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ISSUE NO. 51 SUMMER 2020

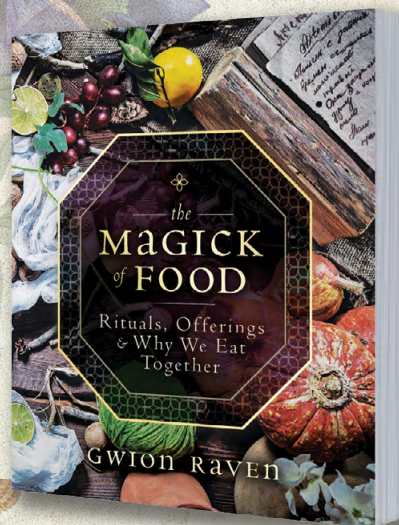
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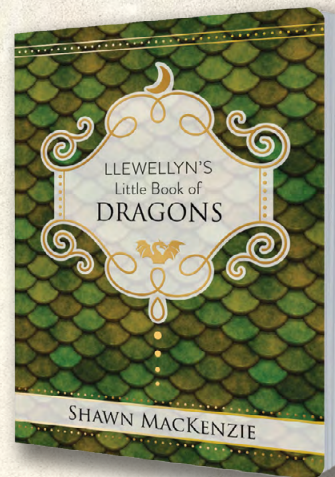
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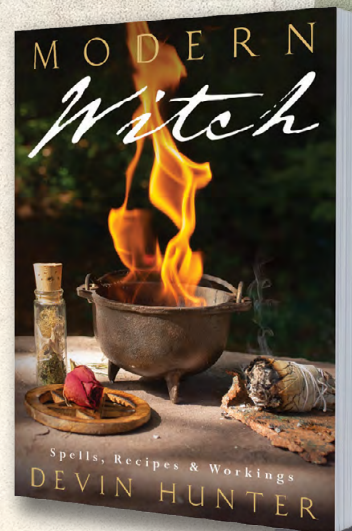
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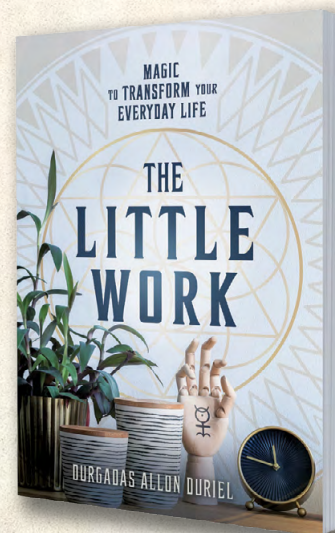
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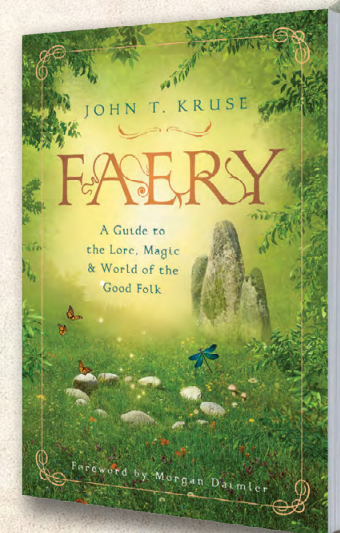
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—  
IN HONOR OF THE  
COUNTLESS HEROES  
WHO ARE ON  
THE FRONT LINE  
OF COMBAT TO STOP  
THIS PANDEMIC.  
—



Photography by ALBERT ACOSTA

Model, JOAQUINA HORMILLA



We'd long planned to do a "Magical Beasts" issue to accompany *The Unicorn Handbook*, which was published in June 2020 by Harper Design and is the third in our Enchanted Library series, but we didn't know how right it would be for the time we're in now. We've put this issue together from our various places of quarantine, hunkered down in our homes with our cats and dogs and other familiars, looking out our windows at a world bursting with plant and animal life.

All manner of articles and photos have documented how, in cities all over the world, our animal co-inhabitants have become more visible as we ourselves have retreated: a jackal accompanying joggers in Tel Aviv; a raccoon crossing a deserted path in Central Park; goats and sheep hanging out near an empty street in Istanbul; seabirds (and fish!) swimming in Venice canals; herds of water buffalo strutting down a highway in New Delhi. There may have even been a unicorn sighting or two, but we cannot confirm this.

In a 2015 piece, the *New York Times* noted our editors' "fondness for interspecies images," which you'll see on display throughout this issue as well as in the astonishing cover image by Anastasiya Dobrovolskaya. We do have a fondness for these images, for animals of every sort, for an imagined, better world in which we can all co-exist without harm and where we can, on occasion, imagine playing with foxes and owls and leopards and dragons. Who among us wouldn't want to recline glamorously with three gorgeous dragons, like the Daenerys in Annie Stegg's painting (see page 36)?

This issue is an homage to all these magical creatures, whether they come from mythology or our own backyards, from the woodlands or the midst of an enchanted forest glade. Or, of course, from the couch next to us, or—in the case of art director Lisa Gill, whose house is overrun with five rescue kitties and their mama—the curtain rods and rafters.

Love,  
*Carolyn Turgeon*



Illustration © Guinevere von Sneeden

DRAGONS WITH ASTERS  
by Annie Stegg Fine Art



# ENCHANTED LIVING

VOLUME 51 | Summer 2020

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## CONTRIBUTORS

*Enchanted Living's Magical Beasts Issue*



**Albert Acosta**

Albert Acosta has taken photographs since he was a child but studied industrial engineering in college. Only recently had he realized he could make a career from his art. A native of Holguin, Cuba, he created the astonishing photo that opens this issue (page 3) after a relative entered the hospital with a possible case of Covid-19. She was negative but told Acosta about all the “good work done by the doctors and how much they sacrifice themselves.” In gratitude, he took this photo to honor the medical professionals on the front lines. The set was his own house, during quarantine. “The model is my girlfriend,” he says, “and the suit is from my mother, who is also a doctor.”



**Susann Cokal**

Susann Cokal is the author of four novels, including the award-winning *Kingdom of Little Wounds* and her latest, *Mermaid Moon*, in which a mermaid goes ashore to find her mother, only to fall into the clutches of a witch who wants to harvest her magic. Cokal also writes short fiction and essays about oddities, and she lives in a haunted farmhouse with cats, peacocks, spouse, and unseen beings who bump in the night. “I’ve always suspected there was more to mermaids than the shipwrecks and love stories that lead them to land,” she says. “I’m glad I had the chance to figure them out in these changing times—both in the novel and here among the creatures of *Enchanted Living*.”



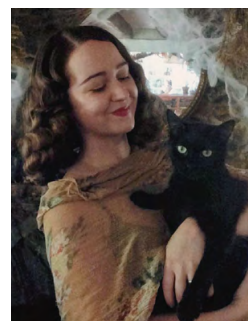
**Marketa Novak**

Marketa Novak is a professional photographer in Prague who created the stunning Mucha-inspired cover image for our summer 2019 Art Nouveau issue. She has received numerous awards for her work, both in the Czech Republic and abroad. For this issue, she contributed the mermaid image on page 50 and the woman with butterfly image on page 66. She creates photographs to “bring people back to love and admiration for nature,” she says. “In the last few years we’ve inflicted particular damage on our fragile connection with nature, and I therefore feel a great need to remind people that it is our duty and our birthright to live in harmony with nature.”



**Marita Tathariel**

Marita Tathariel is a special effects artist, model, and actress from the deep woods of Norway. She’s worked as a TV host, appeared in several plays and TV shows around the world, and achieved the level of mastery in sculpting through the Stan Winston School of Character Arts. She’s also a historical fighter. Her immense love for fantasy and magical creatures has been a huge inspiration since early childhood. “I adore dragons, so creating the baby dragon tutorial for this issue was a lovely experience,” she says. “I hope the readers of *Enchanted Living* will have a magical and fun time re-creating their own winged creature!”



**Guinevere von Sneeden**

Guinevere von Sneeden is an artist living in the New England countryside with her poet husband, two children, and bevy of rabbits. She has long been a regular contributor to *Enchanted Living*, and you can see her charming, colorful work throughout these pages. “For my work in this issue,” she says, “I was inspired by both magical beasts and by our everyday friends from the wood: frogs that bubble up from the mud, dragons that sleep inside mountains, and owls that swoop in the night. Their calls on my roof at midnight feel so ancient—it’s like pure magic.” Her work is inspired by myth and folklore, botany, and ghost stories.



**Jo Weldon**

Jo Weldon is the author of *The Burlesque Handbook* and *Fierce: The History of Leopard Print*. As the headmistress of the New York School of Burlesque and a member of the Burlesque Hall of Fame, she’s traveled the world to teach and perform, and offers online classes. As an expert on animal print, she gives illustrated lectures and promotes sustainable fashion and big-cat conservation. She is currently working on a project about sex workers and their intersections with fashion history and popular culture. For this issue, she writes about the divine feline and its breathtaking beauty. “The leopard is the queen of beasts,” she says. “And the print makes icons of us all.”

## WAYS TO BE A FRIEND TO MAGICAL BEASTS

by Grace Nuth

Illustration by Guinevere von Sneeden

- If winter is harsh or a natural disaster occurs, remember to help those animals whose habitat might also have suffered.
- Hoard the things that bring you joy with a dragon-like fervor.
- Watch the world for signs and symbols from animal messengers. If you listen closely, you might notice that a crow cawing from the distant trees is sending you a message.
- Recognize that any wild animals you might see in your backyard are not invading your space: You are their guest, not vice versa.
- Live your life with the kind of pure heart that would make a unicorn proud.
- Consider adopting a shelter animal or, if your life is too untethered, at least fostering one for a while. If neither is an option, go to your local Humane Society and spend some time with the animals. It’s good for both of you.
- Fight for those you love, tooth and claw, with the ferocity of a mantichore.
- Remember that not just the “cute” or “pretty” animals are worth loving and saving.
- When things get tough, keep a cool head. Or three, if you’re Cerberus.
- Create a bee hotel in your yard. Install a bat box. Put up a bird feeder. Research that down jacket before you buy it. Make sure those fox ears are made with faux fur. Help make the world a bit better for all its magical creatures.
- Believe in yourself. Even when others don’t.



ON OUR COVER

## THE MAGICAL BEASTS OF *Anastasiya Dobrovolskaya*

BY CAROLYN TURGEON

Late last year on social media I saw the most extraordinary image: three very different women holding three very different foxes, all in hues of white, red, and black. The women wear long dresses in each color, and a beautiful shuffling has taken place, so that the black-haired woman holds a white fox and wears a burnt orange dress, and so on. I was stunned. I shared the image on our social media accounts, where it immediately went even more viral than it was already, and looked up the photographer. It was the first I'd heard of Anastasiya Dobrovolskaya, and I was thrilled when she agreed to a feature and interview in *Enchanted Living*. And for a Magical Beasts issue? We couldn't resist putting that extraordinary image on the cover.

Of course Dobrovolskaya is Russian. There is obviously something in the water there, not to mention a wondrous professional model-actor named Stepan, whom you can see charming a model (and all of us!), on page 18. Like most of the enchanted beasts in these photos, Stepan is a rescue; he was saved from a small zoo when he was a cub and has been living with humans ever since. Now he's a dignified twenty-seven.

Dobrovolskaya's first shoot with Stepan took place in January, and she says, "it was a wonderful experience thanks to which we made amazing photos." She describes Stepan as "the cutest bear in the world: very loving and delicate," and says that his story "is an example of an endless love between people and an animal. When I saw him for the first time I could not hold back the tears because I saw such a huge love between this animal and his people. I wish that all people treated their pets like Stepan's family have been treating him."

Dobrovolskaya has always loved and cared for animals. "As a child I brought home puppies and kittens that had been thrown out," she said. "Once, I brought a baby raven whose wing was broken.

