; light your life. Let your iridescence create one last magic moment as the daisies' petals begin to stir.

Susann Cokal lives in an overgrown farmhouse and encourages just about any tree that wants to take root. Her four novels include the award-winning Kingdom of Little Wounds *and* Mermaid Moon. *Visit her online at susanncokal.com.*

GOSSAMER BEAUTY

by Rona Berg



Harmony in the Light of the Moon by Sarah S. Stilwell Weber (1878–1939)

"Trying to create a spell that is ethereal and delicate as the dust on a moth's wing" —F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Jacob's Ladder"

Texture is everything when it comes to the beauty industry. Formulators invest a lot of time and know-how into spinning skincare from gossamer-light to rich, silky, and occlusive. As the seasons change and the weather warms, our desires naturally move toward sheerer and lighter products. We embrace the translucent and luminous, and are drawn to formulations that are airy and more ethereal. Serums shape-shift into weightlessness. We seek fragrances that are light and subtle, such as delicate florals or elusive powdery notes.

New trends in beauty this season are all about reinventing gossamer weights. Soft, silky, "cashmere" foams with mild ingredients are popular in cleansers. They are so light, they're barely a whisper, and they are especially suitable for irritated, sensitive skin. Water balms and lightweight, oil-based moisturizers and makeup, especially lip gloss, deliver dewy-looking skin while feeling weightless. "Jellies" are a fun way to hydrate and are turning up in blendable makeup. Silky milks are trending in milk baths and sunscreens designed to soothe all skin types. Vegan versions feature oat, coconut, and soy milk, some mixed with retinols.

Going gossamer is the ultimate goal at this time of year. Like a dragonfly's wing, iridescent, incandescent, extremely light and delicate, in a way that seems to be not of this world.

Method Dream Foam
Anyone who relies on Method's dish detergents and home-cleaning line will want to check out its new personal care products. The skin-softening Dream Foam foaming body wash comes in four fragrances that are light as air. And the Body + Hair Mist line is perfect for adding a touch of fragrance (the jasmine-sandalwood is a personal favorite), cooling down the skin and reconstituting curls over the spring-summer season.

Acrely Farms Recovery Balm Botanical Blend
Acrely Farms is a woman-owned organic farm tucked into the mountains of Utah. Hand-harvested, its products are grown and crafted to deliver plant- and CBD-based remedies for whatever ails you: inflammation, sleepless nights, localized pain, stress, rashy skin. The Recovery Balm, with a base of coconut oil and beeswax, is a light and lovely cooling blend formulated to provide relief from pain.

RMS Beauty Cashmere Matte Eyelights
Always on the cusp of everything new, RMS Beauty, founded by celebrity makeup artist Rosemarie Swift, launched Cashmere Matte Eyelights—light, long-wearing, and delicate whispers of color for the eyelids. In eight shades, inspired by 1950s pastels, the nourishing new formula feels as soft as breath. Infused with green tea and natural peptides to nourish the sensitive skin on the eyelids, they are packaged in a 100-percent-recycled aluminum artist's tube with a needle-nose tip for perfect application.

Leaf People Nettle & Cucumber Soothing Toner
This lightweight toner removes makeup, soap, dirt, and other impurities while gently nourishing the skin with aloe vera, rose, hyaluronic acid, green tea, and soothing cucumber. Keep it in the fridge and it will cool down overheated or inflamed skin. Put it in a spray bottle for a spritz on the go. Wild-harvested, certified organic, and formulated in the Rocky Mountains by an herbalist.

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Monica Crosson

There once was a woman who lived in a tiny village at the forest's edge. She kept to herself with only a few good books for company, as she felt a quiet ache that settled deep in her bones, reminding her that she would never be good enough. It lingered in the spaces between laughter, in the hush of early morning when the world was still, and in the moments when she stared at her own reflection, searching for something, anything, to make her feel worthy. It didn't help that her peers thought of her as lacking, like an unfinished spell or a recipe missing a vital ingredient.

"Your hair is too unruly," her friends would tell her as they got ready together for festivals. "You'll never find a husband," her aunts would say as they worked on the mending.

"Walk straighter, think quicker, do better, be stronger…"

So she went through life like a slow-moving fog in the forest. Uncertainty weaved its way into her thoughts, dampening the fire in her soul until all that remained were smoldering embers of self-doubt. Her longing for the recognition of others caused her to withdraw completely.

In the evenings, as the community settled down and prepared for bed, she ventured to the one place she could go and dream of being like everyone else. She'd always felt the pull of the forest—the way the trees stood guard over her and the mossy earth cradled her every step. She walked its winding paths, seeking solace beneath the tangled boughs.

Then one evening as she walked the familiar trail, she noticed the air held a different kind of magic. The wind carried an ancient lullaby that lured her deeper, past familiar groves of cedar and hemlock, past the ivy-entwined stones and rustling creek, until she reached a clearing she'd never seen before. At its heart stood an ornate mirror, its gold frame draped in delicate gossamer webs that shimmered under the moonlight. She hesitated; her pulse quickened.

"It can't be," she murmured.

There was a legend that told of a mirror hidden deep in the woods, one that did not simply reflect but revealed. The elders spoke of seekers who found the mirror at just the right moment, when they were ready to witness their own truth. She could hardly believe the tales were true, but there it was, nestled in the moss at the base of a tree, as real as she was.

She reached out, brushing away the lace-like threads, and peered into the glass. At first, she saw only her own face and the dark hair that framed her rounded features. But then the image wavered. The woman in the mirror straightened, her eyes glowing with quiet strength. The lines of self-doubt softened. The reflection radiated something she'd never dared to see in herself before: worthiness. Beauty, not from how the world measured it, but from the fierce spirit within.

She leaned closer, studying every detail of the face before her. It was hers, yet it was more. It was the woman she'd been before the world told her who she should be, before doubt crept into her bones. A flicker of memory surfaced—her childhood self running barefoot through the fields, laughing at the sky, unafraid of her own light. The woman in the mirror was that same child but now with the wisdom of years, the resilience of a heart that had been broken and mended, the quiet power of someone who'd walked through darkness and found her way back to the stars.

Tears welled in her eyes, not from sorrow but from a deep, aching recognition. She'd spent so long searching for worthiness outside herself, hoping someone else would fill the empty spaces in her soul. But the mirror had no lies to tell, no illusions to spin. It showed only the truth. Love, strength, and worthiness had been inside her all along.

The trees around the clearing rustled and the air thickened with magic. She reached out a tentative hand, fingertips brushing against the cool glass. A warmth spread through her chest, as if the reflection had stepped forward and wrapped her in an embrace.

A wind stirred the branches overhead, and the mirror shimmered one last time before the glass dulled. She exhaled, a weight she hadn't known she was carrying lifting from her heart. She turned from the clearing, the night air cool against her skin, and she walked home with a new understanding. She no longer needed anyone's approval to complete her. She was already whole.

As she stepped away, the clearing darkened, and the mirror's frame melted into shadow, vanishing as though it had never been. But the woman knew better. She knew it was still there, waiting.

Somewhere deep in the forest, wrapped in gossamer and moonlight, the mirror remained, holding its quiet magic for the next soul ready to see their own light.

Embracing the Reflection

Throughout history, mirrors have been revered as both tools of divination and gateways to hidden truths. In fairy tales, they are portals to other realms; in mythology, instruments of transformation; and in magic, conduits for self-reflection and personal growth. The act of gazing into a mirror is more than just seeing our physical form; it's an opportunity to look beyond, to explore the depths of our soul, and to uncover the truths we often hide from ourselves. Yet much like the gossamer webs that veil a forgotten mirror in the woods, our perceptions can become clouded by fear, doubt, and illusion. Through the magic of mirrors, we learn to brush aside the veil that obscures the view of ourselves as we really are.

The earliest mirrors date back to around 6000 BCE and were made of polished obsidian. These early mirrors were not just tools for vanity but were often linked to spiritual and supernatural beliefs. The ancient Greeks and Romans practiced catoptromancy, a form of divination using mirrors or reflective

Monica Crosson





water to receive visions. The Chinese believed mirrors had the power to repel evil spirits. Feng shui practices still use mirrors to reflect and redirect energy. The Victorians believed mirrors could hold remnants of past energies, so they were covered after a death to prevent the spirit from becoming trapped within the reflective surface.

These historical perspectives remind us that mirrors have always been more than simple objects. They are tools of insight, capable of revealing the mysteries of our inner world.

When used with intention, a mirror can be a powerful ally in self-discovery, allowing us to confront fears, recognize strengths, and embrace our personal journey with clarity.

By working with a mirror, we can gain insight into our path, deepen our self-love, and call upon the energy needed for transformation.

The Sacred Act of Seeing Yourself

We are taught early to fear our own reflection, to critique every perceived flaw, to see only what we believe to be imperfect. But what if we changed the story? What if, instead of looking for what's wrong, we sought out our own strength? These exercises are designed to help us undo our long-held fears.

- **Morning Mirror Affirmations**: Begin each day by gazing into your mirror and speaking affirmations that empower you. Statements like "*I am worthy*," "*I embrace my power*," or "*I honor my path*" can reinforce self-love and confidence.
- **Dream Reflection**: Before bed, look into a mirror and ask for clarity in your dreams. Keep a journal nearby to record any messages or symbols upon waking.
- **Past-Self Meditation**: Hold a mirror and visualize yourself as a child. What would you say to your younger self? What love or reassurance does your younger self need? This practice can be deeply healing and enlightening.

So don't be afraid, dear reader. The mirror waits. Its surface, once clouded with doubt and illusion, clears as the gossamer veil is gently lifted, thread by fragile thread. And there, beyond the reflection of what the world expects, is your wild, untamed self, woven from shadow and light, rooted like the trees and shifting like the river.

Monica Crosson

A Magic Mirror of Your Own

Much like gently removing the gossamer webs from a hidden mirror, looking past our imperfections requires patience, courage, and the willingness to see ourselves fully. The good news is you don't have to journey into an enchanted forest to find a magic mirror. In fact, any small mirror will do.

You will need:

- *Any small handheld mirror (preferably one you feel drawn to)*
- *A white candle (for clarity and truth)*
- *A few drops of rosemary essential oil (for mental clarity)*
- *A journal and pen*

Find a quiet space where you won't be disturbed. Gently anoint your candle with the rosemary essential oil. Inhale the scent as you do so, allowing it to clear your mind and sharpen your focus. Light the candle and place it in front of you. Hold the small mirror in your hands, close your eyes, and take a deep breath. Feel its energy, its smooth surface, and the possibilities it holds.

When you feel ready, say something like:

"Mirror of truth, light my way,
Through the night and through the day.
Brush aside the gossamer veil,
Reveal the truth without fail."

Open your eyes and gaze into the mirror. Look beyond your physical features and into the depths of your reflection. Be open to whatever emotions or messages arise. You may receive images, words, or an intuitive knowing. If doubt creeps in, remind yourself that this is a sacred practice of self-discovery. When you feel a sense of completion, place the mirror down, snuff out the candle, and take a moment to journal about your experience. Write down any thoughts, feelings, or insights that came to you.

Your reflection is more than what the eye can see. It is a doorway to the soul, waiting to be explored. Through intention and practice, the mirror becomes a sacred ally, guiding us toward self-discovery, self-love, and the infinite potential within.

Monica Crosson is the author of several books, including Wild Magical Soul: Untame Your Spirit & Connect to Nature's Wisdom *and her latest,* A Year in the Enchanted Garden. *Learn more at authormonicacrosson.com and follow her on Instagram @monicacrosson.*

See more of Alexandria Corne's work on Instagram @alexandriacornephotography.





Beneath a Twilight Gleaming

PLAYING WITH THE FAIRIES
BY TRICIA SAROYA



When we were young, we didn't think twice about expressing our own unique creativity, completely free from self-criticism or fear of the judgement of others. We were just simply being ourselves. But somewhere in the process of growing up many of us lost touch with that playful-child part of ourselves. For many it was squashed out by society as we were told we needed to grow up, be serious and responsible. For some, the demands of adulthood took their toll, and that beautiful innocent part of us slowly receded into the background. But I believe we still have that magical, wondrous child inside, and if we can connect with it, I think it could show us who we truly are in our soul, without all the programming and the shoulds and supposed tos. At our core we are a miraculous spark of the divine—full of curiosity, deeply creative, full of delight in the simple joy of living.

I believe that if we can uncover that inner magical child, it will help us reconnect with this important, sacred part of ourselves. It can help us remember how we played, what we loved to do, and how we created. It can help us get in touch with who we *really* are and tap into our innate creativity—not to mention have a lot more fun! I believe that this creativity is unique, divinely given, and a clue to what we came to this world to offer. At the very least, connecting with our child selves and remembering how we played will help us enjoy our lives more. It's so easy to get lost in the seriousness of the world and forget to see the beauty, to play, and to enjoy the precious gift of our lives.

One way I used to play was to lie under trees or large plants and imagine an entire world of fairies and elves set among the branches and leaves. I think this memory is behind my desire to create imaginative settings and tablescapes. And I truly felt the presence of magic when I was creating this tablescape. I'd been having a rough time, so I asked the fairies for help and allowed myself to get lost in the simple joy of playing. I love setting a fantastical table that makes people gasp and drop into their own child self and imagination. One of the most beautiful things you can do for those you love is to create a space for that to happen. You don't have to go over the top like I do.