Nothing has changed. I still love animals with all my heart and am always trying to help those in trouble." She first incorporated animals in her photography by chance in 2018. She'd been taking portraits for a few months when she received a message from a woman who organizes photo shoots in Moscow, offering Dobrovolskaya the opportunity to participate in a shoot with a chicken and a mini pig. How could she resist?

She found a model, plucked a dress from her own closet, and went—but didn't know what to do. "Should the chicken be on the floor? Or should I put him on the fence? The pig suddenly fell asleep—was it okay to wake her up? The only thing I knew was that I wanted those photos to look like fashion ones." So she told her model Margo, "Imagine that we're making content for *Vogue*." The photos turned out smashingly and even went on to be recognized in the huge international photo contest 35 AWARDS 2018.

As it turned out, the couple who owned the chicken and the mini pig took care of other animals too, including a baby fox cub and an owl. Dobrovolskaya asked if it were possible to take photos with them as well, though she was "very worried that it was stressful for the animals." The owners assured her it was okay, and to Dobrovolskaya's surprise, "both the fox and owl were very happy to have an additional walk in a park and didn't even notice the paparazzi."

It was after that photo shoot that she realized she'd found her niche and became acquainted with other animal owners, including a young woman who rescued foxes from fur farms. "I fell in love with these fluffy guys," she says. "In a year I formed a proven and very narrow circle of animal owners. These are people who really love animals and spend all their time working with them. I absolutely trust these people and don't collaborate with anyone else unless I get their approval."



In the course of her work, the animal that most surprised her was an albino porcupine. “I had never seen porcupines before and knew nothing about them, so I was really surprised by how extraordinary they are. It looked like an animal that lives deep in the ocean but spoke like a very grouchy chicken.” Her biggest challenge has been dealing with the occasional animal diva. “Sometimes an animal may be in bad mood and simply not want to participate in a photo shoot,” she says. “And you can’t do anything about it. The only way out is to reschedule. The good news is that it happens very rarely because tasty food is a good compromise!”

When asked for additional stories about working with animals, Dobrovolskaya offers useful tips. “Dogs have very good sense of smell. If you’re planning a photo shoot with a dog in a photo studio, always ask if there was a photo shoot with a cat before. If you don’t ask and a cat was there before you, most likely your photo shoot will be ruined.” Ravens, she explains, are fashionistas. “They like everything sparkling. So you better not to wear bright earrings to a photo shoot with them or be ready to go home without them.” And wolves are yellowbellies. “They have neophobia, which means they are afraid of everything new.”

Finally I ask her about the ladies with the foxes in our cover photo. How did such an extraordinary image come to be? “At first,” she explains, “I decided to take a photo of a blonde girl with a white fox standing near a brunette girl with a black fox. I realized that it would be too boring and decided to mix the foxes. But it was still not very interesting, so I decided to add a third girl with red hair. The next idea was to mix the dresses. It took several minutes to reach the final idea.” After coming up with the idea, she found the models and the dresses. The actual photo shoot lasted less than fifteen minutes.

“In my work,” she says, “I want to show the beauty of animals and their similarity to people. We kill animals for fur, we cut down forests, we eat a lot of meat, we pollute the air and the ocean. With my photos I’m trying to show that both domestic animals and wild animals can trust and love people. What’s more, I usually try to shoot people with similar animals: a girl with vitiligo with a spotted fox, a girl with albinism with an albino porcupine, and so on. I try to find common features between people and animals so that animals become more respected by people and people will do their best to minimize the harm they do to nature.”

See more of Dobrovolskaya’s work on Instagram  
[@anastasiya\\_dobrovolskaya](#).





—  
*“I still love animals  
with all my heart  
and am always trying to  
help those in trouble.”*  
—





## *Featured Artist*

KIMERA WACHNA—GRACEMERE WOODS

Artist Kimera Wachna started working under the name Gracemere Woods as an homage to her childhood in New York, where she was raised near a forest “full of dark magical nooks, streams of sparkling light through the trees, hidden burrows in plain sight,” and, of course, all manner of wildlife. To this day, this enchanted place is her biggest inspiration. “The creatures and realms in my work depict a semblance of childlike wonder and storytelling,” she says, “juxtaposed with deeper and often darker themes of life, death, and rebirth.” The canvases she most often chooses to paint on are pieces of discarded wood, as well as wood foraged from free fallen branches. Using them is her way of “continuing the life cycle of age-old trees,” she says. “A revival of sorts.”

Though she's most drawn to owls, all beasts are magical to Wachna. They “remind us of how to connect back to ourselves, the parts that are hidden or long forgotten,” she explains. And the forest and its creatures continue to provide an endless source of magic and inspiration. “There are stories at every corner,” she says, “wanting, waiting to be told.”

*Find more of Wachna's work on Instagram or Etsy @gracemerewoods.*

# WE ARE ALL FANS OF *Juniper Fox*

BY CAROLYN TURGEON

You've probably heard of Juniper Fox. With her nearly 3 million Instagram fans and personal line of products that include T-shirts, pins, and stickers, not to mention her very own celebrity bio, *Juniper: The Happiest Fox*, she might be the most famous and sought-after red fox in existence. She even has a full-time personal assistant, Jessika Coker, who manages her social media and various business ventures and also feeds her and her brethren every single day. Because Juniper is too in demand to answer press queries and probably busy lying on her back loudly howling, Coker kindly stepped in to answer the following penetrating questions.

**Enchanted Living:** How did you come to be Juniper's owner/caretaker/mama?

**Jessika Coker:** Juniper came from a small family-owned farm where they had a litter of ranched fox kits. Ranched foxes are descended from animals used in the fur trade. They're not considered wild animals because of the differences in their genetic makeup, and for those born in captivity their options are usually to become a pet or to be pelted for their fur. This family was looking for homes for Juniper and her siblings. When I saw they needed a home, I felt inclined to take one, since I knew how to care for them from past experience at wildlife centers.

**EL:** What are the joys and challenges with her?

**JC:** Juniper is quite a character and never fails to bring a smile to my face. She is extremely loving, and we have a bond beyond what I have ever had with a dog or cat. Foxes are very outwardly emotional animals and that can be both a good and bad thing. When she's happy it's blatant—it's all over her face. She smiles, makes cooing sounds, wags her tail, and wants to be smothered with love and affection. When she's upset it's just as apparent. She will scream at the top of her lungs if the other foxes are bothering her; you can almost look at her and see her brows furrowed from frustration. Being such an emotional animal presents its challenges. With the foxes it's impossible to make them do something they do not want to do, and any disturbance to their normal routine can throw them off for days. They're not conventional pets, and the level of destruction they can cause to a home is ghastly. They're loud, rambunctious, and smelly. Something most people don't know is that fox urine is so pungent, it's often used as scent cover for hunters! Having that smell in the house means constant cleaning and candles.

**EL:** Can you tell us a few of your funniest stories? Surely you have a ton!

**JC:** There are so many memories that I hold close to my heart. One of my favorites is when I was traveling for a few days and left the foxes in my brother's care while I was away. Foxes tend to scent-mark their favorite objects by peeing on them, so upon my return Juniper was so excited to see me that she climbed on top of my head and immediately peed on me. Totally disgusting I know, but that's real fox love!

**EL:** When did you start Juniper's Instagram account?

**JC:** I originally started it as a way to keep up with her progress and share her daily life with my personal friends and family. Almost a year later, I posted a video of her that went viral, and I started getting so many questions about her story, her life, and her care. I felt morally responsible to begin educating people about the difficulties I faced raising her, as well as showing that foxes have a sweet and loving nature that not many people get to witness. I think now, after four years, I've found a good balance between the two, and I feel extremely lucky to have such a large platform to be able to educate the public about the care of not only foxes but so many other animals.

**EL:** How has fame affected Juniper?

**JC:** Well, she's a star baby.

**EL:** Does she enjoy dressing up in flower crowns and the like?

**JC:** Juniper doesn't mind being dressed, especially if there's a little bribe involved. I typically put only a little hat on her or maybe a jacket here and there for a photo and purely for a quick giggle. Other than for the quick picture, she doesn't wear clothes and prefers to flaunt the beautiful coat Mother Nature gave her.

**EL:** Can you tell us about Fig? He came along later, right?

**JC:** I took in Fig when Juniper was two years old. She had a rough spring and was troubled with a false pregnancy. I've always wanted to give her the best life that I could, and when I saw that a young fox kit had been saved from a fur farm, I thought this would be the perfect opportunity to give Juniper the baby that her instincts were begging for. Fig was born on chicken wire, which cut his foot at a very young age. This cut grew into a bacterial infection, which caused him to lose his foot and many of his digits on all his remaining feet. He was also born with a genetic abnormality to his left eye, which left him blind in that eye. He went through a lot as a baby, but once he came to our home, Juniper immediately began caring for him as if he were her own. In the wild, red foxes will adopt orphaned foxes and raise them with their own young, so this was something incredibly beautiful to witness in my own home. Fig has grown up to be the most loving animal in the house. A gentle soul with a heart of gold.







**EL:** What about the rest of your menagerie?

**JC:** After Juniper's platform started to expand and we began to make money from sponsorships, I took it as an opportunity to help more animals along the way. We had the support of so many people, it seemed like a waste not to use that support to grow a sanctuary. Over the past three years we've taken in everything from puppies to opossums, nursed them back to health and found them homes—whether with us or another family, or back into the wild where they can live the life they always deserved.

**EL:** What can you tell our readers about having a fox at home?

**JC:** Living with an array of exotic animals is not always easy. Most of the animals must be kept separated from each other. Most of the animals we have here are also nocturnal, which makes sleeping difficult sometimes. They all require specialized diets. We don't use any commercial pet food here; everything we feed is freshly made in house, which can be expensive. I think many people take in exotic animals because of the novelty of having an unusual animal, but they do not see the trials of caring for that animal before purchasing them. Most exotic pets are not trusting; they do not always want to be handled or shown off. There are also licenses involved for many species, and you can almost never board them if you need to travel—they have to go to a specialized vet, and they need expensive enclosures. And these are just some of the factors that make them "difficult" to house. When taking home any animal, it's important to do your research on that animal's needs.

**EL:** How can we help support foxes?

**JC:** If people would like to help support the foxes or any of the rescuers here, they're welcome to subscribe and follow our social media. We're currently working on our nonprofit paperwork to become a functioning sanctuary for animals in need.

**EL:** Can you tell us a bit more about who you are?

**JC:** I'm just your average twenty-eight-year-old girl, with the exception of having a handful of unique animals. My life revolves around wildlife, art, and nature. I grew up just south of Atlanta but moved to Florida a few years ago and have been aiming to build my wildlife sanctuary ever since. I've always been enamored with animals. From a young age I'd bring home small animals I found in the garden and beg my mother to let me keep them and care for them. Of course, she would always have me take them back outside where they belong, but every animal I found felt like a gift. They still do. I feel extremely fortunate that my days are filled with fur and scales. I'm living a life that I only ever dreamed of, and each day I wake up more thankful than the last.



Learn more at [juniperfox.com](http://juniperfox.com), follow Juniper on Instagram @[juniperfox](https://www.instagram.com/juniperfox), or shop on Etsy @[junipersden](https://www.etsy.com/shop/junipersden).



# The Monster Book of Monsters

*Bestiaries bring the beastly marvelously to life—and lead us to self-transformation*

by *Stephanie Stewart-Howard*

Ever since humans evolved enough to make art, we have looked at animals and transmogrified them in our minds into things fantastical. We anthropomorphize them, ascribe to them motives, feelings, and narratives. This truth reveals itself whether we hunt animals, farm them, make totems of them, or worship them as gods and spirits. They are ineffable elements of rituals worldwide and have symbolism in nearly every faith. Even in Christianity, a faith that posits a single deity, we have Saint Francis creating a manger scene and imposing the animals themselves into the story of the crèche; the evangelist symbols, the lion, bull, and eagle, become symbols for saints. Our fascination with the fauna of the world has traveled with us forever in time.