You can start by simply incorporating small bits of magical fun and play in your everyday. Take some of the elements I use in my tablescapes and put them into your own gatherings or even in your home as permanent magical decor. If you have children, let them help you. Take their lead as they unleash their own imaginations. Read a fairy story or watch a beautiful movie for inspiration. When you create a fantasy setting, you allow people a moment to pause, smile, and settle into their hearts. Best of all, you get to play and have fun creating the setting. I believe that when people are delighted, they're filled with the light of the divine and are simply happier. What a lovely gift to give those you love—and indeed the world!



Twilight Gleaming

Tricia Saroya



HOW TO BRING A SIMILAR MAGICAL LOOK TO YOUR OWN GATHERING

- Unite your look with a color story of no more than 3 or 4 colors to help the decor read cohesively and not feel overwhelming.
- You can also unite your design with a theme. Here are some ideas: Secret Garden, Magical Tea Party, Decadent Delightful Desserts, Through the Looking Glass, Enchanted Forest, Magic by the Stream. Or draw on a specific fairy tale, or a theme from the natural world, like beautiful bugs, butterflies, mushrooms, wildflowers, moss, and lichen.

Tips on setting up:

- Cluster your decor and have some open spaces to keep your table from looking too messy.
- Create different heights with nooks and crannies so the look doesn't read as one-dimensional.
- For risers use books, cake plates, upturned baskets, logs, tree slices, fun boxes, and garden items.
- Use mismatched dishes and stemware for whimsy.
- Use live plants from your home or garden to save money.
- Think rustic with elegant, outside mixed with inside.
- Search for props in your garden and mix with elegant elements from your china cabinet.
- Sprinkle the decadent desserts or teas with edible glitter for an infusion of magic!

A much loved and prolific creatrix, Tricia Saroya offers multiple online courses at triciasaroya.com to help participants get in touch with their own creative child within and lose themselves in the act of creative play. She just recently launched a jam-packed online class on creating gorgeous tablescapes like the one you see here. Visit her on Instagram @triciasaroya.



"At our core we are a miraculous spark of the divine—full of curiosity, deeply creative, full of delight in the simple joy of living." —Tricia Saroya



VERONICA VARLOW

Life of a Love Witch

"I light the fires under the Cauldron of Time. I claim all the stories that have ever been mine."

The beeswax cauldron candle's wick sizzles with flame as I speak the words of my own writing-charm incantation aloud in the darkened room. My eyes focus on the flame as I repeat the words of my charm two more times. I allow my eyes to close. The words are a summoning of my creative spirit to come and sit with me like an old friend. It's a calling to slow down time, to forget about deadlines, doomscrolling, and dramas. It's a spell conjuring the seductive pull of a good story forming. While my eyes are closed, I imagine my ancestors gathering around the cauldron and the glowing bonfire to share their stories and knowledge, to pass on the myths and fairy tales to next generations. I see their faces illuminated by the bonfire, as they sit on logs cut from heavy old oak around the firepit. I place my hand on my heart and breathe in through my nose and out through my mouth, three times. Then I open my eyes and focus on the dancing flames of the cauldron candle before me as I let my mind go blank. I focus only on the flickering flame. Then, slowly, an image will come, ideas will arrive, supernatural inspiration flows. This spell is my own personal magic key—one that opens the doors to ignite my imagination and let my raw creativity flow.

My beloved Grandma Helen would say that our souls are like a library filled with books of all the different versions of us in former lifetimes and all the knowledge buried in our ancestral DNA. The problem is that many of us only crack open one book. Magic, she would say, is about accessing our own secret soul library.

The sultry, slow days of summertime and the warm starry nights are the perfect time to conjure your own magic self. We're halfway through the year, and it's the perfect time to look calmly at the things you've really enjoyed so far, the things you want even more of, and perhaps most importantly, the things you want to let go of.

Letting go is one of the most important acts of magic, because letting go of the things that aren't working or resonating with you creates the space for you to cast and create your most beautiful and juicy life. The power of no can become a key to your most joyous *yes*.

Summoning Your Most Magical Life Spell

You will need:

- *1 orange taper candle (or beeswax taper candle)*
- *1 taper candleholder*
- *A cauldron or fireproof vessel that you can safely burn paper in. You can also do this outside in a summer bonfire!*
- *9 pinches of rosemary*
- *3 drops of orange oil (you can also squeeze three drops from an orange for this)*
- *2 pieces of paper*
- *A pen*
- *A lighter*

This spell, like most rituals, ideas, and great inventions, is born first in our imagination. Take some time before you start your spell and sit with a notebook (or a dedicated journal) and pen. Begin the ritual by taking three deep breaths and closing your eyes. Consider asking your ancestors or guides to help you gain clarity for your writing.

Let's begin with the attitude of gratitude. Answer the following five questions in your journal:

- What experiences have you had over the past six months that have nourished your soul in a deeply delicious way?
- When you look back at key moments in your life when you've experienced joy, when you felt truly alive and vibrant, what were you doing or what was happening?
- As you look at the next six months of this year, what do you feel invited toward?
- What is a daydream that's been calling to you to be birthed into reality?
- What is a treasure in your life right now?

Remember that you have to "raise energy" to perform powerful magic, and our raw and uncensored emotions are the electric power that amplifies our spells. Please don't skip ahead or answer the questions "in your mind." This spell needs the honoring of your written words on paper. Give yourself permission to answer the questions deeply and allow your imagination and life knowledge to enrich your answers.

It's no secret that I adore some manifestation spell casting. The opening line of my book *Bohemian Magick* is "Your life is the greatest spell you will ever cast." I regularly check in with my soul about what is amplifying my good energy, what is feeding my soul, and what direction my beautiful limitless imagination wants me to go. This is my favorite part!

Now, once you've allowed yourself to write your heart out answering the above five questions, take one of the pieces of paper required in the spell and write at the top:

My name is [fill in your full name] *and with gratitude, I hereby summon my very best life journey. My unique magic path is paved with* [here write the things that nourish your soul, key moments of joy, great



memories, and a treasure in your life right now]. *In this energy of joy, passion, and the electric wild of my soul, I invite my powerful future manifestations to begin to stir. I call them out by name now here on this page.* [Write your daydreams and what you are invited toward for the next six months.] *See it. Be it. So be it.* [Then sign your name at the bottom.]

Keep this paper open before you as you begin to work on the next, more difficult step. This paper is a treasure map of you. It is filled with your own unique compass of your joys, your passions, your great memories and experiences, and it also looks toward the future and what you'd like to bring in.

Go back to your notebook now and answer the following five questions regarding letting go:

- When you think about the times when you've experienced the most joy in your life, what did you have to say no to in order for the joy to be welcomed? (Boundaries on your time and energy are beautiful for the foundation of your dream life. Keep in mind these might have involved saying no to your own patterns, old belief systems, or a perceived opportunity. No comes in many forms. For instance, I had to say a loud *no* to my deep shame of my own sensuality to be able to experience the absolute and utter joy of performing burlesque.)
- What have shown up as obstacles for you in the last six months?
- What are some old belief systems of yours or old ways of thinking or being that you are ready to truly let go of?
- Identify moments where you have stood in your own way of your dreams. Why do you think that happened?
- Are you willing to sacrifice some old ways of being and thinking? Are you willing to sacrifice overly people-pleasing behavior? And are you willing to let go of the obstacles that get in the way of your juiciest, most beautiful life?

On the second piece of paper for the spell, begin by writing:

My name is [fill in the blank] *and I hereby release and let go of the following things that no longer work for my mental health and well-being.* [From the questions above, write down the things you need to say no to, the old belief systems, thinking, and ways of being.] *I give myself full permission to let go of my personal obstacles that have previously prevented me from my greatest path. They may have served me at some point in my life, but I let them go with grace. I no longer am controlled by fear, which stands for "forgetting everything is all right!" I move forward with love and passion and say farewell to all that holds me back. See it. Be it. So be it.* [Sign your name at the bottom.]

Once your writing is complete, you are ready to begin the core of your spell.

Take three deep breaths, and when you are ready, read the letting-go page of your spell out loud. When you're done, fold the paper away from you three times. Do this by folding it once away from you, then turn the page counterclockwise and fold it away from you a second time, then turn the page counterclockwise again and fold it away from you a third time. When you're ready, drop the paper in your cauldron and set it on fire. Safety note: Often I find that the flames really want to go high when releasing spells, so I'll put my cauldron in the sink and then put the paper in the cauldron. If the flames get too high, I can easily turn on the water from the faucet. Or better yet, make a bonfire outdoors and burn the paper there!

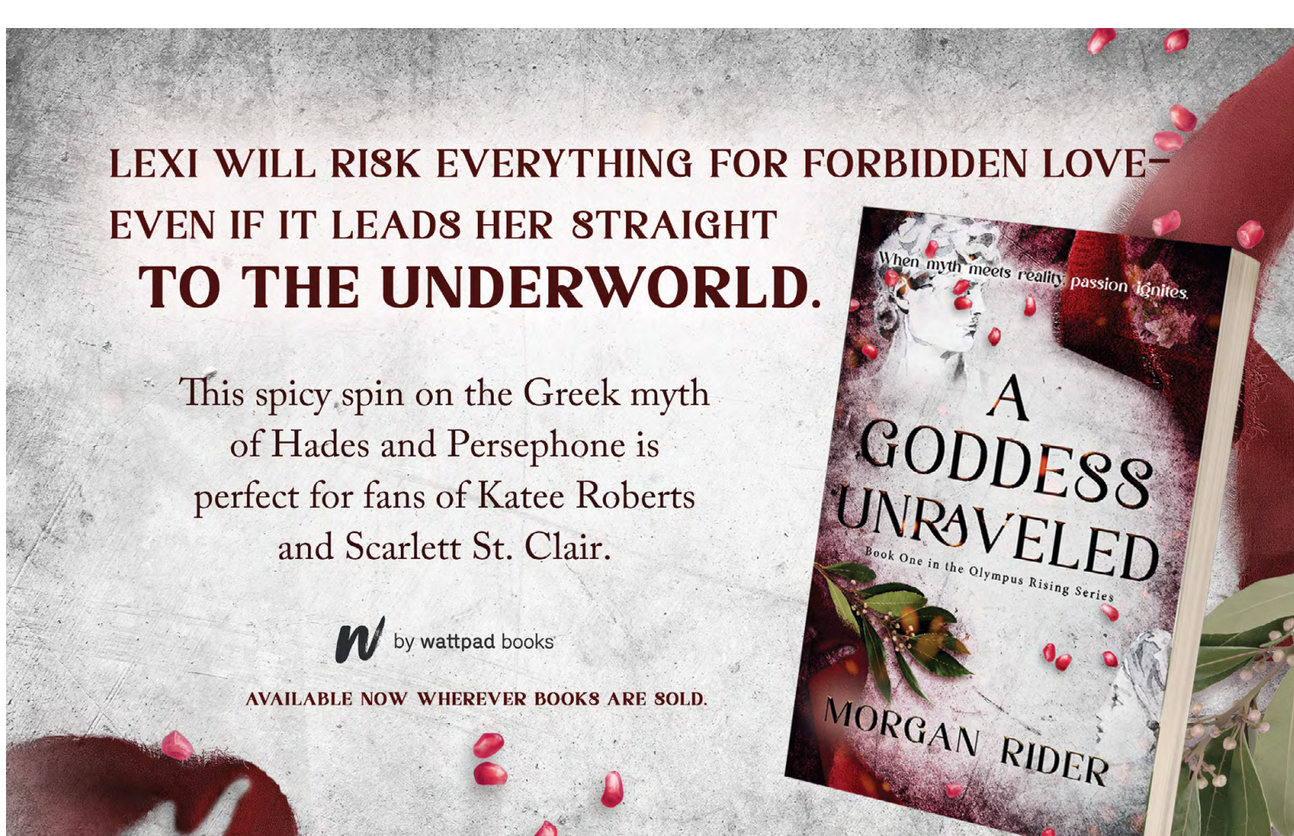
Once you're done with the burning, turn your back, and walk away from it. Wash your hands with soap and water. Take your orange oil or squeeze an orange into your palms. Take the fresh juice or oil and anoint the orange candle with it. This is to bring joy and happiness to you. Light the orange candle in its holder and place nine pinches of rosemary around the bottom of the candle in a little circle around the candleholder. Now read your first dream-vow paper aloud to the candle. When you're done reading it aloud, say this incantation three times:

The essence of orange to summon my joy,
A circle of rosemary to remember my power.
The words of this vow manifest my will,
Which gets stronger in each passing hour.
See it. Be it. So be it!

Allow your candle to burn down for about fifteen minutes. When you're ready, blow it out. Fold your letter toward you in half once, then turn it clockwise and fold it toward you again, then turn the paper clockwise again and fold it toward you once more. Over the course of the next nine days, light your candle each night before bed, read your vow aloud, and say the incantation above three times. Allow the candle to burn for a little while and then blow it out, sending the words you spoke to the spirits above.

Watch your powerful manifestations come true now that you've cleared the way and claimed your path!

Veronica Varlow's best-selling book, Bohemian Magick, *is now available everywhere—packed with secret spells and rituals passed down from Grandma Helen. Read more about it, as well as about her Witch Camp and Love Witch Tarot School, on lovewitch.com. Find Veronica on Instagram @veronicavarlow.*



Susan Ilka Tuttle

Butterfly Pea Flower Iced Tea

BY SUSAN ILKA TUTTLE A.K.A. WHISPER IN THE WOOD



Encountering a butterfly often evokes feelings of joy, lightness, and a sense of wonder at nature's magical beauty. As an avid gardener living in Maine, I've had the privilege of witnessing the most stunning gossamer-winged butterflies (officially known as Lycaenidae, the second-largest family of butterflies, with more than 6,000 species worldwide) as they flutter their delicate, shimmering wings around me, alighting on the garden flowers and pollinating their tender centers. It gives me enormous pleasure to cultivate my garden alongside these fairylike creatures so that we can live among the beautiful flowers together. I've been mesmerized by the likes of brightly colored American coppers, atalas, great purple hairstreaks, spring azures, and white admirals.

So it should come as no surprise that I'd be delighted by the butterfly pea flower (*Clitoria ternatea*), an herbaceous climbing plant native to Thailand and Malaysia with large solitary butterfly-shaped flowers that give the plant its name. These flowers can be lovingly wildcrafted into an enchanting and whimsical tea—a potion of natural brilliant blue that turns mystical hues of purple and pink when a splash of citrus juice is added. This earthy, floral tea can be served iced with lemon as a refreshing summer beverage, one perfect for sipping in the garden among these enchanted beings.

Not only is this magnificent flower celebrated for its vivid hue; it's also cherished for its wellness benefits. Butterfly pea flower is known to sharpen memory, induce a sense of calm, lift one's mood, reduce inflammation, maintain healthy blood sugar levels, and promote glowing skin. What's not to love?

Brew some of this magical elixir for your next garden party and let the fairy tale begin!

Butterfly Pea Flower Iced Tea Recipe

Makes 4 servings

- *Quart-sized mason jar*
- *1 quart water*
- *8 teaspoons dried butterfly pea flower (you can order online from wildhibiscus.com)*
- *2 lemons*
- *Maple syrup, or other sweetener*

Brew the Tea

Boil 4 cups of water.

Add the butterfly pea flower to the mason jar.

Pour boiling water over it.

Steep for five minutes and strain out the plant matter.

Cool gradually to room temperature before chilling in the refrigerator, to avoid cracking glass due to sudden temperature change.

Chill in the refrigerator.

Tip: A tea strainer perfectly fits the top of a small-mouth mason jar and allows for easy removal of the plant matter after steeping.

Make the Iced Tea

Fill 4 glasses with ice cubes and 2 or 3 small slices of lemon.

Sweeten to taste. I recommend maple syrup.

Squeeze the juice of one lemon and divide equally into the four glasses.

Pour chilled tea into each glass and stir.

Garnish with a lemon slice. Enjoy!



Susan Ilka Tuttle is a bit of a hermit who enjoys living in the Maine woods. She is a wild herbalist, witch, practicing spirit medium, owner of the online shop In the Wood Botanicals, and author of Green Witch Magick. *Visit her shop inthewoodbotanicals.com and connect with her on Instagram @whisper_in_the_wood.*

I Know Why Ophelia Picked Her Own Bouquet

by Kambriel and Ali Trotta

I know why Ophelia picked her own bouquet,
why what's wild must stay wild,
how only a fool's heart
would try to tame a woman
made of meadows.

I know why moonlight glinting on watery waves
(more than their hollow smile)
has the power to catch her eye,
why empty words weigh nothing
next to birdsong.

I know why starlight burns in the dark,
a bright rebellion,
a furious reminder of the light,
how to find home when everything feels lost—
lost is never all there is.

I know why she wanders the nighttime woods
forging her own path
past briars and spiders,
moss growing on trees like velvet North stars,
her unbound heart—a torch
no storm can extinguish.

I know why she turned her back
on the river, the tragedy of a different life
gone cold to the bone,
the exorcism of an old tale,
an age-old story
sung softly into night,
as she dances through the trees,
before emerging
out the other side.

I know why Ophelia picked her own bouquet
for she has learned the language of flowers,
she revels in their perfumes,
she understands which can poison
and which can heal,
and that sometimes a flower is simply a flower,
chosen for joy—
as she sings aloud for all the spirits to hear
the song of her liberated heart.

Kambriel believes in finding magic where it is and creating it where it lacks. You can follow her updates on Bluesky (@kambriel.com) and fantastical design work at kambriel.com.

Ali Trotta is a poet, writer, editor, word-nerd, and unapologetic coffee addict. She's on Bluesky (@alwayscoffee), and her website is ali.trotta.com.



Asters and Goldenrod
by **CHARLOTTE BRINDLEY**
charlottebrindley.art

Luna Ascending
by **CHARLOTTE BRINDLEY**
charlottebrindley.art

THE COUNCIL OF GRANDMOTHERS

by Andrea Kasprzak

We swim together under the first Flower Moon in May.

We meet in the mornings at Marr Lake, straight back down the long dirt road, past the rickety farm stand and dusty red barn, out through the clearing in the forest.

These are easy days, when the trees keep getting greener. Blue dragonflies whizz past. The sky so clear and bright and endless above.

We are all old now, but the water keeps us young. Our hair a tangle of weed and moss and sand. Our bodies wrinkled from the sun.

Down at Marr Lake, you can tell the old oak trees everything. We arrive early, sit near the water's edge. The air is hot and thick, but the breeze has stories, if you know how to listen.

One time, Alice swam down deep below the lily pads. She put her hands together like an angel and glided straight through the water. She said she saw all kinds of strange things down there. Sunken ships and lost dolls and rusty green signs for streets no one has ever heard of before.

Last June, Susan showed up with bruises on the backs of her legs. We all sat together in a circle. We lit black candles for protection. Laura said a prayer. The lake is special that way. Whenever something happens, you can take it to the water.

People have been coming down to the lake to swim with us for as long as we can remember. They say there is real healing in being out in the water accompanied by a council of grandmothers. Together, we swim, back and forth. Often, we stay in place and tread. We listen as they share their minds. We give them medicine: stories to remember, places in nature to visit, songs to play, books to read. We do water kicks and pretend to be mermaids, moving and breathing in sync with the musty lake.

After our swim, sometimes we will gather at someone's home. Susan brings out chocolate muffins. Alice makes the coffee. We sit together and we talk about life, about the ways in which we let the water change us. The sky darkens and time disappears. Our words blur together, one plus another becomes a wish. We are sage women-children—so full of dreams and passions, hopes and ideas. We are lines and wrinkles and curves and stories. We sit together and we laugh and cry.

And then we vow to meet again tomorrow, down by Marr Lake.



Vintage illustration courtesy Dover Publications

Andrea Kasprzak is the author of Romance the Every Day *(Chronicle Books). She lives in Michigan. Find more of her writing at venusdays.substack.com and @andreareneekasprzak on Instagram.*

STRAWBERRY BUTTERMILK CAKE

WITH CREAM-CHEESE FROSTING

BY MUST LOVE HERBS





STRAWBERRY BUTTERMILK CAKE WITH CREAM-CHEESE FROSTING

When I think of gossamer, I'm immediately reminded of my childhood here in the Appalachian Mountains and the way it felt—light, airy, and ethereal. There is a veil in my mind between now and then that feels so fragile, I can almost break through. My childhood bedroom was filled with pinks, greens, and all things fae. It was the perfect environment for a fairy in the making—along with my mother's perennial gardens, and the black-eyed Susans, foxgloves, and Queen Anne's lace that overflowed in our yard and led like breadcrumbs into the forest.

This cake and its light, fun-filled nature is a nod to that childhood feeling. It features kiwi jam between layers of fluffy strawberry cake—a fun combination of flavors that I find especially delightful in the summer heat. They're delicate tastes that also pack a huge punch, making them a perfect addition to any summer get-together!

Ingredients for cake:

1½ cups all purpose flour
¼ teaspoon baking soda
¼ teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt
½ cup buttermilk
1 stick of butter (½ cup) at room temperature
1 cup sugar
3 eggs
2 cups strawberries (diced)
Kiwi jam

Ingredients for icing:

4 ounces cream cheese at room temperature
½ stick of butter (¼ cup) at room temperature
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
Pinch kosher salt
1½ to 3 cups confectioner's sugar (depending on desired consistency)
Pink food coloring (optional)

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Grease four 6-inch cake pans and line with parchment paper.

In a medium bowl, combine flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt.

With an electric mixer, cream together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy (about two minutes). Add the eggs one at a time, mixing between each addition. Then turn the mixer off and scrape the bottom and sides of the bowl, making sure there isn't any unmixed butter and sugar.

With the mixer on low, add the buttermilk and flour, alternating half at a time until both are incorporated. Mix until evenly distributed.

Fold the strawberries gently into your batter. Make sure they are evenly distributed, but do not overmix.

Pour the batter into your greased pans and bake 25 to 30 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the middle of the cakes comes out clean.

Allow the cakes to cool in the pans for a minimum of 30 minutes. After 30 minutes, flip the cakes out carefully onto a wire rack and allow to cool for another 30 minutes. While the cakes cool, prepare the icing.

In a medium mixing bowl, combine the cream cheese, butter, vanilla, and salt. Use an electric mixer on medium speed, mixing thoroughly until the ingredients are smooth and creamy. Add in the confectioner's sugar a half-cup at time until the desired consistency and sweetness is achieved. There are no wrong answers here!

Using a spatula, smooth the frosting and 2 tablespoons kiwi jam between each layer of cake. Cover the entire cake in an even coating of frosting.

Ingredients for rice-paper wings:

1 package of spring roll rice-paper wrappers, found in most grocery stores
Warm water
Gel food coloring
Parchment paper
Paint brushes

Method for rice-paper wings:

Fill a large bowl with warm water, then submerge the rice papers until completely softened.

Lay a sheet of parchment paper flat out on your counter. Place the softened rice paper onto the parchment paper and arrange it into a shape of a wing. I scrunched the rice paper on one side and left it wider on the other.

Using food coloring as paint, diluted with a few drops of water, paint the rice paper while it's still wet.

Allow the painted rice paper to dry overnight.

Gently insert the hardened rice-paper wrappers into the sides of the cake at an upward angle to form wings.

And voila!

Follow Lauren May on Instagram @mustloveherbs or visit mustloveherbs.com.

ISLABEL *and* SPIDER

by Luci Johnson
Photography by Sandra Paul



Once not so very long ago, but before time was counted, Islabel came into being. She was quite alone in the world. She was fed and clothed and housed, but not loved. Islabel survived, but failed to thrive.

Painfully aware of her differentness and solitude, Islabel retreated into herself, and her heart became a gaping wound.

One stormy summer night, when the skies were pouring rain and lightning flashed and cracked the sky and thunder shook the earth, Islabel awoke to find a spider on her nose, staring at her intently.

Spider spoke first, saying "I've come to help you, Islabel. Your heart wound must be mended."

"But how, and why?" Islabel asked. "No one loves me."

"You are divine." Spider answered. "I love you and I will teach you to love yourself."

Islabel began to surrender to a calmness she had never known. "Please mend my heart, Spider," she said.

Spider made her way to Islabel's heart. Islabel felt Spider's legs tickling her skin, but was not afraid. Spider carefully embroidered her silk across Islabel's heart wound, each stitch a tiny prick.

Islabel felt a steady stream of tears dripping from her eyes—not because she was in pain, but because she felt Spider's love flowing into her.

When Spider's ministrations were complete, she returned to Islabel's nose. Holding Islabel's gaze, she said, "Your heart has been mended, and you will grow stronger each day. My only request is that you share your gift with others who need it."

"How will I know who needs it?" Islabel asked.

"Everyone needs it. Everyone needs love."

When Islabel awakened the next morning, she thought that Spider's visit had been a dream, but when she sat up, she was covered by a delicate webbing that stretched across all four corners of her bed. And when Islabel placed her hand over her heart, she felt a fine scar of precise stitching.

From that day forward Islabel shared her gift with others.

For those who doubted their worth, she spun a mirrored web to reflect their goodness.

For those who were in the midst of transformation, she spun a cocoon of protection. She spun a web to capture falling stars and gave a star to anyone in need of a miracle.

For those who were exhausted, she spun a web where they could rest.

She spun a web of self-forgiveness for those who were regretful.

And for those who needed to be brave, she spun a web of courage.

Through it all, Islabel thrived. The more she shared her gift, the more she had to share.

Many years passed before Spider came to Islabel again, on another stormy summer night when rain pelted the windows and lightning flashed in the sky and thunder shook the earth.

Islabel again awakened to see Spider perched on her nose. "Islabel, you have shared your gift well," Spider said.

"I've always hoped you knew, Spider," Islabel said.

"It was easy to know, Islabel. The gifts you spun created an unbroken web stretching between all you have touched. Just look."

Islabel then realized that they were outside, floating above the earth, among the stars. Beneath them a gossamer web glimmered, stretching out in every direction, as far as she could see.