Perhaps it started with the hunt-or-be-hunted reality of our forebears, interacting with bears, wild horses, cave lions, and the cattle and mammoth they depended on for food. They noticed the traits of these creatures and came to admire them. In caves in the hills of France, Spain, and Africa, paintings of animals dating back more than 20,000 years can still be seen—some with deeply realistic technique, some with a deliberate element of the surreal, where humans transmute into partial beasts. Whether this is evidence of shamanic spirituality or a tale of monsters, the early imaginings of wolf-men and bear-men, we don't know. We know only that whether for faith, fear, or whimsy, artists chose to paint them there and have continued to do likewise ever since.

The known early mythologies—from Africa, Mesopotamia, Siberia, Greece, Rome, the desert Southwest of the U.S. and the Indian subcontinent—all involve magical animals. These animals are guides, teachers, tricksters, and symbols. In many cases, they are creatures: beast men, both woman and cat, both man and hawk, a woman with writhing snakes in place of hair. They symbolize

both good (fauns, centaurs) and evil (harpies or lamia), and terrifying neutrality (as with the trickster Coyote, the sphinx, and the Morrigan, the Irish crow goddess and death surrogate).

The ancients, beginning with Plato and Aristotle, organized the world into a great chain of being, providing a hierarchy of gods, men, animals, birds, fish, insects, plants, and minerals. The lion, of course, is the most kingly of beasts; the bee the best of the insect world. These ideas spilled into Roman and later both eastern and western Christian philosophies. And it is here, as the Middle Ages begin, that true bestiaries, books of beasts both fantastical and ordinary, begin to appear.

The very first bestiary dates to the second century—a rather random collection of animals, trees, and (really) minerals. The greatest influence on these bestiaries was the effort of Isadore, Archbishop of Seville, in the seventh century. Isadore added elements of Platonic and Aristotelian chain of being ideas and

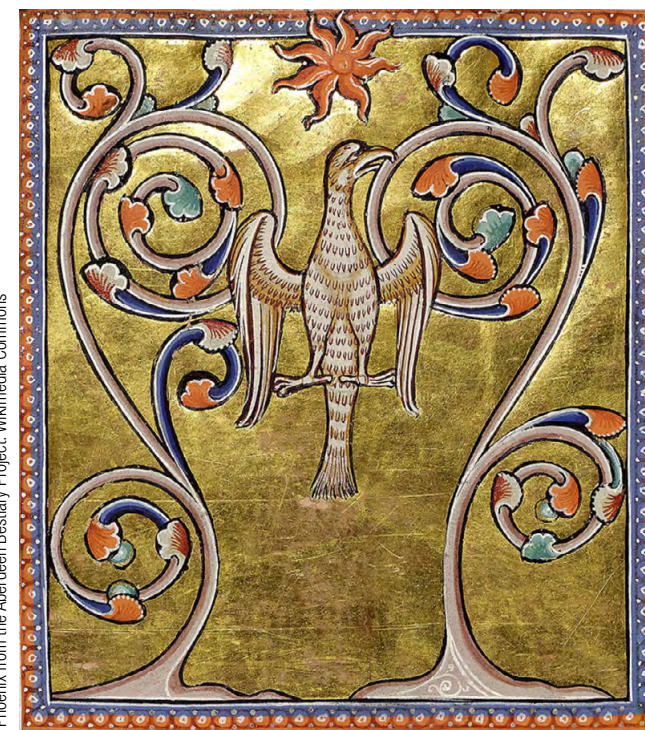
created an encyclopedia of sorts, providing a background on about 250 animals, but traditionally without much illumination to go along with it.

And then illustrations changed all of it.

What we'd consider *real* bestiaries—books of animals real and imagined with stories, myths, and fables attached—start appearing in the late 11th and 12th centuries in Europe. They are already firmly grounded in the myth and folklore of the cultures that went before them, classical and local. The text was mutable for every animal, and every piece of flora and chunk of rock were referenced. The number and type of animals varied—some very real, and some quite fabulous—as did their

relative characters. A hedgehog is adorable, carrying grapes on his spines in the bestiary; a griffin is terrifying as he runs down men on horseback.

It didn't matter to readers—and I use that term loosely; mostly the consumers were read aloud to by one of the literate



Phoenix from the Aberdeen Bestiary Project. Wikimedia Commons



folk in the household—that the stories they heard were familiar. Indeed, they prized them because of it in many cases. Familiar stories were beloved; plagiarism is the stuff of later centuries. For the clerks and higher clergy members doing the reading, the stories often served a didactic purpose as well as a delightful one, teaching valuable lessons in the manner of Aesop’s fables. And of course, you can’t have a Bible without a serpent in the garden, the Leviathan, a man-eating whale, or Balaam’s ass.

As the Crusades arise during the 11th century in parallel, returning Europeans tell stories of the marvelous things in the Middle East and North Africa, blending in the regional folklore. More than telling tales, artists, often monks and nuns in monasteries, begin rendering illustrations as well as written descriptions. After all, literacy was kept to a limited few, largely clergy at this time. For the wealthy commissioning such books, looking at the pictures produced most of the delight. And there was so much material to draw from: The rise of the troubadour poets, first in France, then in England, the German states, Italy, and elsewhere, brought familiar stories to more poetic forms, including the Arthurian legend and classical myths. The public at large was hooked, from the royals on down. (After all, Eleanor of Aquitaine is regarded as one of the first patrons of the troubadours.) Bestiaries proved incredibly popular, some of them telling tales, others just brief homilies, all of it influenced by medieval popular culture, which is a whole different story. Many of the books provided religious metaphors, which were a definite part of popular medieval culture in ways that we might not anticipate today. Animals might have dual characters, one side good, another evil. A modern comparison might be Mufasa and Scar from *The Lion King* (itself a kind of modern bestiary).

Sometimes, the dark or light side is a mythical variation of the very real creature, like the bonnacon, a fictional cow with horns that turned in so it couldn’t protect itself.

The unicorn provided the fairy-tale capture story, with all its romance, and also served as a metaphor for Christ and his incarnation as a human. The duality of these tales impacts our own stories, from Peter S. Beagle’s *The Last Unicorn* to Tanith Lee’s haunting story *The Hunting of the Unicorn*, both of which are both literal romances and metaphorical messages about the nature of the human spirit.

Of course, for horse-obsessed medieval tweens, we can only imagine the “*I wanna unicorn tapestry in my room*” requests. The unicorn, after all, has always been a favorite.

The great-chain-of-being idea meant that bestiaries followed hierarchies—the noble king lion, the lowly mouse, the loyal dog, the hunting cat. Where Christian allegory was a principal element, the books often presented Adam or Adam and Eve naming the animals. Just of note, the dragon is the upper echelon of serpents, but the snake not so much (though above the lowly worm).

Among the invented creatures in a typical medieval bestiary were the phoenix, the horse-averse griffin with a lion head and eagle’s wings; the cockatrice, a deadly serpent hatched from

a hen’s egg; the salamander, a lizard that lives in flames; and the cynomolgus, either a dog-headed man that built houses of cinnamon or alternately, a “race” of very attractive long-haired humans who hunted with dogs. (In truth, a cynomolgus is a type of macaque native to Southeast Asia.) In more familiar realms, the lion, tiger, pelican, crane, and a host of other recognizable figures typically populate these books.

The bestiary has not died out over the ensuing centuries, nor has the way we explore the notion of animals as metaphors for the best and worst traits of humanity. We love pictures of animals as much as our ancestors did. Admit it, your Instagram is brimming with pet pictures. My cats have never been the same since they realized they were well-known on the internet.

The books of beasts remained popular through the high Middle Ages and beyond. In some cases, they spilled into imaginatively illustrated books on animal husbandry, as in *The Hunting Book of Gaston Phoebus*, a treatise on raising and working with hunting dogs.

Even in texts remarkably free of real or imagined animals, the illustrators let their illuminating talents fill in fluffy and scaly whimsy—the marginalia of books religious and secular show off knights jousting on snail back, rabbits jousting against dogs, hunted animals taking revenge on human hunters with axes, and birds eating much larger creatures.

In art and textiles, animals often pop into view in the margins. The Bayeux Tapestry, for example, has a plethora of animals illustrating its borders.

Nothing has changed since the first attempt to lay out animals and allegory in one place.

As we read everything from *The Wind in the Willows* to *Watership Down*, are we not looking for the same thing? To say nothing of the Pottaverse, Narnia, and the odd game of Dungeons and Dragons, heaping with monsters torn from myth and medieval bestiary both. (Roll D20 against a cockatrice!) And of course, how many animal-centric movies do we prize? Or animal-hybrid characters like Chewbacca?

Instagram might be our new bestiary, as we follow cats, horses, foxes, crows, and wolves—probably far more than we follow trendy “influencers.”

Enchanted-enchanting animals and human-animal hybrids remain firmly in our minds, just as real-life animals serve to inspire, soothe, awe, and terrify us when we turn from our novels and movies to the work of someone like David Attenborough. We feel a deep affinity to the earth’s fauna, back to the dawn of time—and we endow them with characters and natures that speak to our own deepest needs. Perhaps they have their own myths and stories about us. I hope at least some of them are whimsical.



Follow Stephanie Stewart-Howard on Instagram @stephaniegwen13.



## FROM CLOISTERS TO CAT COVENS: THE MEDIEVAL-INSPIRED ART OF KJERSTI FÅRET

We've long been fans of Cat Coven, the online shop of Brooklyn artist Kjersti Faret that features her art hand-printed on clothing, accessories, and all manner of home décor. Her signature and logo of sorts is a large cat face with a pentacle on its forehead—perfect for witchy ladies everywhere—and cats populate many of her designs: cats riding on broomsticks, cats gathered around a cauldron, cats dressed in armor, cats surrounded by a bright moon and stars, cats leading a séance. Faret even sells catnip pillows printed with her designs, and she and her wife share their home with two cats of their own.

Cats aren't the only magical beasts featured in Faret's art. She has a penchant for enchanted beasts of every variety—like, for example, the dragon on page 29. This illustration, "Free at Last," was part of a collection she made for Cat Coven in 2018 called *Myths & Magick*. She'd taken a trip to the Met Cloisters and fallen in love with a tapestry of a dragon on a leash, with the arm of the person holding the leash visible. "I created a little story in my head that the dragon freed himself by chopping the arm off and becoming his own master." Based on that, she made her own illustration: "I added the arm in the mouth to really show the taking back of one's ownership. I gave him some little demon friends to cheer him on. It's really about being free to be yourself, unchained from others or obligations and finding where you belong." Also: Don't ever try to keep a dragon on a leash.

The illustration *Rebirth*, which you can see at the top of page 31, was part of a 2017 series called the *Enchanted Armor Collection*. Faret was inspired by historical armor and themes of strength, but she focused on mortality. "I find solace in knowing I'm part of something greater," she says, "part of an eternal cycle of renewal. With that knowledge one can hopefully live



a little easier and trek through this life with more strength." She explains that the ouroboros is an old motif for the cycle of life, juxtaposed with the poppies behind it, a symbol of death. Luna moths represent transformation and life. Acorns, which eventually grow into giant oak trees, symbolize potential and strength as well as immortality and life in Nordic and Celtic cultures. The overall shape is based on a medieval gorget, which is a piece of armor that protects one's throat.

Her *Saint Margaret* illustration (shown here) and the banner at the bottom of the page were created for a fashion show in collaboration with garment designer Kelsey Hine of I Do Declare, with Hine designing the clothing and Faret creating the illustrations printed on it.

They included Saint Margaret because they both enjoy stories of strong women—especially ladies accompanied by (unleashed) dragons.