See photographer Sandra Paul's work on her website at sandrapaul.it or visit her on Instagram @sandrapaulphotography.



8 of Pentacles, Verdance Tarot
(September 2025, Llewellyn Worldwide)
by STEPHANIE LAW
@spmlaw



CREATURES of GLASS

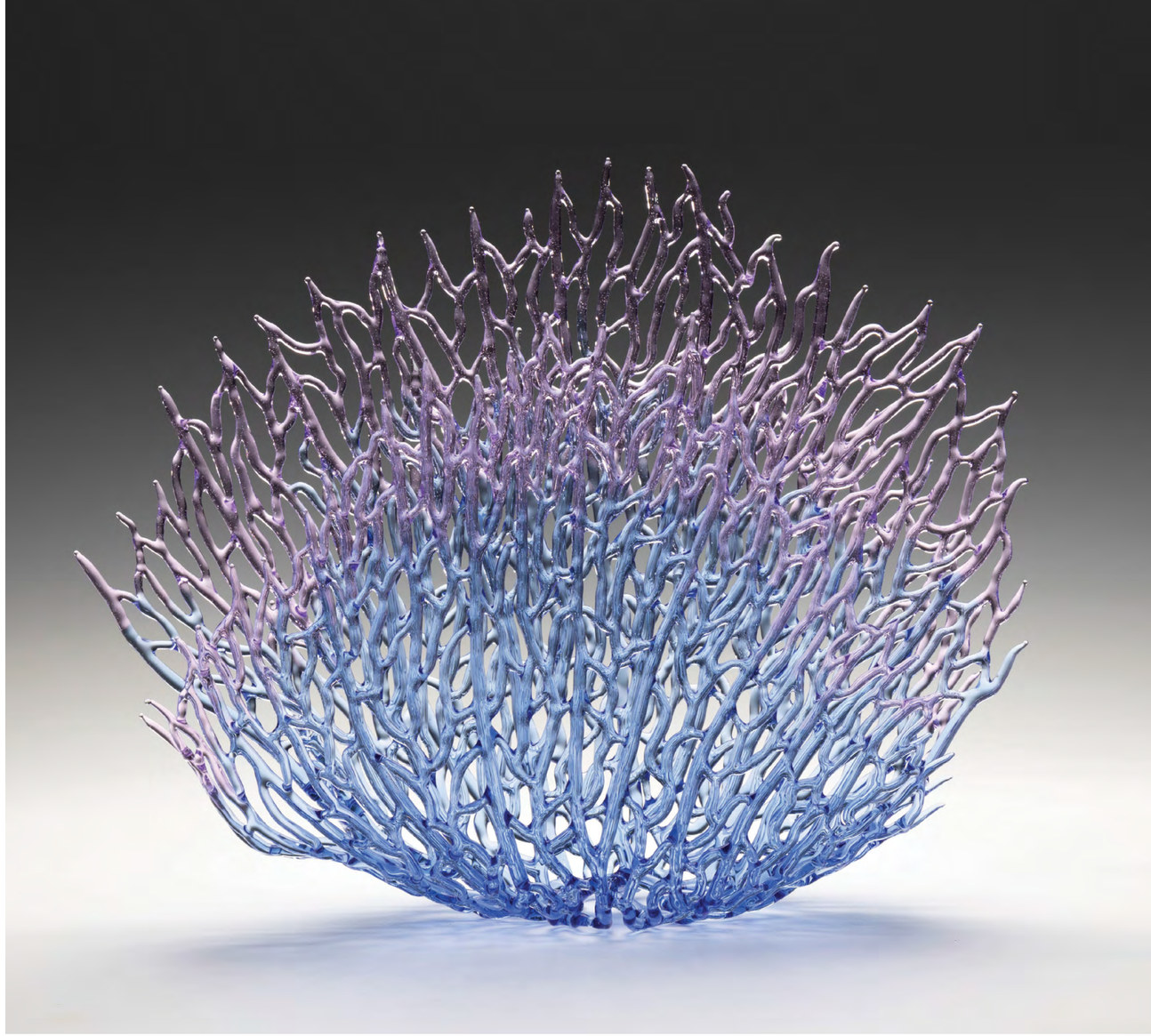
BY EMILY WILLIAMS

All my life I've lived around the water. The most impressive place I knew growing up was Southern California, with its amazing tidal pools and sea kelp forests. In recent years, I've begun working on this *Glass Reef* project and exploring marine life unique to coral reefs. By using small hand torches, I can explore the movement, structure, and pattern found in coral-reef life. Many coral reefs are threatened, under attack, and facing extinction. Through this project, I want to draw attention to this hidden, fragile world. I've been developing special glass-working techniques using a small hand torch and glass-annealing kilns. With these methods, I can create detailed brain corals, fan corals, and patterned seaweed forms.

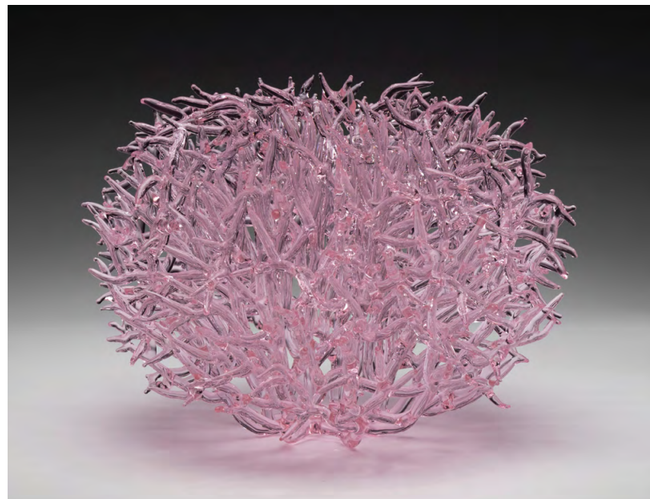
For more than a decade, I've been using hand-torched borosilicate glass to create marine life-forms that are highly sculptural and detailed. The hand-torching process is very spontaneous and satisfies my desire to capture the exquisite, detailed forms of corals, seaweed, and water itself. Borosilicate is a strong, vibrant glass material that can be worked at length between annealing, allowing me to develop complex, intricate forms. By using the boro glass with a small hand torch and my four-inch specialty tip, I can create forms with depth, detail, and physical strength.

Many of my past sculptures focused on different types of ocean reef life such as brain corals, plate corals, bird's nest corals, and more recently, fan corals. These glass sculptures are intensely detailed and building them can take several weeks and sometimes months. In the past couple of years, I've begun to explore more brilliant colors in seaweed, corals, and water sculptures. Using luminous, transparent blues, greens, and pinks allows the light to penetrate different marine life-forms to create a colorful glow. I'm deeply interested in their strange behaviors and color variations, as well as in conservation efforts to stave off devastation to coral reefs worldwide.

See more of Emily Williams's work at emilywilliamssculpture.com.







LUNA MOTH
Photos: Propel the Moon Photography
@propelthemoon_photography
Model: Aundi Lanaé *@aundi_lanae*

Mosaic Threads of Novel Escapes

by Jasmine La Fleur

Photos by Ileah Lutz of Propel the Moon Photography

I love many things about fantasy films—the dazzling costumes, otherworldly beauty, and pristine nature. Tall trees and mountains that disappear above ocean mist. There's a stark contrast between fairy-tale forests and the dusty arroyos and grassy plains of my eastern New Mexico hometown. However, one state further west looks the very picture of fantasy fiction. When I think of Oregon and its verdigris trails of moss, it overtakes every stone and rooted path in my mind. Just the very thought of its rainy days gives me a sense of melancholic longing. Then recently, I received an invitation to meet with creatures who dance in moonbeams and run with wolves. It was a chance to join a heavenly host of adventurers whose odyssey began in the pages of tomes.



Novel Escapes is an event-production company in Portland that creates bookish escapes for curious daydreamers and draws vivacious readers to their productions like a moth to a flame. This fall, I will be an honored guest.

Anastasia P. founded Novel Escapes in 2024 to create high-quality, whimsical events that reflected her love for books as well as her community. She partnered with author A.B. Daniels-Annachi, who shared her passion for literature and offered his experience with publishing and organizing. The team also includes newcomers Ashley B. and Bri H., who create community engagement opportunities like Discord role-playing and social media activations.

The beckoning light that Novel Escapes cultivates is reflected in the faces of the people who attend each event. "I really think that there's something about making space for diverse voices, for hiring a diverse cast," Daniels-Annachi says when discussing what makes their work so special. Safe spaces are defined as environments that protect against harassment, discrimination, criticism, and other emotional harm. It is this very promise of comfort and security that draws in guests from all walks of life. Like delicate threads woven together, each storytelling guest becomes part of a rich tapestry and binds their unique experiences. When somebody attends one of the events, "they're going to see that we're really putting effort into making sure everyone feels represented," Anastasia emphasizes. As a plus-size woman myself, I was delighted to see a variety of body sizes, skin colors, and talents included in their cast of goddesses and gods for their Pomegranates and Styx event last winter.

Because there truly is immense wonder in the rain-soaked forests of Oregon, there are animal familiars who contribute to the delicate fibers that Novel Escapes creates. Saaya and Echo are two wolfdogs known as Of Wolf and Shadow on Instagram. Their handler and photographer Jade found an opportunity to introduce fantasy lovers to wolfdogs and the challenges their wolf ancestors currently face. Anastasia recalls Jade saying, "I see so many people who would take a photo with a wolf or read a story about a wolf but have no clue about any of the environmental stuff or know that wolves need saving." Through each photo, the subjects and curious observers become just a little more informed about the conservation of wolf territory and the forest sentinels themselves.

It's safe to say I accepted Anastasia and Daniels-Annachi's invitation and was honored to experience their work firsthand through our collaboration last spring for Black Fae Day, a celebration of Black fantasy enthusiasts and culture. The craft of bringing fantasy to this mundane life sometimes requires balancing advocacy with respite. And no doubt, much sacrifice is required. But as delicate as the result may be, the experience Novel Escapes creates leaves an indelible mark on the hearts of all their patrons.

If you'd like to experience the magic for yourself, their next seasonal event is Faerie Revelry—A Bookish Retreat. Experience a cozy weekend getaway with role-playing, meals prepared by an award-winning chef, book talks with vending fantasy authors, and the wilderness of Brasada Ranch, August 22 to 24. Visit their website for more information: *novelescapesllc.com/faerie-revelry.*

Visit Jasmine La Fleur online at blackfaeday.com. You can hear more about Novel Escapes and other magical guests on her podcast, Faebies and Friends, available on Apple Music, Amazon Music, iHeart, and Spotify.

AMBER TAURUS
Event: Dead Wrath and Beyond's
Grassvalley Fantasy Photography Retreat

Midsummer Night
by **KINUKO Y. CRAFT**
Courtesy of Borsini-Burr
borsini-burr.com

THE DANDELION CLOCK KEEPER

by Amy Bowden

Walking in her mother's garden by moonlight was like stepping into a pool of molten silver. The air was scented with early summer flowers. The scents of wisteria and soft lavender twined together, a frothy, swirled confection that left her dizzy. Gone were the buzzing bees and the sounds of the neighbor's lawn mower. Now it was so quiet Elsie thought she could hear the stars twinkle. A breeze wrapped the last of the day's sunshine around her bare ankles.

The garden was a wild thing. Her mother hadn't believed in pulling weeds, and there were no neat borders or tidy pathways through raised beds. Dandelions, thistle, and knotweed spread alongside honeysuckle vines and English roses. Herbs grew rampant in far-off corners, and old trees, their trunks gnarled and covered in moss, stood like ancient guardians at the edge of the garden. Some parts of the garden burst with color, while others were dark and shaded, filled with deep green ferns and mosses. It was a patchwork quilt of plants sewn together with the threads of her mother's free spirit.



Vintage illustration courtesy Dover Publications

Standing here now, on the day before her mother's funeral, Elsie let the memories wash over her.

She remembered her mother waking her in the early dawn hours to look for fairies. They snuck out of the house in their nightgowns and bare feet to walk across the dew-sprinkled grass. The garden gate had creaked as they tiptoed inside to peer into the trumpets of flowers turned toward the approaching light. They hadn't found fairies, but they did find a dandelion clock closed up against the cold. Elsie remembered watching in wonder as the dandelion opened into a delicate puffball, soft as a kitten, with the warming sun's golden rays.

Her mother had plucked the dandelion clock and told Elsie to close her eyes.

"The seeds will carry your wishes to the stars," she said.

Elsie had taken a deep breath and blown on the seeds as hard as she could until none remained. They'd watched together as the seeds, carried on warm currents of summer air, had spiraled up and up into the bright blue sky until they disappeared.

It'd been a long time since she believed in wishes and fairies. But being back here, in her childhood home, sleeping in the pink canopy bed she'd begged for as a little girl, she began to wonder when she'd let her mother's magic slip from her life.

There'd been fall harvests, with fistfuls of flowers and mouthfuls of blackberries. There'd been picnics with her teddy bear, her mother pouring endless cups of lemonade. Best of all were the shooting star nights, when they'd lain a blanket among the sunflowers and watched meteors fall from the sky.

Never again would she be able to feel the wild magic that was her mother.

"I miss you, Mom," she whispered into the night.

Just then a cloud scuttled across the moon, casting the garden in shadow. The evening chilled as the last vestiges of summer warmth and heat fled. Elsie shivered, pulling her cardigan tighter around her shoulders.

At her feet, a dandelion grew, unfurled, turned into a soft white ball. She stared in wonder.

The cloud covering the moon soared by, and once again the clearing was bathed in the soft luminescence of moonlight. For a moment, everything glowed as if wrapped in a great gossamer cloak: the variegated ivy trailing along the tree trunks, the silvery cobwebs strung between rosebush thorns, the pale white petals of evening primrose. A carpet of silver flowers seemed to unfold in front of her, rich with sweet alyssum and clover.

Elsie reached down and plucked the dandelion. She blew softly and watched the seeds carry her wishes to the stars.

***

Amy Bowden is an Oregon-based writer and university instructor, currently pursuing an MFA. She is inspired by the natural world and the strong women in her life, often weaving these influences into her work. Her writing has appeared in 1859, Parents Magazine, Oregon Coast Magazine, *and other publications. When she's not teaching, writing, or curled up with a good book, you can find her exploring the beauty of the Pacific Northwest.*

SEVEN ENCHANTING PASTIMES FOR SUMMER DAYS

by Steele Alexandra Douris

In a dizzying world that seems to spin faster every day, using our hands to create can ground us and help us find empowerment and expression. As an author and artist, I rely on my creative practices to steady me and keep me strong, but I also try to make time for experimentation. Sometimes, the best thing I can do is set aside my manuscript and try something new. There's nothing better than staying up late on a warm summer night, drinking sweet tea or homemade lemonade, and exploring a new medium, and these days I've found that I want my creative experiments to be as whimsical and fanciful as possible. If you too have a yearning for whimsy, here are seven crafts you might try exploring this summer:

1. **Candy-making.** If you've already tried baking—and even if you haven't—you might consider exploring the world of homemade toffee, truffles, caramels, and more. Pastries and baked goods are delicious, but there's something especially fanciful about creating your own exquisite homemade candies. You can consult the internet for tips on re-creating your favorite store-bought treats, or look up beginner recipes for homemade fudge and caramels. There are many resources online for candymakers, and you can also check out a book on the topic from your local library. Try your hand at making a few different kinds of confections, and then treat yourself to a taste test. You might even invite friends over and host a picnic or a tea party.
2. **Embroidery and creative mending.** The theme of this issue is gossamer, which makes me think of iridescent dragonflies, delicate spiderwebs, and … embroidery floss. Textile arts have a unique magic, and embroidery is a wonderful medium for exploring the whimsy of the natural world. You don't have to restrict yourself to traditional embroidery subjects; flowers and cute birds are fun to stitch, but so are dragons, skulls, and song lyrics. Anything that can be written or drawn on paper can also be stitched onto fabric, so give your needle free rein and sew whatever moves you. If you're trying to buy fewer new clothes and maintain the clothing you already have, you might look into artistic mending (also known as visible mending), which allows you to take beloved clothing items that have tears or stains and turn those flaws into a springboard for your creativity. Holes in jeans can be patched with beautiful, creative embroidery, and stains can be covered with unique designs in bright colors.
3. **Dorodango.** This Japanese art form is perfect for anyone who wants to use their hands to connect with the earth—literally! Dorodangos are created by rolling mud, especially mud with a high clay content, into smooth balls. The balls are then left to dry, and once dry, they can be polished, glazed, or decorated, depending on your preference. Making a dorodango might sound easy or even childish, but it's trickier than it seems. If you're a little impatient, you might be frustrated by the delicate nature of dorodangos and their propensity to crack or crumble. Then again, if you're naturally impatient, you might find that the slow, meditative, grounding process of creating a dorodango settles your mind and steadies your hands.
4. **Making miniatures.** Have you ever noticed that the most mundane items suddenly acquire a fantastic quality once miniaturized? Though it's a hobby focused on crafting tiny marvels, miniature-making can quickly become an all-consuming obsession. But if you're short on time and space, you don't need to start construction on a miniature Camelot. Start by experimenting with a few small items. You can begin by deciding if there's a specific theme you want to explore with your miniatures. Some miniaturists focus on creating furniture or artifacts from their favorite historical periods, while others focus on more fanciful or mythological subjects. Some talented makers have memorialized beloved places from their past, such as their childhood bedroom or their grandparents' kitchen, by creating miniature versions. Don't forget to look online for inspiration, and don't just look at the most famous dollhouses. Colleen Moore's Fairy Castle and the Astolat Dollhouse are very impressive, but social media is full of incredible, inventive miniature work being done by amateurs and professionals alike.
5. **Nature journaling.** Of all the ideas on this list, this one is probably the most open-ended. A nature journal can be anything you want it to be—it's really just a way for you to observe, study, and record whatever you find compelling about the natural world. If you're more of a visual artist, you can use your nature journal for painting sunsets and sketching the local toads and beetles. If you prefer to write, you can scribble away about the changing of the seasons and the behavior of any animals you observe. You can also press flowers between the pages and paste in printed photos. There's no wrong way to nature journal, so grab a notebook and get started!
6. **Terrarium-keeping.** As a child, were you entranced by aquaria, the reptile house at the zoo, or vivaria full of shimmering poison dart frogs? You might want to try creating and maintaining a small terrarium. Terraria are tiny universes unto themselves, and there are infinite varieties. It can be a lot of work to maintain a full-fledged aquarium or vivarium, but small terraria with no living animals are much lower maintenance and allow for more experimentation. If this idea intrigues you, but you don't want to buy a terrarium, you might try creating a "jarrarium," which is exactly what it sounds like: a terrarium in a jar. Some people get marvelously creative with their jarrariums. You can try growing moss, ferns, a succulent, or even some local plants responsibly gathered from your neighborhood. One of my terrarium goals is to create a small one exclusively for carnivorous plants.
7. **Amigurumi.** Whether or not you have prior experience with knitting and crocheting, you might want to give amigurumi a whirl—the art of knitting or crocheting little creatures and characters out of yarn. While perhaps not as practical as knitting socks or crocheting a scarf, amigurumi is arguably more fun, and you can decorate your space with small dragons, penguins, owls, witches, and wizards.

Follow Steele Alexandra Douris on Instagram @steelearcana.



Botanical painting
by Laura Winter Art
@laurawinterart





Featured Artist

Laura Winter

"It is in the thinnest layers that precious things are hidden," Italian artist Laura Winter says. "The casing of a flower that lets its interior shine through, the filigree of a dry leaf, the wings of a moth."

We've long admired her delicate watercolors, oil paintings, and painted porcelain, with their scenes of blooming flowers and cascading leaves, of sweet birds and bats and cats and foxes, of gleaming, dropping fruit. It's all so *lovely.* Winter likes to combine botanical and animal elements in harmonious compositions, she says: "A sinuous curve, a light shade of color that turns into its complementary color, the two blending together to form unique nuances in a tonal balance. This balance cheers the soul, rests and delights the eyes." That's what her art is—restful. As restful and soothing as it is beautiful.

Winter has a weakness for detail and intricate things. She uses different techniques that she believes shines through in each one of them. In ink illustration, she likes to create subtle textures through "hatching": The lines blend like spiderwebs until they form a certain shape, she explains. "Through them you can discover different shapes. It's like a microworld that creates itself, helped by the touch of the pen." In oil painting, she's most fascinated by color and the layering of colors—the magical "glazes" from Flemish painting that form unique atmospheres and from whose overlapping you can achieve unique shades sometimes impossible to create otherwise. For her, painting on porcelain is a mix of all this: "You can decide to have sharper lines, but you can also use colors with a more liquid consistency, creating veils of color that make the shapes as a whole more delicate and ethereal."

She's constantly inspired by a search for beauty, and "every object or natural element represents a world to discover and from which to draw a lot of inspiration." You just have to know how to look, she says, and how to "observe deeply through and in things."

See more of Laura Winter's work on Instagram @laurawinterart.



Botanical paintings
by Laura Winter Art
@laurawinterart



Titania in Cellophane

by Timothy Schaffert

When I was a little boy, I loved paper dolls. In theory, anyway. My mom would buy me the little books with the characters you could punch out from the cardboard and the dresses you'd cut out with scissors, but usually I preferred to draw my own dresses across the doll's blank bodies. I loved old movies, so my dolls would perform as Garbo and Bette Davis and Carole Lombard by way of the paper wigs I'd draw and paste to their heads. I still have a sketchbook of movie-star drawings I did based on studio portraits: Marilyn Monroe, Merle Oberon, Louise Brooks.

Every now and again, wrappers and labels and other snippets of colorful paper would become part of my fashion collages, and while I gave it all up for a while in my adulthood, I eventually returned to the drawings in my thirties; every Valentine's Day, for example, I drew movie couples on top of little heart-shaped boxes.

Just before the Covid shutdown, I was in Kansas City with my husband and friends, and we found a stand in a candy store devoted to Venchi, the Italian chocolatier, and the elaborate wrappers called out to be the gowns of Golden Age Hollywood. Shortly after that, I was diagnosed with a neurological condition that hastened my abandonment of sugar. So as we waited out the pandemic, I threw away the candy and kept the wrappers, committing to creating a daily candy-wrapper illustration, beginning with Myrna Loy in a gown by Venchi Cuba Gin.

While I eventually slowed down from my daily drawing, I have created more than 700 of them over the past five years. The illustrations here aren't based on movie stars but on the fairyland idyll that John Simmons (1823–76) would create in his miniatures and watercolors, many influenced by Shakespeare. Since most of his fairies wear little, if anything at all, I used some of my more diaphanous wrappers for my portrait of Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—she's in a gown by Smarties. If the other fairies seem particularly pearlescent, it's because their little slips are from Kate Spade's Candy Pearls wrappers.

Timothy Schaffert is the author of seven novels, most recently The Perfume Thief *and* The Titanic Survivors Book Club. *Follow him on Instagram @timothy.schaffert.*





Rêve Crémeux



The Birth of Venus (1852), by Henry Courtney Selous

The Unbearable Lightness of Beauty

BY ALISE MARIE, THE BEAUTY WITCH®

When the heat of summer casts her voluptuous spell of brilliant light, we are bathed in golden riches of outstretched solar waves, radiating with an almost ferocious intensity. But what is intrinsically a time of immense cosmic power can be received as an overpowering force—perhaps all this sunshine is too much for some, who prefer the cool and quiet dark of a late midsummer night to conjure their desires. Yet these long days are the peak of vitality, abundance, and celebration. What if, instead of wilting in the heat, we chose to see things from another perspective? Better yet, to *feel* from a different level, one that allows us to elevate above the clouds, entwine with the flowers, and float between the worlds?

The other "light" of summer is *air*, *mes chérs*. Though the elemental reign of fire holds court, it is the wind which carries a luscious breeze through our collective spirit. Air is ruled by Mercury, that charming chatterbox that opens doors … why not let him open our *minds* right now, weaving a spider's web of thoughts through our daydreams? Dare to imagine conjuring spun-silk masterpieces, creating the architecture of your wildest desires.

My offerings to you this season are a pink chiffon facial, a perfumed hair mist, and a whipped cream cocktail—all designed to inspire flights of fancy! I see you twirling, spinning, and dancing with soft delirium, feathery light as the gossamer wings of a creature only *you* can imagine.

And because day turns to night (as it should), one dazzling star shines here: the fetchingly fragrant, slightly mysterious **plumeria**. Plumeria, or frangipani, has long been revered as a Venusian flower of love, with an intoxicating scent that seems to effortlessly call forth beauty magic with the ample charms of its regent. Plumeria simply *adores* your skin! It has a unique ability to bind cells together, providing structure to them, which translates to lifting and firming the skin. It also softens, balances oil, and stimulates the oh-so-important cellular growth, all while soothing and healing a parched, sun-kissed visage. A naturally potent aphrodisiac, plumeria's perfume also soothes, calms, and reduces stress to aid beauty sleep. When added to the cauldron for hair care, it strengthens follicles, promotes hair growth, hydrates, and provides UV protection.

Concoct and adore these under the precious new moons of summer, on any gentle Sunday, or whenever your secret stories beckon …

Rêve Crémeux

Beauty Cocktail

Conjures 2 to 4 cocktails
½ cup fresh plum, chopped
½ cup fresh raspberries
¼ cup coconut milk
Squeeze of tangerine
Champagne or soda water

Pop the raspberries and plum into a high-speed blender, add the coconut milk, and blend until completely smooth and creamy. (Note that vortex-style blenders will always work best with all produce, eliminating the chunky bits and odd particles!) Pour into a cocktail shaker, add a squeeze of tangerine to taste, ice if you like, then shake until blended. Pour into gorgeous cocktail glasses, filling only halfway up. Add the champagne or soda, then top with a dollop of coconut cream. Raise your glass to all good things coming to fruition in these sun-soaked days of summer! This drink is a delight of silky, creamy, whipped delirium infused with a bright fruit flavor that's both decadent *and* light. *Santé!*

Tangerine Fiery and protective tangerine supports collagen production and cellular renewal while bringing forth love and prosperity.