Faret's inspiration comes largely from art history: medieval manuscripts, expressionism, Tove Jansson, folk art, fairy-tale illustrations, children's books, decorative architecture, art nouveau, and historical embroidery like the Bayeux Tapestry. "I could go on forever, but those are some main ones right now," she says. "I also have strong ties to my Norwegian heritage, so I'm always looking at Nordic history and visuals too."

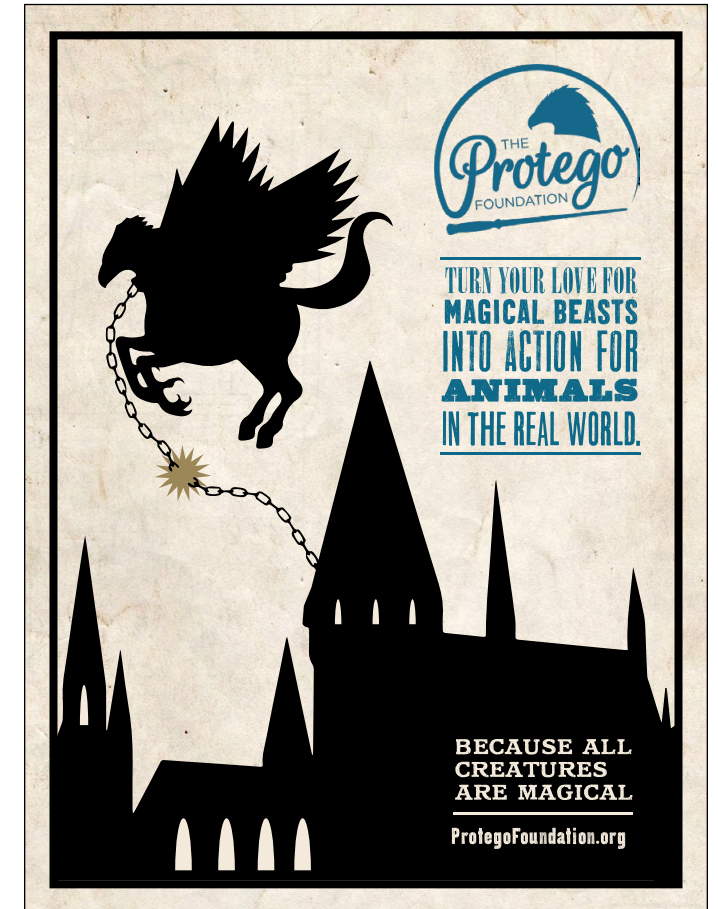
And how does Faret stay enchanted? "Through art! To me, art is a form of real magic. Whether I'm creating or consuming the works of others through books, TV, or even Instagram, art is what keeps my life enchanted. The fact that our eyes can look at a 2-D image and be transported to new worlds or perspectives is the best."



See more of Faret's art at [kjerstifaret.com](http://kjerstifaret.com) or [catcoven.com](http://catcoven.com). Follow her on Instagram at [@cat\\_coven](https://www.instagram.com/cat_coven).



"I FIND SOLACE IN KNOWING I'M PART OF SOMETHING GREATER, PART OF AN ETERNAL CYCLE OF RENEWAL. WITH THAT KNOWLEDGE ONE CAN HOPEFULLY LIVE A LITTLE EASIER AND TREK THROUGH THIS LIFE WITH MORE STRENGTH."



# The Beauty of the Dragon

BY ALISE MARIE, THE BEAUTY WITCH

Beyond the menacing physique and legendary ferocity, a deep fascination lies in wait, guarding the treasure that is the dragon. The sinuous tail gives a little swish, causing a rustle among the jewels that sends a stiff shiver up the spine of the beholder. *Silence.*

And then, the magnificent eye opens its golden crystal gaze.

Fear and loathing throughout the ages have walked arm in arm with a certain curiosity where this incendiary beast is concerned. The ravaging Fafnir, from Norse mythology, has dwelled in the imaginations of children for centuries, depicted as a greedy, ruthless, fire-breathing slayer with nearly impenetrable skin. Quite a feather in the cap of anyone who could rid the land of such a beast. To me, as a child, the dragons were simply misunderstood.

Of course, there were all those tales, dark and foreboding: the terrifying Hydra who challenged Hercules, the stealth Greek *drakones* that served as the getaway car for the dark witch Medea, and the great Welsh Red Dragon that defeats the White Saxon Dragon right in front of the king (who has to have it all explained to him by Merlin). And then, there was the sanguinary foe in the final battle for an aged and frankly exhausted Beowulf.

In modern folkloric wanderings, our beloved J.R.R. Tolkien has given us dear old Smaug. He's the greediest of all, isn't he? And rather lazy. But he remains fascinating. And who among us doesn't desire, secretly or not, a trio of grand dragon eggs à la Madame Targaryen? The fierce and mystical beauty of these creatures never ceases to enchant.

But tucked in among those famous stories, lesser-known legends of the winged beast await discovery. There are those worshipped by the ancient Chinese, who considered themselves direct descendants of the dragon: These rulers of moving bodies of water and rainfall had control over the weather. The embodiment of masculine yang, dragons were held in high regard as a

symbol of strength, power, and good luck for those deemed worthy. This continues today, as benevolent people of high achievement are said to be "dragons."

Ah! And there are the beautiful dragon sisters, Léana and Léas, of magical lore. They are personal favorites of mine. Léana, with her sliver-white mane, watches over your sleep, keeping nightmares at bay and replacing your fears with peaceful visions. She is never far from her sibling Léas, the Moonbeam Dragon, with her swirling silver sparkles, who can only be summoned during a full moon. (So, please—don't bother her during any other phase. It's just bad manners.)

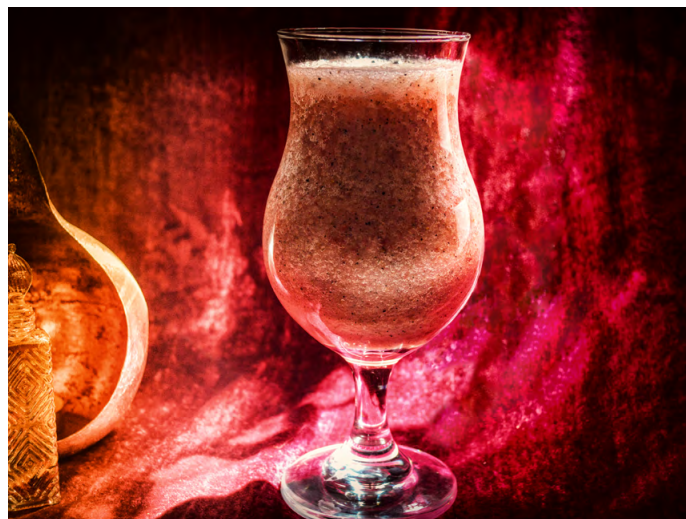
I always knew mystical beasts watched over me as a child. After all, they guard the treasure, yes? And they still do. For it is said that a dragon will perch on your shoulder to protect you ... *if you are willing.*

*Mes amours*, with this strangely halted world we have been experiencing of late, filled with fear and uncertainty, you may be wondering where exactly your own inner dragon fire has gone. It's time to call in *le puissance du dragonne*.

I have conjured several potions to help you reconnect with your fire—to feed your passion, instill strength, and raise your power. Allow me to introduce two stunning friends of mine that you really must know: The first is the **dragonfruit**, a gorgeous little being that you can find in the exotic section of your produce market. But don't be fooled by its beauty; it possesses the power worthy of its namesake.

**Dragonfruit**, or *pitaya*, is indeed a superfood, which always equates with beautyfood. It wields active antioxidants, anti-inflammatory properties, heaps of vitamin C, coveted B vitamins, fiber, and immune boosters. Topically, a simple slathering upon the face as a treatment masque will tighten and revive dull skin, giving you a radiant solar glow. You can even apply it to your scalp, to keep hair smooth and healthy! Magically, of course, it possesses all the firepower you need.

For this dragonfruit sipping potion, I've added **strawberries** to conjure a little Venusian love magic, and **pomegranate** for an extra shot of fire, all to fuel the fertility of your creations. The **almonds** combined with the liquids make for a fresher, creamier almond milk than the kind you buy, with the added touch of more bioavailable vitamin E for stunning skin and hair. **Cinnamon** and **cardamom** are a sensual fire blend that boosts circulation, provides ample antioxidants, and brings forth power, healing, protection, love, sexuality, and success. Enjoy, *mes chéris!*



### DRAGON FIRE Elixir

Per serving

- 1 whole dragonfruit, flesh only
- ½ cup pomegranate juice, unsweetened
- ½ cup spring water
- ½ cup fresh organic strawberries
- ¼ cup raw organic almonds
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground cardamom

First, slice the dragonfruit lengthwise—you are in for a treat! Once opened, each half will contain a soft flesh, similar to that of a ripe pear, dotted with elegant black seeds of pure life force. Scoop out the flesh with a spoon and remember it, because next time you will buy a few extra and eat them straight from their pretty pink “scaled” hulls. Connect to the energy of its magic. Then add in the remaining ingredients, one at a time, as you visualize your inner fire. Really *feel* it as you blend all these delights together until the potion is smooth and creamy. I always recommend a high speed, bullet-style blender for all elixirs, as lesser versions don't properly break everything down. Pour into a sexy cocktail glass and sip, drinking in all the energizing and beautifying powers it offers. You will immediately feel revived, clear, and ready for action! I would concoct this potion during a waxing moon, when you need that push forward, and nearest a full moon for an extra shot of manifesting prowess.

Now for the exterior. A dragon's exquisitely scaled skin must naturally be treated as the marvel it is, feeding it with moisture to combat all the fiery dryness that can occur (particularly in the heat of summer) while giving it a protective armor that allows for renewal. So my second friend you must meet is none other than **dragon's blood**. No, it is not the actual blood of the beast—I would never suggest causing one harm—but rather a resin used since ancient times for healing and magic. As a beauty warrior true to its name, it protects the skin. It also heals damaged skin in a similar fashion to **vitamin E**, which translates to improving fine lines and wrinkles. Add in the regenerative properties of fire, and you have a most mystical beautifier that adds a certain spark, shall we say. It also carries a rather intense protective magic, as well as one of love and lust, and will increase the power of any spell significantly.

This potion also contains a few more of my favorites: **meadowfoam oil**, made of 98% fatty acids, is one of the most moisturizing oils you can apply to your skin without clogging pores. It actually crates a barrier that holds moisture in and has a fantastic rejuvenating effect. **Pomegranate oil** is another potent rejuvenating and repairing oil that not only reduces but prevents wrinkles, with creative magic to spare. Concoct your potion at the new moon, then place it in a windowsill (or outdoors) until the moon is full. Use it daily to ensure a glowingly gorgeous visage.

### ARMURE DE PEAU Beauty oil

Per ounce

- 1 teaspoon dragon's blood resin, crushed to a fine powder
- ¾ ounce meadowfoam oil
- ½ teaspoon pure vitamin E
- ½ teaspoon pomegranate oil

To begin, place the dragon's blood into a mortar and grind it to a fine powder with the pestle. Depending on how much you would like to concoct, pour the meadowfoam oil into a glass potion bottle using a small funnel—colored works best to protect the contents—then add in the vitamin E and pomegranate oil, one at a time. As you add the ingredients, feel the potion gaining power. See yourself with enviably renewed skin, and feel how it boosts your confidence to see it in the mirror and be complimented by others! Now add in the powdered resin. Hold the bottle up to the light and watch the resin slowly glide into the oils. Give it a good clockwise swirl, cork or cap it, and place it in a window to receive cosmic blessings. You will want to stir the potion perhaps daily (a skewer works well) to encourage the powdered resin to fully dissolve into the oils. This is also an effective way to keep building the energy. When you are ready to use it, you may wish to strain the blend through cheesecloth to filter out any remaining undissolved resin, though I prefer to use it in its raw form. If you have very sensitive skin, please strain the potion before using.

**Beauty Witch Secret:** And what would be the ultimate magical power boost? A dragon stone, of course! Dragon stone is as absolutely gorgeous as you can imagine—in its raw form it appears to have scales, and when polished it becomes a breathtaking gray-green entwined with a bold blood red. This magical helper centers on the heart, amplifying the energy of love, power, and courage. It also can manifest like mad. One warning: dragon stone will amplify *any* energy present, so be sure to feed it strong, positive vibes!

I shall leave you with a petite ritual to connect with your inner mystical beast, one who will protect its treasure with an unequaled presence. May you remain in cosmic light, now and always.

### TO CALL FORTH YOUR DRAGON

**Conjure.** In a beautiful bowl, gather cinnamon, nutmeg, star anise, cloves, and cardamom. You will need to grind or grate them into a powder, using a mortar and pestle or electric spice grinder. First remove the star anise and cardamom seeds from the pods, and if you are using whole nutmeg, crack the shell with a nutcracker. Remove the shell, then grate the soft nutmeg in the same way you would gingerroot. You can also grate the cinnamon this way. (If you prefer, use pre-ground spices.) Once all your ingredients are powdered, mix them well, with the intention of conjuring inner fire, then bring them to a quiet space.

**Ignite.** Place a charcoal or coconut disk inside a cauldron, then light the disk carefully. Sprinkle a good pinch of incense onto the disk, adding as you like.

**Summon.** Light a red candle and have your dragon stone present. Close your eyes. Begin to breathe slowly and deeply, allowing yourself to fall into a relaxed state. Open your eyes, and focus on the flame. Ask for the powers of courage, protection, and strength. Feel it build, circling you in a crimson wave of energy until you know it in your heart—no doubts, no fears. With that energy released, begin to ground yourself once more. Allow the electricity in the air to settle, and breathe with your eyes closed for a few minutes until you feel peaceful. You can now snuff the candle, put out the incense, and go about your plans.

**Beauty Witch Secret:** Coconut incense discs are a sustainable alternative to the classic charcoal censers. They burn with less smoky ash and, unlike self-lighting incense additives, do not harm trees—they are made from discarded coconut shells! Just check your sources carefully, as always.



Alise Marie is an actress, writer, and certified holistic nutritionist. Potions and rituals like these will be brewing in her upcoming book, *The Beauty Witch Grimoire*. She can be found at [thebeautywitch.com](http://thebeautywitch.com) and on Instagram @thebeautywitchofficial.

*Add a Touch of Magic to  
Any Occasion*



*Original handmade cork creations*

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“No, I would not want to live in a world without dragons, as I would not want to live in a world without magic, for that is a world without mystery, and that is a world without faith.” —R.A. Salvatore, *Streams of Silver*



Dragon's Blood has become an increasingly popular ingredient in beauty and skin care these days, and it's not what you may think! It is a resin from the bright red sap of the *Croton Lechleri* tree (the Dragon's Blood tree), native to South America.

Legend holds that the first dragon's-blood tree sprouted from the blood of an injured dragon, and local townspeople used the extracts of the tree to heal their wounds.

Dragon's blood is loaded with antioxidants, which help prevent the signs of premature aging. It is now often found in serums, eye creams, and moisturizers, where it is relied on to reduce the appearance of lines and wrinkles, reduce puffiness and dark circles beneath the eyes, and improve skin firmness and elasticity.



**Rodial Dragon's Blood Eye Gel**

This lightweight gel helps tighten skin in the undereye area and protects skin from environmental aggressors, with dragon's blood and pomegranate extract. [dermstore.com](http://dermstore.com)

**Shea Moisture Dragon's Blood & Coffee Cherry Volume + Conditioner**

With certified organic shea butter, cherry coffee, and dragon's blood, this volumizing conditioner also softens and nourishes the hair. [sheamoisture.com](http://sheamoisture.com)

**Sunfeather Dragon's Blood Soap**

Olive oil, coconut oil, and rosemary and paprika extracts create a luxuriously moisturizing and spicy bath. [jet.com](http://jet.com)

**Mahalo Hawaiian Hydration**

This luxurious serum is loaded with peptides, antioxidants, and botanicals like dragon's blood to help repair dryness, breakouts, and inflammation. A little goes a long way! [artofpure.com](http://artofpure.com)

—Rosie Shannon



MOTHER OF DRAGONS

by Annie Stegg Fine Art



**BIBIAN BLUE**

Who can resist this charming Malachite Butterfly chiffon-and-tulle corseted dress from Barcelona designer Bibian Blue?

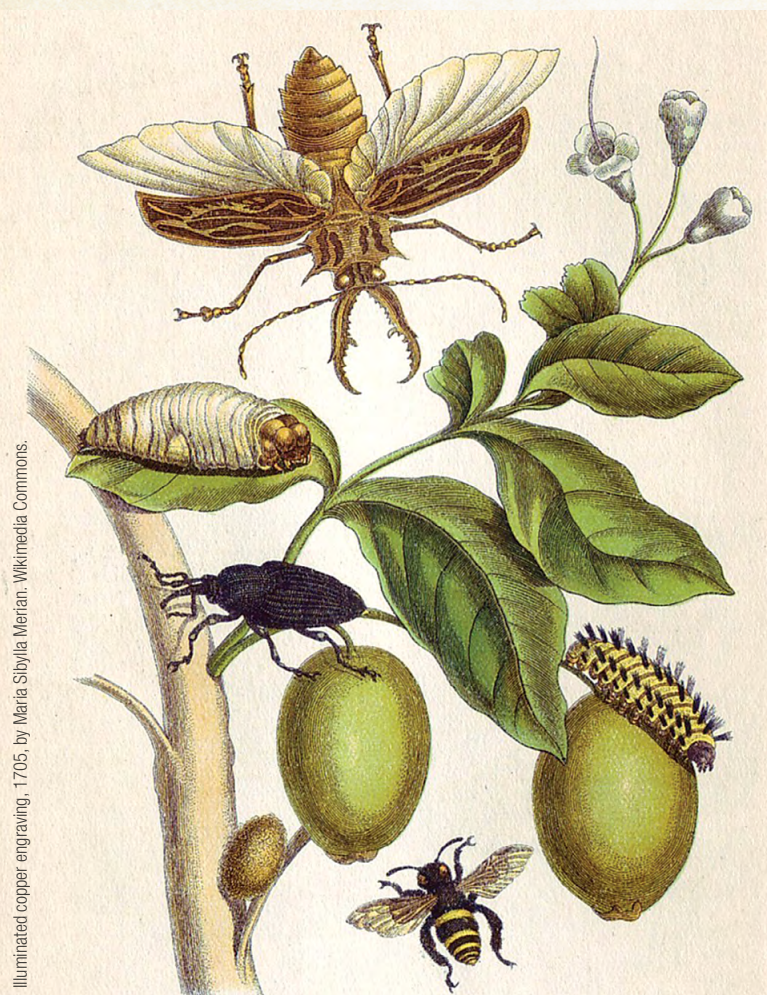
“I love the concept behind a butterfly,” Blue says, “the way they morph from caterpillars into an amazing beauty that everyone loves. Their wings have always inspired me and made me dream.” See more of her designs at [bibianblue.com](http://bibianblue.com).

Photography: Gosia Photobscure | Model: Wiki | Hair: Sylwia Szafer | MUA: Maria Fliegner

# THE ECCENTRICITIES OF GENTLEMEN

EPHEMERA AND APOCRYPHA FROM THE NOTES OF TIMOTHY SCHAFFERT, ESQ.

## Firefly Diamonds & other tales of the whimsy and fashion of insects



Illuminated copper engraving, 1705, by Maria Sibylla Merian. Wikimedia Commons.

The traveling bug lover, in the earliest days of insect study, brought back from foreign trips magical tales of sailors becoming drunk and dizzy from sucking on honeycombs built by intoxicated bees, of beetles that sprayed a rose perfume, of villagers who strung together glowworms to light their way in the dark.

Poetry and fantasy were key to entomologists' research, a whimsy that sometimes tested their authority. "Madame Merian had a poetic fancy," declared a Mr. Davis, with a condescending huff, at a meeting of the Entomological Club in 1836. He's speaking of Maria Sibylla Merian, the pioneering entomologist and scientific artist. She did groundbreaking research during her travels in the early 18th century, gathering insights into metamorphosis and other fabulist tales. And though her work is still admired and consulted today and her art still exhibited, Mr. Davis found it all too fantastical. In his lecture, he speaks of her "gross misstatements" and stories more fabulous "than which the history of gnomes and fairies cannot boast."

He also refers to the legend that Madame Merian illustrated a luminescent bug in the night by using the light of its glow as a lamp, though these were not her own claims at all: They were tall tales attributed to her, inspired by her fame for discovery. Nonetheless, he stirred up a heated debate among his club members, demanding that they make changes to their motto and logo, which reference Madame Merian's research. He

proposed that they acknowledge the inaccuracy and that "the representation of Fulgora Candelaria, which appears on the wrapper of the Entomological Magazine, be forthwith deprived of the radii intended to indicate luminosity, and that the motto, signifying 'allow me to illuminate the world,' be henceforth omitted."

He was so determined to dim her glow, he was dimming the glow of the entire club.

They were right, though; she and other entomologists had noticed that the bug glows in the dark, but later scientists would determine it was likely a bacteria that gave it its shimmer. But other of her "fancies" cited by Mr. Davis have since been proven sound, such as the leaping tarantula that was only just recently named after her.

But Madame Merian's humiliation wouldn't end with Mr. Davis. Her listing in the book *Women in the Fine Arts* (1904) concludes with: "This extraordinary woman, whose studies and writings added so much to the knowledge of her time, was neither beautiful nor graceful. Her portraits present a woman with hard and heavy features, her hair in short curls surmounted by a stiff and curious head-dress, made of folds of some black stuff."

Despite this criticism of her folds of black stuff, Madame Merian, as with many entomologists and fashion designers, appreciated the links between insects and style. The 19th century entomologists William Kirby and William Spence wrote of "the beaus of Italy" catching fireflies "to adorn the heads of the ladies with these artificial diamonds by sticking them into their hair." They wrote also of the *Elater noctilucus*, a glowing beetle, worn in St. Domingo, one on each big toe.

Kirby and Spence cite the story of a maid who worked for the biologist Jan Swammerdam and discovered a number of wood lice in his garden; the bugs roll up into a little ball when alarmed. Mistaking them for beads, "she employed herself in stringing them on a thread; when, to her great surprise, the poor animals beginning to move and struggle for their liberty, crying out and running away in the utmost alarm, she threw down her prize."

This impulse may somewhat speak to inclinations by designers such as Elsa Schiaparelli, who created a necklace designed to make it seem as though your sweater were crawling with bugs. More recently, Jennifer Herwitt has designed jewelry such as a choker of linked ants in yellow gold and a diamond butterfly belly ring as part of her "Collection of Living Jewels." The fashion designer Nicholas Godley has harnessed the cannibalistic golden orb spiders of Madagascar, which spin a strong, silken web, to create fabric.

And scientists have written of insects that demonstrate a fashion sense that dovetails with their sense of survival.

"If you place a number of large ant-flies in a box, the wings of many of them will, after some time, gradually fall off like autumnal leaves," writes William Gould in 1747. "These [wings] are, to other insects, their highest decorations, and the want of

them lessens their beauty, and shortens their life. On the reverse, a large ant-fly gains by the loss, and is afterwards promoted to a throne, and drops these external ornaments as emblems of too much levity for a sovereign."

Kirby and Spence tell of a lace-winged fly that intimidates by wearing the pelts of its victims, a thick coat "composed of the skins, limbs, and down" of aphids. But they're just as happy to dress in something pretty; the scientists placed a fly in a glass bottle with a silk cocoon and slips of paper, and the bug put those on too.