Champagne The "wine of kings" is actually quite the beauty secret—and my personal favorite libation! Loaded with antioxidants, celebratory champagne helps promote even skin tone and cleanses with natural antibacterial powers.

Beauty Witch Secret: Oh yes, it does make a smashing smoothie, too … just omit all things bubbly. You can do wonders with this: Add a cold herbal tea, a banana, a few spoonfuls of cooked quinoa, cacao nibs … the sunny, starry sky is the limit!

Mousseline Rose

Facial

Conjures approximately 3 treatments
1 8-ounce can organic coconut milk, chilled
1 tablespoon rose water
3 tablespoons almond flour, finely ground
3 fresh raspberries
3 drops plumeria essential oil

Plan ahead by placing the can of coconut milk in the refrigerator for about an hour. This will allow the solid cream to separate from the liquid. Spoon the cream into a large bowl, and set aside the liquid for later. In a separate bowl, combine *two tablespoons only* of the coconut cream with the almond flour and rose water. Drop in the raspberries. Then, using a hand mixer or immersion (or "stick") blender, pulse until you have a fluffy, whipped consistency. Add more almond flour to reach a desired texture, if needed. Fold in the plumeria, inviting her beauty to your ritual soirée.

Massage in a circular motion onto clean skin to remove the dulling surface layer of cells, then let the masque set for 10 to 20 minutes. Breathe in the sensuous aroma and decadent touch of this blend. Rinse well with cool water, pat dry. Your skin will be glowing and your spirit uplifted!

You can spoon the remainder into an airtight jar and keep refrigerated until you are ready to use.

Coconut Ruled by the moon and water, coconut heightens your intuition and psychic abilities as it provides beauty fats for supple skin. Its creamy, soft consistency adds sensual richness to your potions.

Rose Though the rose appears delicate, it's actually one of the oldest symbols of strength. A flower of Venus and sacred to both Freya and Hathor, it's been revered for its beauty magic, as well as its love, luck, divination, healing, protection, and psychic enhancement abilities. Rose is active yet soothing, targeting fine lines and wrinkles with a variety of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.

Raspberry Rich in antioxidants and vitamin E, raspberry prevents the destruction of skin cells, wards off premature aging, and helps maintain water balance in skin. It is healing to eczema and psoriasis, and protects against UV damage. Ruled by Venus and water, it brings forth happiness, love, and protection.

Almond Rich in calcium and vitamin E, almond milk is beautifying and strengthening, with added magic of money, luck, and healing. As a very gentle exfoliant, it sloughs away dead skin without irritation. Ruled by air, it gives potions a lightness of energy surrounding the intellect, reminding you to ease up on the kind of worrying that wreaks havoc on your face.

Beauty Witch Secret: If you have any coconut cream or milk left over, enjoy! Splash them into a warm bath, add several drops of plumeria, apply your potions, pour your cocktail … and lose yourself in a spellbound spa!

Mousseline Rose



Plumes Parfumées
Scented Hair Mist

Conjures approximately 2 ounces
1½ ounces rose water
3 drops raspberry seed oil
3 drops sweet almond oil
1 teaspoon aloe vera gel
6 drops plumeria essential oil

This is almost *too* simple! Just combine all ingredients in a glass sprayer bottle—though it must be a pretty one—and blend by shaking vigorously to blend the aloe into the potion. Give it the magic touch with a final clockwise swirl, cap it, and mist your dry or damp hair whenever you like! A light coating is all you need to detangle, hydrate, calm frizz, protect from UV damage, and impart celestial shine. This works well on all hair textures and is light enough for fine hair.

Aloe Known as the "medicine plant," lunar aloe carries the magic of protection and luck. It contains anti-inflammatory hormones, which have a firming, depuffing effect on the skin.

Beauty Witch Secret: This little mystical mist can refresh and illuminate sleepy strands, so do pop one in your bag for whenever you need a lift. *Psst: It does double duty as a body mist!*

Alise Marie is the author of The Beauty Witch's Secrets: Recipes and Rituals for the Modern Goddess, *available wherever books are sold. Find her at thebeautywitch.com and on Instagram @thebeautywitchofficial.*

Daughters of the Mist (1900–1919), by Evelyn De Morgan

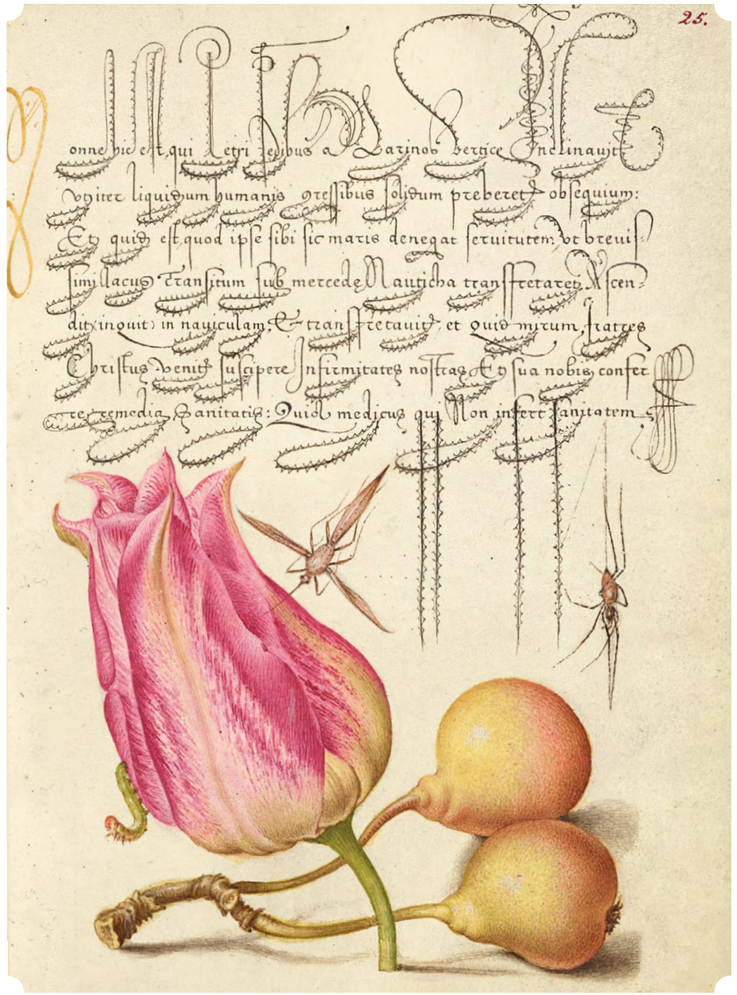


Illustration from *Model Book of Calligraphy* (1562), by Joris Hoefnagel

INTRICACIES OF GOSSAMER

by Eric Brown

The word *gossamer* has come to describe a particularly fine sort of delicateness: something lighter than air, almost insubstantial, and often infused with an otherworldly, ethereal quality. This meaning can be traced back to a specific natural phenomenon that has been observed since ancient times: the airborne "ballooning" or "kiting" of spiders, who release strands of silk in order to be transported by wind, a phenomenon especially noted on warm autumn days. It is perhaps most famously and touchingly depicted near the end of E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, when the baby spiders leave their nest and release threads from their spinnerets, creating shimmering parachutes that catch the updraft until the air becomes "so full of balloonists that the barn cellar looked almost as though a mist had gathered. Balloons by the dozen were rising, circling, and drifting away through the door, sailing off on the gentle wind."

The first appearance of *gossamer* in this sense of drifting spider silk dates to the early 14th century, when it appears in the rather marvelously titled *The Treatise of Walter of Bibbesworth*. Intended as a playful and poetic primer to teach English speakers essential French, the text glosses key vocabulary across domains from cooking to hunting. Bibbesworth links the lovely French word *filaundre*, a filament of spider's web, with the Middle English word *gosesomer*, literally "goose summer." ("I would rather have a small handful of ginger," the poem runs, "than a hundred handfuls of gossamer.") In that old spelling one can hear more clearly the folk etymology of the word, which the Oxford English Dictionary supposes emerged from the appearance of gossamer during a time when geese were also in season. A similar idea appears in a German word for November: *Gänsemonat,* or "geese month."

But the word itself in modern English also has an onomatopoeic feel to it, an opening gasp that glides into sibilance and settles on soft-cushioned consonants, a youngling spider launching into the air before smoothly touching down elsewhere. Robert Herrick evokes the word's weightless grace in his poem "Oberon's Palace," which describes Queen Mab nestled in her bower upon a bed of dandelions, with "two blankets o'er- / Cast of the finest gossamore." The very sound of the word conjures a kind of languid and ephemeral delicacy, and this idea has been woven into centuries of verse. Chaucer places gossamer among the ineffable mysteries of the natural world, its origins as wondrous as thunder, tides, and mist. Shakespeare equates it in *King Lear* with "feathers, air," and imagines in *Romeo and Juliet* that "A lover may bestride the gossamer / That idles in the wanton summer air, / And yet not fall," so light are the steps of lovers. In *Le Morte D'Arthur*, Thomas Malory has Gawain declare the fragility of life itself "but gossamer."

The spectacle of silk filaments drifting through the air holds no less wonder than what some have seen in spiderwebs more broadly. One of the earliest celebrants of their sublimity was the 16th century entomologist Thomas Muffet, who may have lent his name to the nursery rhyme "Little Miss Muffet" (in whose earliest version "There came a big spider / Who sat down beside her"). Muffet's late 16th century encyclopedic work *The Theatre of Insects* praises especially the artistry of the spider, a topic well-developed in the mythical weaving competition of Minerva and Arachne. Muffet is positioned firmly in camp Arachne, calling the spider "the Goddess of a thousand works," and marveling especially at the "variety of their Nets." He notes that "some of them are looser, some thicker, some triangular, others square, some diamond figures," such that Euclid, he opines, must have "learned to make his figures from hence." He singles out further as the "best Artificers" those spiders that "work in Autumn" and spin gossamer, drawing "a thread that is smaller than any linen or silk, and far lighter, and so pure ... that the whole Web wrapped together will scarce make one thread as great as a linen thread." Muffet is also especially struck by the color, which he calls "aerial and transparent, or rather no color," ingeniously invisible and perfect for the catching of flies. Or as recounted in Homer's *Odyssey*, such craftiness is so divine that Hephaestus's "net of chains, firm and unbreakable," in which he catches Ares and Aphrodite, was "fine as a spider's web, and so cunningly made it was invisible even to the blessed gods." Though the reverse is also true, as Philo put it in his first century work *On Animals*: the art of spiders can amaze with its splendor, making "an open space look like lace."

Muffet further points to another remarkable aspect of spiderwebs: their curative properties. Since at least classical times, webs have been used to assist with the treatment of wounds. (Muffet also includes more exotic applications, such as the belief that "the webs of Spiders found in the Cypress tree" may be a remedy for gout.) In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Bottom, upon meeting the fairy Cobweb, remarks, "I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb: if I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you." This reflects a common folk practice of applying spiderwebs as a poultice particularly for small cuts. In Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, he argues likewise that "cobwebs are good, too, for stopping the bleeding of wounds made in shaving." Easily the most enthusiastic paean on the healing power of spiderwebs is given by Edward Topsell in his *History of Serpents* (1658): "If anyone be newly and dangerously wounded, and that the miserable party feareth a bleeding to death, what is a more noble medicine, or more ready at hand, than a thick Spiders web, to bind hard upon the wound?" Not only will it staunch the bleeding, but a cobweb "adstringeth, refrigerateth, foldereth, joyneth, and closeth up wounds, not suffering any rotten or filthy matter to remain long in them." And in fact, a number of modern medical studies have shown that spiderwebs are indeed effective, with one scientist recently echoing Topsell's exuberance: They are "biodegradable, non-antigenic and noninflammatory," all "ideal properties."

For all its ethereal beauty, gossamer is proportionally stronger than steel. This too was considered by Muffet, who observed that "the work is so firm, though it appear so weak, that it will hold Hornets, endure force of winds, and dust being fallen into it, rather yields than breaks or is hurt." With a duality of lightness and strength that calls to mind Tolkien's mithril, spider silk has been researched extensively for its potential structural applications, including as a synthetic fiber. At scale, the reproduction of natural spider silk is daunting: a single handwoven cape produced by farming golden orb spiders in Madagascar required the labor of more than a million spiders over the course of some eight years. Perhaps for this reason it remains most commonly situated in miniature, as in Herrick's "A Description of the King of Fayries Clothes," where Oberon sports "a cobweb shirt, more thin / Than ever spider since could spin."

The windborne *gossamer* of the spider has been transferred to other small beings in acts of naming, as with gossamer flies, gossamer damselflies, and gossamer-winged butterflies (including hairstreaks, blues, coppers, and elfins). These appellations capture well a kind of silken translucency and finesse. But *gossamer* is finally a word imbued with an intricate charge: airy and errant as the exhalations of autumn, and equally dense with potency.