James Rennie, the Scottish naturalist, seemed particularly appreciative of the whims and follies of insects, and even attributes the damage they do to a fashion sense they share with humans: "The moth that eats into our clothes has something to plead for our pity, for he came, like us, naked into the world, and he has destroyed our garments, not in malice or wantonness, but that he may clothe himself with the same wool which we have stripped from the sheep."



Timothy Schaffert's latest novel, *The Perfume Thief*, will be published by Doubleday in the summer of 2021. Learn more at [timothyschaffert.com](http://timothyschaffert.com).

*Will You Answer Magic's Call?*

Meet changelings, selkies, & more magical beasts

*When Magic Calls: A Collection of Modern Fairy Tales* by Caitlin Berve

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# *The Magical Stag Portraits of* **MAX ELLIS**

BY GRACE NUTH

Photographer Max Ellis may live in London, but he keeps one foot firmly in the Otherworld through his surreal and majestic photographs of stags, rutting and standing in the misty countryside, the glowing dawn shining between the tines of their branching antlers. While Ellis has been a professional photographer for twenty-plus years, heading up international advertising campaigns, he had no special interest in landscape photography until he started photographing the stags ten years ago.

“There’s nothing in life compared to being on your knees on a perfect misty dawn in front of an emperor stag,” Ellis says. “It’s a bit of an obsession. They never get boring. The silhouette is so majestic and instantly recognizable.” Although nature photographers can spend hours waiting patiently for the right moment to photograph, Ellis has found the noble deer to be a relatively easy subject to capture. He has sometimes remained for an hour or more in a perfect spot, but he doesn’t usually spend a long time waiting. Instead he shadows the stags, watching them. “I can read a stag very well and know what he’s thinking. We have respect for each other. I don’t tend to get in their way and vice versa.”

Most of the time this works, but there have been a couple of close calls, especially when Ellis captures the stags during a rut. During the lead-up to mating, they tend to be very single-minded, with the main risk occurring anytime Ellis finds himself stuck between an alpha male and a juvenile, when the alpha has finally had enough of the younger deer’s nonsense. “He will just charge in a straight line at the transgressor, taking out everything in his path, including eager photographers,” he says. “I’ve been missed by a foot or so, but I’ve learned not to stop shooting.” These fight images are the most dangerous to capture, since confrontations between the stags can be unpredictable, taking place at high speed and often in deep undergrowth.

Ellis’s personal spirituality focuses on the Celtic horned forest god, Cernunnos, and he is drawn to how the power of the stags makes him feel closer to his path. “The stag is a legendary beast,” he says. “It has always been a symbol of power and elegance. Cernunnos inspires me in all of my stag imagery. I say a prayer to Cernunnos and bow to the stags when they really deliver.”

Follow Max Ellis on Instagram @junkyardmax or view his portfolio at [maxphotographic.com](http://maxphotographic.com).







*Featured Artist*  
LILY JONES—RIVULET PAPER

Lily Jones, a.k.a. Rivulet Paper, was raised in a household of artmaking, reading, and crafting. She grew up admiring the illustrators of the Golden Age, as well as more contemporary fantasy illustrators like Alan Lee and Brian Froud. She wanted to be just like them, she says, “creating art that speaks to another world and tells a story in each frame.”

Jones is drawn to illustrating animals like coyotes, fawns, hares, foxes, and owls, and thinks of them as “a roster of spiritual guides on my creative path.” Sometimes she’s inspired by a physical encounter, and sometimes she just has a feeling, but selecting her subject matter is always an intuitive process for her. “It’s more like I’m waiting for them to creep out from behind the frame and onto the page,” she says. One of her most memorable encounters was during a bike ride along a preserved wetland, where she was cut off by a coyote who looked back at her before jumping from log to log, seeking prey. “I named him Heathcliffe and have been obsessed with coyotes ever since,” she says. “That is ultimately what I try to capture in my work—the notion that each animal has a story to reveal.”

*Find more of Jones’s work on Instagram @rivuletpaper or Etsy @rivuletpapershop.*

# Butterfly Creatures

SVETLANA MATVEEVA'S HANDMADE FAIRY TALES

BY GRACE NUTH

When fabric and multimedia artist Svetlana Matveeva was a young child of four growing up in Russia, she and a friend agreed to “go visit a fairy tale.” They convinced themselves that if they left home on a journey, they would find themselves wrapped in the center of a magical fairy-tale world. Her parents caught them stocking up on crackers for their trip and cut it short before it began. But whether Matveeva ever had to look anywhere else outside her own mind to find a fairy-tale world is up for debate, especially when one looks at her whimsical and sweet fantasy-creature creations.

All of Matveeva's creatures, whether their bodies are made from hard clay, bendable clay, or cloth, are distinguished by their stunning (and fully poseable) fabric butterfly wings. “All of my creatures belong to one main kind of species: They are butterfly creatures,” Matveeva says. “Of course they can be divided into subspecies. For example, butterfly-elephants, butterfly-dragons, butterfly-foxes, butterfly-dogs, and so on. But I feel that myriads of beings are still waiting for their turn to be born.” Why wings? “For me, wings are a symbol of freedom and belonging to the subtle world—the sign of an eternal magical soul. I believe the universe is inhabited with different types of creatures, and not all of them have the opportunity to be physically present on earth. Many we cannot see still help, protecting and teaching.”

These wings are made through a process called cold batik. The process, Matveeva explains, is extremely capricious and utterly unforgiving of any mistakes. Using silk paints that spread quickly like watercolors and gutta, a wax, in combination, she can lay down her patterns and gridwork in the wax and try to coax the paints into other spaces in a controlled way. Or she can use a style of painting where she allows the paint to more freely flow, creating surprising results. Once she's happy with the resulting patterns on the wings, the colors are fixed to the fabric using an iron or steam.

Another signature of Matveeva's animal creations are the blended elements of plant and mineral life that she gives them. Somehow in her hands, a chihuahua with geodes growing from its softly pastel ears or a seahorse with a ruffle of flower petals framing its face can seem believable and logical. “I like to add flora and other elements of nature,” Matveeva says. “I think that's a great way to show that nothing exists separately.” She also notes her long history of loving odd creatures. “I was told a lot of fairy tales as a child. The weirdest characters always were my favorite. Apparently the stranger a creature looks, the more magical it feels to me.”

Thanks to friends and followers on social media, Matveeva always has new and fresh ideas for creatures to make. Recently, her creation of a luna moth butterfly dragon with a sinuous body and tail led a few followers on Facebook to observe how lovely it would be for her to make a butterfly seahorse. Matveeva loved the idea, and it was her next project. Her daughter also helps her imagine ideas. “She is the chief expert. She always knows what creature I should make next. And then sometimes the concept is born in my head and I just can't ignore it. They appear in my mind and don't leave until they're made.”

Matveeva always searches for new ways to create and cannot imagine using only one medium. “In my mind, a particular art form is not actually important. I rather would like to go beyond conventional concepts. For me, that means unceasing experiments with materials, shapes, colors, textures. Each new art medium or form is always a new way to tell a little more about my fantasy world, to bring enchanting details to my story.”

Always moving forward, Matveeva seriously doubts she will ever run out of new fantasy creatures to create. “My plan is to take over the world with myriads of magical creatures,” she says. “But unfortunately, I don't think I have enough hands to do that much.” She also dreams of someday creating an interactive “fairy exposition,” where people would be invited not to passively observe her creatures but meet them in magical moments. Since magical creatures normally appear suddenly and out of nowhere, she feels the element of surprise is one of the essential elements of their nature. “I'm wondering how ordinary passersby would react to being involved as spectators. Try to imagine, for example, passing through an airport building or entering the lobby of a hotel and you suddenly find yourself looking at a small or, even better, a giant butterfly creature looking right back at you,” she says. “What would you feel at that moment? I'd love to see your face. I think that would be the best reward I could dream of.”

How else does Matveeva keep her daily life enchanted? “Observation. Through observing, you can discover the magic in familiar things. Miracles and nature inspire me most of all. Probably they are the same things, because nature is the greatest miracle we have.”



*Follow Svetlana Matveeva on Instagram @handmadehome.*

*Grace Nuth often shares her adventures in nature on Instagram @gracesidhe.*







## A Celebration of the MODERN MERMAID by Susann Cokal

Photography by Marketa Novak Model: Marie Kružíková Renčová

Empresses from the deep, with beautiful faces and seductive voices, luring sailors to their death. Wicked profiteers who pick a shipwreck clean of its riches and line their lairs with fallen crowns. Not-quite-women who surrender themselves entirely for a man's love ... Really?

No. Not anymore.

"I want to be a mermaid," says Freja, a nine-year-old girl from the land of Hans Christian Andersen. "I don't really know why ... I just think they are *special*. They can do anything."

A new sort of mermaid is the quintessential 21st century woman—and literary heroine. Freed from some of the less pleasant conventions of old fairy tales, she owns her body and its power. She is a lover of beauty, a free spirit, and a member of a society where women govern themselves. Perhaps her allure can't be entirely defined, but it can be celebrated for a new generation.

### HER STORIES

If you want to capture mermaid life on the page, as I did for my recent novel, *Mermaid Moon*, you'll have a lot of mythology to sort through and a lot of poems and novels and self-help books. As long as land dwellers (let's call them the landish, with merpeople being seavish) have pulled a living from the water, they have yearned for the *marreminder* who live in it. That means almost exclusively mer-*maids*; the male counterparts may have had a moment with *The Shape of Water*, or in the coats of arms of some hypermasculine noblemen, but it's the girls who fascinate us.

Columbus spotted three in the Caribbean. Henry Hudson saw one in the Arctic, and (according to legend) Blackbeard tangled with a bevy of them in the West Indies. They are the *femmes*

*fatales* of western Africa; the fallible Princess Suvannamaccha in Thailand; maybe even related to the catlike Chippewa lake monster, Misshepesu.

"For me, mermaids are rebirth," says Krishna, who moved to seaside Florida in her fifties. "I'm different in the water. I swim far from the harm of humans."

So why would a mermaid come to land? For love, sure—or because some of her blood is landish and she wants to explore that connection, just as Krishna unites her blood to the saltwater.

### HER BODY

One thing is certain: The modern mermaid delights in her body. She loves its difference, the fact that it is never entirely one thing. To landish humans, this body might be unsettling; to her it is practical. She glides like a fish in the water and crawls like a seal upon land, if she doesn't enchant her way into a convenient pair of legs.

*Marreminders* aren't always physically beautiful by landish standards, but that doesn't matter. Even the 19th century hoax known as the Feejee mermaid, a grisly patchwork of young monkey and sizable fish, drew audiences around the world for more than twenty years. (And the true mermaids must have laughed.)

Who can say, really, how a mermaid looks? The world is large and species are varied; her body doesn't have to mimic the statue in Copenhagen or the redhead in Disney. Myths and legends report women with one or two tails, fins up and down their bodies, or just a pair of powerful flukes, laying eggs or giving

live birth, sometimes furred rather than scaled. Some have gills; some can hold their breath long enough to surface just a few times a day. I propose that the mermaid exhales through a blowhole in the back of her neck—not entirely elegant, perhaps, but efficient when swimming long distances. Especially when her arms are needed for towing nets full of treasure or elderly members of her clan who otherwise would be lost.

And I am sure of this: Swimming as much as she does, diving deep, and sifting through wreckage for treasure, the mermaid's body must be substantial. A skinny waist would snap in two; a few yards down, the weight of water would crush an ordinary human. So her body is naturally thick, and her fingers have callused from gripping rocks and splintery boards.

I think she might still grow her hair long, though, because she likes how it looks when it swirls through the water.

### HER TAIL

A mermaid's tail is both a mystery and a proof of her self-sufficiency. It helps her swim fast by pushing the water; it signals to the landish, *You don't know who I am*.