Eric Brown is executive director of the Maine Irish Heritage Center. His publications include the book Insect Poetics *and poems and essays appearing or forthcoming in* Scientific American, Rust & Moth, Gargoyle, The Galway Review, The Ekphrastic Review, Mississippi Review, Eternal Haunted Summer, Lesser Living Creatures of the Renaissance, *and elsewhere.*



Photography: **TOM BELDING**
Fairy: Jessica Leigh Clark-Bojin
Makeup Artist: Sarah Elizabeth
Camera Crew: Silas Egan
Hiker: Sean Dillon

Becoming a Froudian Fairy

BY JESSICA LEIGH CLARK-BOJIN

When I was a child, I knew that certain books on the shelf were special. These were the books I could read only on certain occasions, they were so treasured. It was always a treat to pore over my very favorite of those books, *Faeries* by Brian Froud and Alan Lee—a book I know *Enchanted Living* readers are no stranger to! I cannot tell you how many hours I spent as a child doing my best to copy those Froud illustrations from memory and then searching the woods around our house for the telltale signs of the fae. While I never did find any fairies in the backyard, I did carry my love of all things Froudian into adulthood, and it's always been a secret dream of mine to one day fashion my own wild and scruffy fairy costume and create my own photo homage to my favorite book.

Well, a couple of months ago, I got the chance to make that dream a reality in a big way!

When I'm not spending time waxing nostalgic about childhood dreams, my day gig is working as a pie artist under the handle @thepieous—believe it or not, that's my real job! My pie art has taken me to some crazy places, like the *Today* show and the Food Network, as well as to the pages of *Ripley's Believe It or Not!* But I was recently given the opportunity to flex my creative muscles in a new, non-pastry direction as the host of a new TV series called *Fun City*, a show all about living out childhood dreams as an adult. Talk about kismet! Of course, I requested that one of the episodes be dedicated to my dream of becoming a fairy. To my delight, the producers agreed. The photos you see here are the result of an exciting two weeks in which I met with costume designers, fabricators, special effects makeup artists, and fantasy photographers to learn all about the art of DIY creature creation. I also learned about how to craft a narrative for your photos to really bring your creation to life!

One of the hallmarks of *Fun City* is accessibility, and I really wanted to show audiences at home just what can be accomplished without infinite time and resources. I had one mark in my favor already—my complete and utter lack of sewing ability! That's right, despite my other creative pursuits, textiles have remained a mystery for me. Professional film and TV costume designer Chris Murdoch met with me and gave me the lowdown on costume "breakdown," a.k.a. repurposing existing textiles and turning them into something new and awesome—with no sewing!

This is the process Chris guided me through to create my fairy costume on the cheap, on the quick, and without sacrificing quality:

- **Step one: Purchase your base items.** Source the base components for your costume cheaply online, from thrift stores, or from bargain Halloween leftovers. Don't worry so much about things like color and texture, as those can be changed. Look for fit (if you really want to avoid any sewing, as I did) and basic silhouette. In my case I knew I wanted a more raggedy, flesh-colored look for my fairy, so I started with a cheap white corset, long crinoline skirt, and cheap lace shrug. Remember, you can always cut things down, but it's a lot more work to build them up, so select elements that have more fabric than you think you'll need!
- **Step two: Break it down**. Those cheapo textiles are going to be pretty pristine looking, as well as mismatched. I wanted my fairy to look like she'd been living in the woods for years, so I asked Chris to show me how to—in a controlled fashion—f--- up the garments. My impulse would have been to hack at them with scissors, but he pointed out that I'd achieve a more natural degradation if I used a seam ripper to pull at the fabric and then used sandpaper to fray larger areas.
- **Step three: Color your world.** When you're thrifting mismatched bits of textile, it will be pretty much impossible to find pieces where the color, sheen, and texture all match perfectly… but that's okay! With a little diluted acrylic paint and some hot water in a metal bucket, you can dye your pieces to whatever color you wish. Just don't forget to set the color once the garments have dried fully with a blast from your blow-dryer, or a very quick tumble in the dryer, so the synthetics don't melt.
- **Step four: Finishing touches**. Once you have your base costume elements colored, scruffed up, and fitted correctly, you can begin the really fun stage of adding details. You can dry-brush on some stains and moss, and hot-glue on twigs and dried leaves. Chris did caution that if you want to wear your costume for more than one photo shoot, you should use fake foliage rather than real foraged elements, as the latter will decay and need replacing after the shoot.

With the clothing portion of my outfit ready, I next needed to create the wings. Because I'd selected a corset with stiff boning, it was a simple matter to bend a wire into a U shape that could slot down the back of my outfit and support the wings. Then all I had to do was bust out my trusty glue gun (I'm an expert glue-gunner) and attach some tulle fabric to the frame. After the glue on the fabric had set, I hid the wire with some stippled hand painting and strategic "grunge" elements, and then I was ready to put the whole look together!







Behind-the-scenes photos on the page: SEAN DILLON

Of the many professional cosplayers I spoke to for this episode, one of the tips I heard over and over again was a reminder to put as much work into the look of the rest of your body as into the costume itself. That meant arms, hands, feet, décolletage, face, and hair all had to be given the same consideration. I was fortunate to receive a crash course from professional special effects makeup artist and creature designer Sarah Elizabeth, who showed me how to turn a $50 internet wig into something that looked like a million bucks with a little strategic braiding and the insertion of some twigs and grungy metallic flakes. She helped me carry the look through the rest of the costume by adding metallic splatters to my hands and feet and any other exposed skin, and she used skin-safe glue to add some more grungy elements around my neck and shoulders. This helped ensure there was no distracting stark division between the costume and me, and our fairy was one cohesive character.

Sitting in Sarah Elizabeth's chair, I was absolutely delighted with the finished product. But of course, my dream was not to be a Froudian fairy sitting contemplatively in a makeup room. I wanted to be a fairy out in the forest living my best life! While I do live in Vancouver, British Columbia, and have access to an embarrassing number of beautiful forest landscapes, the purpose of this episode was to give people at home tips on what they can pull off in their own neighborhoods, wherever they live.

With that in mind, we enlisted the help of the wonderfully creative fantasy photographer Tom Belding to teach us how we could make the tree-lined ditch behind our studio look like a deep, magical forest. Tom found the perfect angles to hide unwanted elements like fences and power lines, and the few elements we couldn't crop out he was able to disguise with image-editing software after the fact. Tom also taught us how we can use simple lights from our phones to add pops of color and reflection on skin in the real world to match the sparkle effects he added afterward—all the simple little tricks that make the results of our photo shoot feel more real!

But the single biggest takeaway from working with Tom was his tip about creating a narrative around our characters before heading out and snapping photos. Who is this creature? What is she doing here? What is she looking for? We came up with the idea of my character stalking a human hiker through the woods and offering him some magical fairy nuts, and we recruited another model to play the hiker role. This really helped give life to the photos and take us beyond "influencer poses with fairy wings" territory.

In the end we came away with twelve gorgeous, finished photos to remember the day—and one childhood dream fulfilled in a big way! I may still not quite be ready to pick up a secondhand sewing machine, but my trusty glue gun and I are feeling confident for next Halloween after my whirlwind tour through the world of costume modding and breakdown. The only question is which fantasy creature to choose next. Hmm ... at least I know which magazine I can read for inspiration!

You can check out all the photos from this shoot at funcity.tv.



Peach Pie
by Jessica Leigh Clark-Bojin
@thepieous

Sewing Blessings

by Regina M. Hansen

As with a piece of antique lace, the threads of human connection are fragile and intricately worked, the hands that work them often unknown. My great-grandmother worked those threads throughout her life, creating a fabric of family, friendship, and loving kindness that survives to this day.

To visit Nony Emma's apartment on Browning Road in Somerville, Massachusetts, was to immediately notice three things. First were the pictures, of her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Second, the religious objects: statues and images of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and Saint Francis of Assisi, filling every shelf and table. Once, when looking for spoons, I found a picture of Jesus in the cutlery drawer. Third, and perhaps above all, the apartment was filled with things she had made: embroidered kitchen curtains and lace doilies, dolls with crocheted skirts, the handmade lace tablecloth that she set out with anise cookies or coffee or homemade pizza any time a visitor arrived. As a child I was fascinated by the life-size statue of the Infant of Prague that she kept on top of her ancient television set, with outfits she'd sewn for each of the Catholic liturgical seasons.

In many ways Nony Emma was the archetype of the Italian *nonna*, four foot ten on her tallest day and speaking in gently accented English, a sound that to this day reminds me of home. Like that archetypical woman, her hands were always moving. My aunt recalls sitting with Nony Emma one evening to watch the old *Ed Sullivan Show*. Nony worked away, occasionally commenting on the program, her eyes never leaving the screen as her knitting needles click-clacked to the swift movement of her hands. "By the end of the show there was a baby sweater," my aunt recalls. "All done. And she never used a pattern."

Everywhere Nony Emma went, she made things beautiful. Each winter she crocheted slippers, what she called "sleeps," for her extended family of more than seventy people. Sometimes you could choose the color, but mostly you got what you got, and it was always perfectly made. If you gave her a paper napkin, she would fold it into a bird or rabbit, just to entertain you. She could hem a skirt in such tiny and impeccably even stitches that they were virtually invisible. She made felt hats and dolls' clothes too. Once she gave me a doll dressed entirely in green satin. I should have taken much better care of it.

The work of Nony Emma's hands was the work of her heart, the skill that maintained our family, and during the Great Depression, the skill that would save her children from poverty. Emma Capozzi was born at the end of the 19th century in Monte Calvo Irpino, in the Italian province of Avellino, Campania, from whence many Italian Americans trace their roots. A daughter of Italian nobility, Emma experienced a childhood and youth of storybook privilege. When I was a child, my mother would point out the largest, fanciest building in our neighborhood, an apartment complex that looked like a castle. "My grandmother had a house like that," she would tell us. "It had its own school, its own chapel." Nony Emma and her siblings did not go to the village school. Instead, their teachers came to them, including the nuns who taught her the lacemaking, embroidery, and other handwork skills that all young ladies learned and that would soon form such a vital part of our family story.

As a teenager Nony Emma sailed to the U.S. on a ship called the *Christopher Columbus,* on the way contracting a disease—either typhus or typhoid—that caused her to lose all her beautiful hair. She spent her first weeks on Ellis Island in quarantine, an experience she related many times, without complaint. Nony Emma would eventually recover and marry her father's *compare,* Domenico Pizzella, for whom my son Dominic is named. The marriage was technically arranged but was known by all to be a gloriously happy one. Emma and Domenico had six children together, including my grandmother Marie (born Maria), while Domenico built a business as a master cabinetmaker based in Boston's North End. He carved the elaborate wooden altarpiece for one of our neighborhood parishes, in the basement or so-called lower church where Italian immigrants were expected to worship. I like to think that Nony Emma and Papa Domenico's bond had something to do with the fact that they were both artists who—to borrow from William Morris—spent their lives making things both useful and beautiful.

The usefulness of Nony Emma's skill with needle and thread became vitally apparent during the Great Depression, when Papa Domenico contracted tuberculosis and was forced to enter a sanitorium. The family lost the cabinet shop that had supported them, and Nony Emma immediately went to work, creating delicate handwork as a finish seamstress—also called a "master" or "fancy finisher"—in a wedding-gown factory on Kneeland Street in Boston's then thriving garment district. During those years Emma would wake every morning to attend 7:00 a.m. Mass and then walk into downtown Boston to start her shift. There she would sew wedding veils, make lace-covered buttons, and expertly join lace pieces for bodices to the exact size each dress required. Her work was perfect, deft, and quick. The "fastest finisher in Boston," many family members have claimed, although there was no contest to establish this as a certainty.

Throughout her time on Kneeland Street, Nony Emma became a vital thread in the fabric of the immigrant worker community, and she maintained those attachments throughout her life. As a teenager, my grandmother would join Nony Emma in the factory most days after school. Once a month, they would


Drawing by Elissa Della Piana



treat themselves to a meal, always at the same restaurant in nearby Chinatown. There Nony Emma got to know all the staff. The monthly tradition continued decades after she had stopped working in the garment district, as part of regular family trips to "dollar days" at Filene's Basement. On such excursions, the restaurant's elderly maître d' always greeted Nony Emma as an old friend.

Nony Emma spoke fondly of the women who worked with her on the factory floor. She liked and had stories about them all, though some were tinged with tragedy. In her later years, she often recalled her friend Esther, the young woman who encouraged her in her efforts to speak English. Any confidence Nony Emma had with the language, she always attributed to Esther's kindness and patience. Nony Emma told of how Esther, who was Jewish, returned to Europe, then under the shadow of fascism, to look for a brother who had disappeared. She wrote to Nony Emma a few times, but soon the letters stopped, and what happened to Esther is all but certain. Still the thread between them was never broken, and Nony Emma's friend is not forgotten. Decades later, my high-school-age daughter can tell you about Esther, the woman who taught her great-great-grandmother English.

In her stories of her years on Kneeland Street, Nony Emma never betrayed a moment of resentment at her loss of a more genteel life. She often described her work as a form of prayer. Proud of the dresses she helped create and of the beautiful young women who would wear them, she would imagine these women as she worked. She spoke of "sewing blessings" into each veil and lace appliqué.