These days, if someone born spiritually mer- but physically landish wants a tail, she can buy one custom-made from silicone or off the rack in cost-effective spandex. She'll find her group—her school, her clan, her pod—at one of a half-dozen mermaid conventions held nationally each year, or basking together, flukes outstretched, on a local beach. Maybe she'll perform behind the glass of a water show, or only for a lover, or herself, at home.

How *do* merpeople make love—either with each other or with two-legged humans? This mechanical question has baffled the landish forever, and it was one of the first I got when I mentioned that I was writing this novel. Her tail was the problem to solve.

My theory: the seavish parts are in front among her scales and fins, and bodies twine around each other like DNA strands.

Isn't love always a bit of a mystery, even when we know how the parts work?

### HER POWER

It is said that in 1563, while the Swedish Duke Magnus of Östergötland was supervising construction of a castle, he spotted a *hafsfryn* in the moat and hurled himself from a window to join her.

This story cannot be confirmed. But it proves that even without trying, the mermaid enchants anyone tied to the land, luring them to peril.

This is her nature, not her fault. In "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," T. S. Eliot writes, "We have lingered in the chambers of the sea, by sea-girls wreathed in seaweed red and brown—till human voices wake us, and we drown."

It's not the magical *marreminder* who are dangerous. It's the everyday humans.

### HER SEXUALITY

The landish have always feared the power this creature has

to seduce them. Which is why, in the old stories, when a mermaid comes to land it is because she wants to mate with a man. Men have turned the story around so the mermaids want *them* instead.

In Danish folklore, poetry, and sculpture, land-born Agnete leaves her farmer husband and children in order to live as a mermaid. She gives birth to mer-children—then chooses to return to the farm, to be mourned forever in the sea. Heinrich Heine's Lorelei lives in the Rhine and waits for a landish lover who will never come back. And the most famous Dane of all trades her voice and her tail to walk on land and sigh over a prince already in love with somebody else.

The old pattern isn't enough anymore. As the modern mermaid has found her own strength, she has become slipperier in love. Her amphibious nature—and that *tail*—are signs of a sexuality that can't be defined in one way.

It makes sense to me that mermaids fall in love with each other, perhaps more easily than with landish men. Or maybe they don't fall in love at all.

### HER FREEDOM

Alabama-born Emily has fulfilled many of her dreams: a happy marriage to a loving wife, a new baby, a horse farm. Still, she points out, "We are so hindered as people. But mermaids, or sea folk in general, are held back by nothing."

William, a bushy-bearded city dweller, agrees: "They are free spirits. They are my thing, and they always have been." Maybe mermaids were once the daughters of mer-kings. But with the power to enchant other creatures and even to choose their own bodies, why would they live by the rules of a patriarchy?

They wouldn't. They don't, not now.

The seavish heroine of modern tales is a future queen herself, as in Carolyn Turgeon's *Mermaid*, or part of a democracy, as in my *Mermaid Moon*. She's as much Elizabeth Warren as Marilyn Monroe. Or, like the mer-girls in Aimee Bender's short stories, she goes to high school or takes an office job—and finds her own pleasures within the humdrum day-to-day.

Even more than her body, that ability to enjoy life is what attracts humans. We are a melancholy breed who need the mermaid, not the other way around.

### HER HEART

"I am a mermaid," says Freja.

"I am a mermaid," says Emily.

"I am a mermaid." Krishna declares, "I am living the life I always dreamed of."

The mermaid slaps her tail at anyone who tries to tell her who she is. We aren't supposed to understand her entirely; her thick heart beats far, far below the surface, and she writes her own stories upon the water. Their traces vanish as swiftly as she does, leaving nothing but mystery behind.



Find Susann Cokal at [susanncokal.net](http://susanncokal.net). Read an excerpt from her latest novel, *Mermaid Moon*, at [enchantedlivingmagazine.com](http://enchantedlivingmagazine.com).



PHOTOGRAPHY BY KATERINA PLOTNIKOVA

# WHISPERS FROM THE HEDGEROW

## *Lessons From the Deer*

BY MONICA CROSSON

There are souls whose hearts beat out an unkept rhythm that can't help but keep them on the margins of our ordinary world. She was one of those wild souls—the young lady in the park who spied dragons in the clouds as her peers organized baseball games. She was the one who spent more time reading fairy tales than studying her algebra, and the one who would rather hold a conversation with a nature spirit than with most people she knew.

It was her grandfather who told her of the ones who teeter between this world and the other—the ones who have honed their intuitive skills and can journey beyond the veil to gain insight from their animal spirit guides.

“But I don't have a guide,” she said, disappointment pulling at the corners of her eyes.

“Aww, but you do, my girl,” he replied. “You just need to let your animal find you.”

She thought for days about who her animal guide may be. “Is it you?” she asked a raven who squawked madly from its post on top of the mailbox. “I will call you Merlin, and you could ride on my shoulder and whisper to me of shapeshifting and magic.”

But the raven saw something more interesting on the other side of the hedge and left her in a flurry of flapping and feathers.

When wandering down a country lane, she saw a horse nibbling on tufts of fresh spring grass. “Is it you who will be my guide and tell me of endurance and freedom as I ride upon your back with the wind on my face?”

The horse snorted and stomped, and then took off in the direction of the setting sun.

While gathering stones along the river's edge, the girl heard the cry of an eagle who was riding a thermal along the mountainside. “Is it you, Eagle?” she asked. “Will you fly alongside me and cry out your charms of healing and rebirth?”

But the eagle only soared higher and higher until it was just a speck along the top of the ridgeline.

One day, as she picked salmonberries along the edge of a hedgerow, she heard something nibbling at a thimbleberry bush not too far from where she stood. It was a small doe who looked bashfully her way before creeping into the forest. The girl parted her lips to speak but stopped. What good would a deer be as a guide? It is a timid thing that keeps to the edge of the forest. No, she need not bother to ask the deer for anything, as it had already shied away.

# Whispers From the Hedgerow

Monica Crosson

But over the course of the summer, she began to see the doe every day along the edge of the hedgerow, where she knew the veil between our world and that of the spirits is thin, and then again every night as the doe slipped through the tendrils of her dreaming world.

It was her grandfather who reminded her, when she asked him what a small deer could possibly have to teach her, that all forms of life have wisdom to share—even a shy deer.

One night, when the moon was almost full and a breeze stirred the willows that shivered along the riverbank, the girl was woken by the tugging of the silvery strands that reached from her soul and drew her with a steady breath to the hedgerow. As she situated herself there at that border between the wild and the tame, she became aware of her heartbeat in rhythm with nature's own earth beat.

"We are the same, you and I," rode sweetly on the air. And as the girl turned to see who spoke, she saw the doe.

"How so?" she asked.

"We are both seen as beings on the edge, somewhere between wild and tame, this world and the other."

"Neither here nor there," the girl said. "I sometimes don't understand my own world and I long for the other."

The deer nodded and said, "I can help with life's mysteries, dear friend. If only you believe."

Then and for the rest of her days, it was the deer spirit that helped her find that spirit child within herself who knew intimately the music of the wind that rustles the leaves before the rain. The deer taught her to hear the voices of the

otherworld that whisper just beyond the silence that insulates the land after a heavy snow. And when she grew older, she remembered how it felt before she knew that too much sun could cause wrinkles and what the rain did to her hair. For she always entered nature's bower as a child, where anything is possible if you look to nature with curiosity and wonder.

## THE DEER SPIRIT

In Celtic mythology, deer could move between the worlds and hunting a stag represented the pursuit of wisdom. A stag's antlers were representative of a tree, and because they were shed and regrown every year, they were a perfect symbol of rebirth. The hind, or female deer, often symbolized access to the fairy world and the spiritual realm. To dream of a hind has been said to mean that you must integrate the characteristics of compassion and gentleness into your spirit, but without sacrificing your sacred self. In Arthurian legend, it was the white stag that could evade capture and was said to represent humanity's spiritual quest.

A deer's gentle spirit and swift and delicate movement remind us to have grace under fire. The deer's innocent nature teaches us to find that lost childlike quality within ourselves and to use that ability to look at things from another perspective.

The deer spirit can also be used to help develop your intuition and refine psychic abilities, which I have found very helpful. And if you're magically inclined, the deer spirit can be used in spells for renewal, life's mysteries, grace, intuition, and peace.



## ANIMAL SPIRIT MEDITATION BEADS

An animal spirit guide is much more than just an animal whose qualities we admire. It is the embodiment of our subconscious mind and a guide to help us acknowledge those aspects of our lives that need to be transformed, inspired, or comforted.

There are several ways to cultivate a connection with an animal spirit including: observing nature and keeping track of repetitive sightings of a specific animal, shamanic journeying, dream work, and meditation. Another way is through these Animal Spirit Meditation Beads, which can work as an aid in focusing your intention on your power animal while in a meditative state. Just touch each of these beads in repetition as

you call forth your spirit guide.

You will need:

- 13 beads to represent the lunar months (use turquoise, peridot, hematite, or other stones representing the element of earth or whatever beads best represent your animal)
- 3 beads of your choice to represent the power of Mother Earth (or triple Goddess)
- Spacer beads of your choice (wood is nice)
- A charm representing your power animal spirit (I'll be using a deer)
- Beading string

Lay out your beads in a way that pleases you. String them onto your beading string and knot the string securely at both ends.

Follow Monica Crosson on Instagram @monicacrosson or visit her website at monicacrosson.com.



## FIREFLY PATH

JoEllen Elam Conway of Firefly Path designed this Celtic Sorceress gown with model Marita Tathariel in mind. What else would an elf wear in the forest? The gown features embroidered gold Celtic knots around the chest and armbands; the knots around the waist transform into stags leaping toward each other. The pattern is available on Etsy @FireflyPath.

Photo by Simply Savannah Art.



## *Featured Artist*

KELLY LOUISE JUDD—SWAN BONES

Kelly Louise Judd, a.k.a. Swan Bones, is a flora-, fauna-, and folklore-inspired artist who lives in the Midwestern United States with her flock of chickens, clowder of cats, and two very smart dogs. When she's not creating things she's likely tending to these creatures or to her varied gardens. "My pets and plants are constantly feeding into my work," she says.

How is she inspired by animals? "I feel very connected to all animals. They inspire me to live more in the moment and to not incessantly question the path that I am on. I try to evoke some of that spirit in my work." While her own animals are her favorite magical beasts, she's always been drawn to werewolves.

And how does she stay enchanted? "I go outside and look at all the tiny things growing and moving around me. A single blade of grass enchants me."

*Find more of Judd's work on Instagram or Etsy @swanbones.*

# A PLACE OF PEACE

BY RONA BERG

Close your eyes and dream about a place where farm animals gambol and frolic in a beautiful, bucolic setting. Imagine rolling green lawns, flowering gardens, and brightly painted barns with fruit trees like papaya, pineapple, and banana perfuming the air for the cows, ducks, goats, sheep, turkeys, chickens, pigs, cats, and horses that live there.

That paints a perfect picture of the Leilani Farm Sanctuary, an animal rescue nonprofit and home to more than 300 farm animals on the Hawaiian island of Maui. The sanctuary was named in honor of its first resident donkey, Leilani, a particularly inspiring creature, and founded by Laurelee Blanchard, a former commercial real estate executive who left her corporate job to pursue her lifelong passion for protecting and advocating for animals.

“My vision was to provide food, shelter, and veterinary care for rescued animals; humane education to the community; and a model of compassionate living,” she says.

After a career in animal-rights activism, with jobs at Farm Animal Rights Movement and Farm Sanctuary, the nation’s largest farm-animal protection organization, Blanchard bought eight lush acres of land in Haiku, on Maui, in 1999. There she created the Leilani Farm Sanctuary to provide an idyllic home for rescues, along with programs to educate children about the animals who live there. “Animals, with their unconditional love and nonjudgmental attitude, can often reach kids more deeply and effectively than people can,” she says. Picture, if you will, a place where Old MacDonald and *Charlotte’s Web* come to life.