When Papa Domenico returned from the sanitorium, the family home was waiting for him. Nony Emma continued her work as a finisher throughout World War II, and throughout her husband's continued recovery. Not long before she died, Nony Emma gave my aunt the thimble she used during those days on Kneeland Street. "I paid the mortgage with this thimble," she would say, with matter-of-fact pride.

My siblings and cousins and I were privileged to know our great-grandmother into adulthood, to receive her handmade "sleeps," to eat at the lace-covered table, to wonder at the statue of the Infant of Prague in its fancy outfits. We were the recipients of a love that showed itself in the work of a tough, tiny woman's heart and hands.

Nony Emma spent her later years involved in countless works of charity that reached far beyond her blood ties, adding ever more strands to the garment of blessings that was her life, a garment as delicate as gossamer but made strong enough to last a lifetime, through tiny, perfect stitches worked with stoic grace.

She died thirty-three years ago, but we speak of her as if she left us just yesterday—all of us, everyone who knew her. With strength and skill and a loving heart, Nony Emma knit and sewed and embellished the fabric of our family and added to the delicate strands of goodness in this world.

Regina Hansen is a novelist and lecturer at Boston University. She would like to thank the many family members who contributed stories to this essay.

Photography:
ELIZABETH ELDER
based on the painting *Midsummer Eve*
by Edward Robert Hughes
Model: Emma Peet
Gown: Firefly Path
Assistant: Griffin Sendek

WEBS AS WOUND CARE

The Strength of Delicate Things

BY BRIANA SAUSSY

We are in a cutting time. A piercing time, a time of separation. Images abound in popular culture of chainsaws and knives and broadswords. We are in a time when wedge issues are used, often deliberately, to drive apart communities, families, and traditional alliances. A time when glassy black screens and efficiency and new forms of intelligence much more powerful than yours or mine (so they say) seek to divide us, most of all from ourselves.

I have told my students that this is the work of Pluto in Aquarius, a transit we will live with for the next twenty years. Aquarius marks the places, moments, and ways that we gather. Pluto destroys these things and, in the process, shows us which were false, which need better foundations, and which are always to be protected and held sacred. But we are not there yet. We are not yet ready to rebuild. We are sitting with what we have lost and what we are losing.

What does enchantment mean in this context? Is it merely another form of escapism? Children at play? Yet another diversion? How does one meet the energy of the chainsaw, the broadsword, the dagger moving silently in the night? A client asked me recently in a session, What is the story for this moment?

I go to my altar and light the beeswax candles there, one for each family member. I see the little house spider that has made her home under the ledge of the window above my altar. When we first moved into this house years ago, it was a great-great-grandmother spider that spun her discreet web in that exact same place; now it's a granddaughter. In her time, she shall lay her egg sack, and then another will take her place.

I don't disturb these spiders, and they don't disturb me. I was taught early that killing a spider is a horrible thing to do so unless you must, because it brings bad luck. I watch this little arachnid jumping her way across the altar and back into her home of spun gossamer. And it strikes me that it is exactly this moment, when we stand on the sharpest edge of uncertainty, that enchantment most matters.

Enchantment is the song that each of us have a note in. (Remember that enchantment is *en canto*: "to be in the song.") It is there that we find the needed medicine. For enchantment reminds us that sometimes the most effective way to meet the power of the blade is not with a bigger, badder blade but instead with something altogether different, something soft and silky and strong. Something delicate, gossamer-like. Something like a spiderweb.

In story, webs are often traps—they catch and ensnare. But sometimes they save. Spider silk may seem like the most delicate of materials, but as enchantment teaches us, things are not what they appear to be, and pound for pound, gossamer silk is tougher than steel and more flexible than nylon. It is also a lifesaver. Starting with World War I, we have documentation that spiderwebs were used as wound care for soldiers. Most likely this started, as many things do, from necessity. In the thick of war, medical supplies, especially materials like gauze, were in short supply. But, as it turned out, working with clean spiderwebs was a genius move; Spiderwebs are basically pure protein and are extremely effective at stanching blood flow and encouraging skin cells to knit themselves back together, speeding up the healing process. We now know that they have special antibacterial, antibiotic, and analgesic properties, so their use also lowered the likelihood of infection and reduced pain. In fact, scientists even now are studying spiderwebs for their potential medical applications. Quite literally, they have been and remain one of the most profound answers for the wounds that division creates.

Of course, if we pay attention, this shouldn't come as a surprise. In stories ranging from those told in ancient Greece to those told in my home here in the Southwestern U.S., spiders are mainly known for weaving. These stories teach that women learned to weave by watching our sisters, the spiders. They tell us that this weaving has saved countless lives by providing cover in the form of clothes and by showing us the way out of the labyrinth, away from the monster, back to safety. Weaving is, after all, the antithesis of division: Weaving binds together what has been separated. It connects what was previously unconnected.

What better response could there be to the divisions left in the wake of a sharp blade than a gossamer web?

I'm back at my altar, saying my prayers, with the little spider that I share this space with. I watch her as she diligently weaves her web and tucks herself in, a fierce and powerful huntress holding vigil. I'm hunting too—feeling into wind and soil for the medicines for this time, this cutting time, as many types of blades seek to separate us from each other and from ourselves. And I thank my spider friend for reminding me that we too can weave together what has been torn apart. We too can remember that our strongest response to division isn't matching force with force but rather creating connections where none existed before.

As we stand on the precipice of profound change, let us gather the gossamer threads of our lives—our stories, our relationships, our rituals, and our wonder—and weave something worthwhile. In the patient, persistent act of weaving these threads together, we create something both impossibly delicate and remarkably resilient: a web of belonging strong enough to hold us all.

Briana Saussy is an author, storyteller, teacher, spiritual counselor, and founder of the Sacred Arts Academy, where she teaches magic, divination, ceremony, and other sacred arts for everyday life. She is the author of Making Magic: Weaving Together the Everyday and the Extraordinary, *and* Star Child: Joyful Parenting Through Astrology. *See more at brianasaussy.com.*



What We Weave by Katrina Haffner
@katrina_haffner



FROM OUR READERS

Water-Lilies and Water Fairies (1870), by Richard Doyle

FOR THIS ISSUE, WE ASKED, WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE DELICATE SUMMER PLEASURES?

One of my favorite summer pleasures is the golden hour before sunset when the world feels bathed in soft light and time seems to slow. I often spend these moments sketching or painting with the windows open, letting in the scent of summer blossoms and distant laughter. It's a quiet, creative space where inspiration flows as naturally as the warm breeze. —*Aida A.*

Sipping champagne in my fairy-lit carriage, eating strawberries with freshly whipped cream, and watching the stars while lying on a quilt my grandmother made by hand. —*Deborah Sage*

My family always celebrates Midsummer Night's Eve by dedicating it to our fairy friends. My children are grown now, but I'll celebrate with my three-year-old grandson this year. We wear gauzy clothes and serve the fairies tiny delicate cakes, fruit tarts, and other treats. The children run through tulle-draped trees in the woodsy backyard searching for gifts left by the grateful fairies—tiny crystals, pretty rocks, marbles or seashells, diminutive jewelry, little tea sets, miniature books ... It's a grand night! The adults sip sun tea, pick juicy berries, and feast on mini sandwiches while the littles run about. It's one of my favorite holidays of the whole year! —*Mary Angela Morrisroe*

The silvery and gossamer appearance of Spanish moss can be quite enchanting in the evening sun or moonlight. I love the way it sways in the slightest breeze. —*Tom Manes*

Hmm, delicate summer pleasures, let me see. Fireflies, for one. Seeing these enchanting insects lighting up the summer nights with their gorgeous choreographies brings me back to an idyllic childhood back in New Jersey. Or catching sparkling dewdrops on grass and flower petals in a garden. And seeing spider's silk glistening with these pearly drops of nature's tears in their delicate lace designs. Collecting wild strawberries from a meadow. Finding buttercups and holding them under one's chin to see how much a person loves butter. Plucking petals from daisies for a yes-or-no divination. Blowing on dandelion puffs, making wishes too with thistledown. And a most divine pleasure, smelling honeysuckles on a warm breeze. And partaking in the nectar from the plant's stamen on my tongue. Such simple, yet profound pleasures! —*Jeffrey Habicht*

The soft susurrus of wind through a stand of birch trees. The cool gentle embrace of my foot breaking the surface of a stream. The lacy delight of a spiderweb covered in morning dew. The bright milky glow of a warm night illuminated under the full moon. The gentle sway of grasses and wildflowers against my bare legs walking through a meadow. The pitter-patter of raindrops against the window in a sudden summer shower. The wafting perfume of the garden as I water in the evening. —*Caitlyn Chambers*



Lying in the grass in the sun, slightly sleepy. Light breeze, flower aromas, and some wind chimes in the distance. —*@cat.mcmanus*

Sinking my fingers into hot dry sand and watching the tiny grains sparkle in the sun. —*@a_forest_of_shells*

Helping my daughters concoct potions in the garden, casting in water-drenched rose petals, fresh mint, and rosemary. Lying in warm grass as the sun dips behind the chimney pots, and waiting for the stars to appear. —*@daniellecahillwriter*

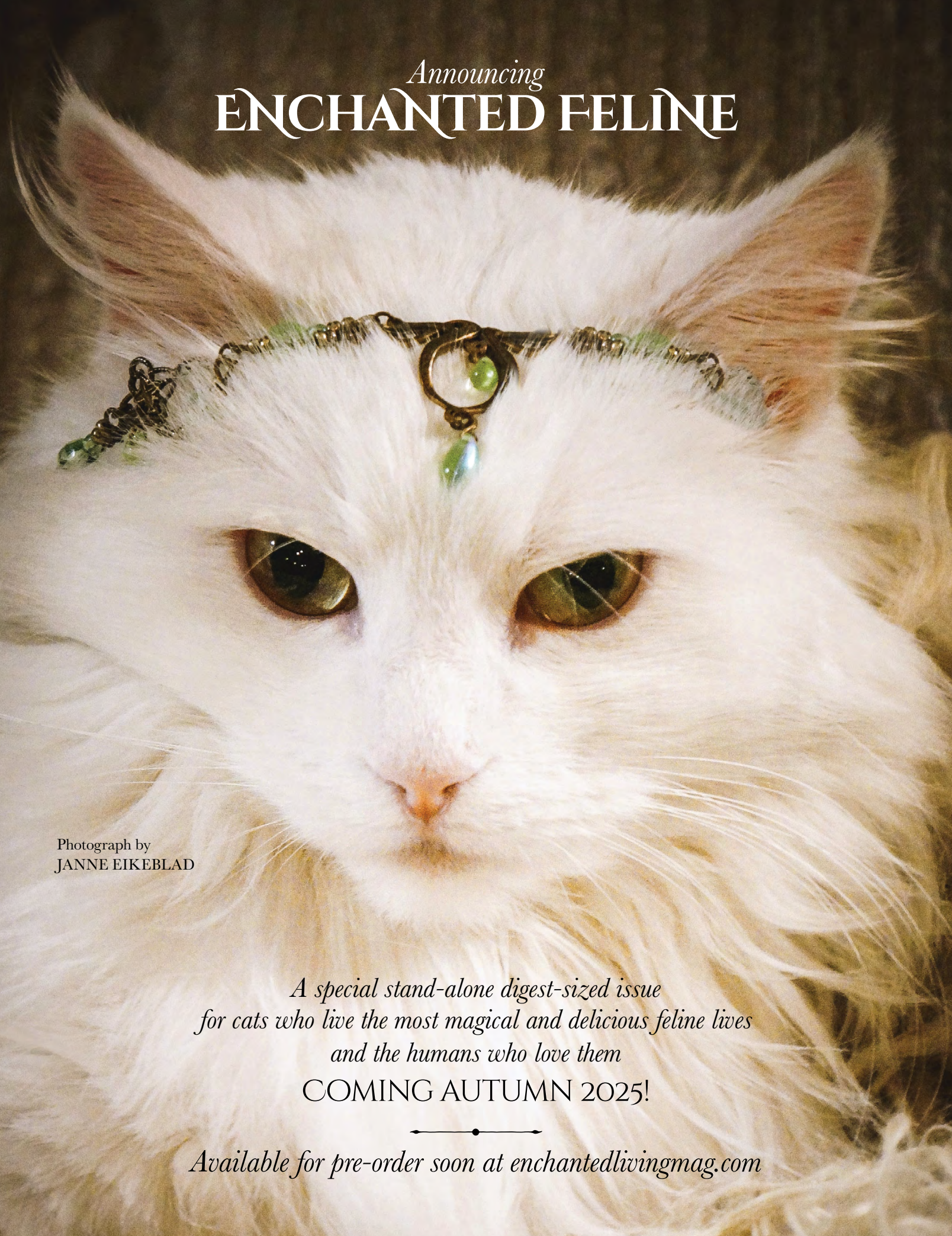
Listening to the choir of crickets that serenade me as the fireflies cosplay the stars above. —*@mishagram*

The rain of petals from flowering trees in a summer breeze. —*@vanessasigley*

Snacking from the garden, flowers, cricket chirps through the warm nights, string lights over backyards, and garden parties. —*@florastellanova*

Eating watermelon chunks off the tip of a knife while reclining by a rushing body of water with the sun on your bare skin. —*@gatorfairie95*





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