Here the animals graze freely, nibble on leaves in the garden, and provide memorable interactions and education for visiting children, families, and school groups, as well as the general public.

The staff is all volunteer. And it’s not surprising that they are drawn to this Edenic spot, where the animals are happy and playful. Each inhabitant has a unique personality—some bigger than others!—and favorite ways to occupy each day. “When I wake up in the morning,” Blanchard says, “I look out the window of my cottage and see happy animals in every direction:



ducks swimming under the waterfall, animals grazing in the fruit orchard, and sometimes a parade of goats, pigs, donkeys, sheep, and deer walking through the animal alley behind my cottage that serves as a bypass from their barn to the pasture. As I sip my cup of coffee, several purring cats crowd onto my lap.” Apparently, there is one particular cat who loves to be combed while hanging out on the wraparound lanai. The resident busybody, she has a solid friendship with a few of the sheep and pigs and keeps a close eye on just about everybody.

At the end of the day, Blanchard will often walk out to the pasture to photograph the animals before sunset. One balmy summer night, she heard some unfamiliar pig sounds—“grunts, snorts, and oinks that I didn’t recognize,” she says. Opening the gate to the animal paddock, she found Kea, a rescued pig, engaged in animated conversation with a young wild boar standing on the opposite side of the fence. “He had likely lost his mother to hunters and wandered up from the wild area in the gulch behind the sanctuary,” Blanchard says. “I watched from a distance to avoid scaring off Kea’s cute suitor. He wanted to be friends with the animals here, it appeared, and started following the donkeys along the fence line.”

Visitors can take personalized, guided tours, which may include giving a pig a belly rub, cuddling a bunny, brushing a goat’s coat, and more. The tours—as well as monthly or yearly paid sponsorships—support the costs of maintaining the sanctuary, which include feeding the animals, veterinary care, fencing, and building repairs.

“Most visitors have never had the experience of cuddling a chicken, a turkey, or a goose,” Blanchard says. “They are amazed to discover how soft and warm animals are, and how much they enjoy being petted. The healing that takes place when children get together with the animals is profound.”

Visit [leilanifarmsanctuary.com](http://leilanifarmsanctuary.com) to make a donation or learn more.

Visit Rona Berg on Instagram @ronaberg





# VERONICA VARLOW

*Life of a Love Witch*

She is known as Queen Wolf of the Witches.

She is a four legged wonder of an animal, a great wolf spirit present in the body of a nine-pound chihuahua.

She has a thousand and one names, as magical creatures often do.

To me, she is Niney, a word combination of nine and tiny. We have enjoyed grand adventures together for fifteen magical years and counting. She has been by my side longer than any other living creature.

Her keen sense and almost supernatural instinct guide us on magical adventures in the forest. Running free, her four legs lightning quick, she knows the paths to the deer, to the dragonfly river, to the tiny squeaking chipmunks hiding in the moss. In the sun-soaked field, she blinks her eyes beside me, head lifted, sniffing the breeze, as I carve candles, throw down tarot cards, and string roses together in a love spell.

When I started Witch Camp gatherings, magical women from all over the world came together and sat in a circle playing drums, shaking rattles and tambourines, singing in dying languages that Fre Atlast taught. Then, the Wolf Song happened, and on cue, Niney sauntered into the middle of the circle, threw back her little head, and howled. To this day, it has become a tradition that she howls at both the beginning and end of all our gatherings. We all throw back our heads and howl with her, and then she puffs up her tiny chest, proud to be the Queen Wolf of us all.

I am honored that she chose me and that she is my familiar.

### WHAT IS A FAMILIAR?

A familiar is a loyal animal companion of a witch. The two are deeply tied in

spirit, emotion, and magic workings. A familiar and a witch walk together, connected by a stronger bond than human language can define. It is my personal belief that there is no master in a familiar-witch relationship; both offer strong support to each other. When a familiar crosses to the other side, the familiar will still connect with the witch through dreamtime messages and signs. The bond is eternal.

The concept of familiars and our connection with the animal kingdom have existed throughout history, etched in the fabric of fairy stories and folklore. Ancient shamans relied upon animal protectors to watch over them when they fell into a trance state, and neolithic cave

paintings showed great reverence for animals, who were depicted in magical scenes and decorated just like the humans standing at their sides.

### WHAT IS THE MAGIC OF FAMILIARS?

Animals are a connection to the deep wild. In worldwide cultures throughout time, animals were worshipped for their otherworldly heightened senses and focused natural instinct. Having a deep connection with your familiar will bond your magic between animal and human worlds. When we allow our familiar to be a teacher, we gain a greater understanding of instinct and our own wild magic.



# Life of a Love Witch

Veronica Varlow

## HOW DO YOU CALL A FAMILIAR TO YOU?

If you don't yet have a familiar in your life, you might take into consideration what animals you have experienced a natural connection with.

My first human words were not mom or dad but "Sneaky," the name of my first canine companion. I learned to walk by holding onto her collar. We walked side by side, and then one

day, I let go and took my first steps on my own. The canine friends are always the ones that showed up for me.

That being said, you don't have to limit yourself to the idea of having a familiar that lives with you. Familiars can also be animals of the wild, like squirrels, ravens, bunnies, owls, deer—any animal that makes a regular appearance to you.

## A SPELL FOR DRAWING YOUR FAMILIAR TO YOU

- ♥ Write a petition (*a letter to the spirits, ancestors, angels, or guides who watch over you*). Ask for the guidance and teachings of a familiar to come into your life and allow the gates to the magical realm of the wild to be opened to you.
- ♥ Take a strand of your hair and tape it onto the letter.
- ♥ Scroll the letter towards you. This is an old Romani-Czech tradition in my family for bringing what you are asking *to you!*
- ♥ Hide the scroll inside a tree, tie it to a birdfeeder, or bury it in a garden to "grow." Use your imagination of where to put your request.
- ♥ Do this spell during the new moon, and by the arrival of the full moon, you will have an indication of who or where your familiar is!

## A BONDING SPELL FOR YOUR FAMILIAR AND YOU

- ♥ Take a piece of your hair and tie it around your familiar's collar, to protect them and hold them near.
- ♥ Take a piece of their hair and wear it in a locket around your neck or keep it near your person.
- ♥ Hair holds our magical DNA and is a language all its own. When we exchange pieces of hair with our familiar, it is a personal talisman of love, care, and magical bonding.
- ♥ Of course, with our sweet familiars, the only real spell we need is said when we look into each other's eyes and know that we've got each other's backs, in this lifetime and beyond.



Read more about Veronica Varlow's Witch Camp and Love Witch Tarot School on [lovewitch.com](http://lovewitch.com). Instagram: [@veronicavarlow](https://www.instagram.com/veronicavarlow).



International performer and artist Ali Luminescent is an icon of unicorn style. Here she models a Miss G Designs headpiece; see more on Etsy [@MissGDesignsShop](https://www.etsy.com/shop/MissGDesignsShop). Ali's been making couture unicorn horns for ten years now too, collecting flowers, crystals, and seashells during her travels to make ever more elaborate confections. Visit [enchantedlivingmagazine.com](http://enchantedlivingmagazine.com) to see how she does it and make one of your own. And admire Ali's style at [aliluminescent.com](http://aliluminescent.com).

Photo by  
PIXIE VISION PHOTOGRAPHY



*The Enchantress, c.1901, by Arthur Wardle*

# THE DIVINE *Feline*

by Jo Weldon

Wherever the leopard is known, it has moved the hearts and spirits of those who've seen it. With its grace and power, its ability to adapt to every element, this gorgeous beast has developed a following of fervent admirers around the world. There are leopards at home in the desert heat and in the snowy mountains, swimming in jungle rivers and resting high in trees.

The leopard is a breathtaking beauty in all its variations: the golden glow of the Amur leopard in Russia and China; the glacial grey of the snow leopard in Nepal and Afghanistan; the near-geometric rosettes of the clouded leopard of the Himalayas; and the most numerous, the one we know best, the glorious ochre, black, and cream of the African leopard, roaming across the continent from savannah to rainforest. In the Americas, the leopard's beauty is echoed in the patterns of lynxes, ocelots, and jaguars.

Cats, especially big cats, have been admired and revered throughout history, and leopards in particular. A figurine from Catalhoyuk, one of the oldest archeological digs in Anatolia, depicts a marvelously curvy goddess seated on a throne with each of her hands on the head of a leopard. The city of Catalhoyuk, founded in approximately 6700 BC, is known for its art that frequently depicted leopards as important figures in the social and spiritual lives of its inhabitants. The city was preliterate, meaning they have no written history, but their murals, figurines, and other artifacts show how much the great cats meant to them. From our earliest records of human art, we see the relevance of leopards.

Ancient Egyptian writing and art also shows a special fascination with leopards. While many animals were featured in Egyptian iconography and temples were built to the domestic house cat, it was the leopard skin that was associated with priests and royalty. Sashet was the leopard-clad goddess of learning and writing, disseminating important intellectual and spiritual teachings. A stele of Princess Nefertibet (c. 2550 BC) shows her in her leopard priestess robe. A piece of linen shaped and painted to resemble a leopard skin was found in the tomb of Tutankhamen, who reigned from 1334 to 1325 BC. Hatshepsut, one of Ancient Egypt's most powerful and influential pharaohs, chose the leopard as one of her symbols. The association evoked the power of the leopard, which can climb a tree carrying three times its weight. It can hunt in the night and be productive when others sleep. It can hide in grasses and jungles thanks to its spots. In more southern regions of Africa, for millennia, the leopard has been a symbol of power and spirituality, now known as representative of the Zulu and Shembe cultures, among others.

In ancient Greece the leopard was associated with Dionysus, the god of vegetation, wine, and pleasure. The association may come from the nocturnal nature of big cats, as well as their great beauty. Dionysus wore them, rode them, and had them as companions, evoking both their danger and their playfulness. The female leopard is also a single mother, a vivid source of maternal ferocity. Throughout the centuries, leopards were associated with European wealth, power, and royalty. In

England, Henry VIII forbade commoners from wearing the leopard's fur or patterns, reserving those associations for royalty only. In the late 18th century, fashionable young men known as macaronis helped make leopard print popular in the European courts; Marie Antoinette was often pictured with a leopard skin and once even as a leopard in the 18th century equivalent of a meme.

Throughout Europe cats became associated with femininity and women's domains. The domestic cat in medieval Europe was not only a pet but a kitchen worker, keeping the area clean of mice. The classic image of the witch with her broom, cauldron, and cat can be imagined as an adaptation of the all-seeing, all-knowing domestic behind the scenes, who ran the house and had the power to control all household members in invisible ways. The cat as familiar makes sense, as something the witch could become and not be noticed, or as a witch's faithful companion watching out for the unwanted.

Now we wear our own familiar when we don leopard print. We are inspired, and we aspire. We take on its power and grace, evoke its warm-bloodedness and nocturnal drives. What the leopard wears to blend in, we wear to stand out. We are saying not that we are hunters but that we are not prey.



Visit Jo Weldon online at [joweldon.com](http://joweldon.com).



© Bettina May

*The Butterfly's  
Numidian Gown*

*by Emily Dickinson*

The Butterfly's Numidian Gown  
With spots of Burnish roasted on  
Is proof against the Sun  
Yet prone to shut its spotted Fan  
And panting on a Clover lean  
As if it were undone—

*Photography by*  
**Marketa Novak**

*Model*  
**Klára Šlechtová**

# SOULFUL BEASTIES

*Sophie Gamand's Flower-Powered Pitbulls*

by Jill Gleeson





At first glance, Sophie Gamand's photographs of pit bulls, that most maligned and feared breed of canines, are simply lovely. Each artfully depicts a pooch, bedecked endearingly with a crown of flowers, in a three-quarter shot, staring directly into the camera. Despite the pit bull's fearsome reputation, there is no malice in these dogs' gazes. Look for even a moment longer and it becomes clear that there is nearly everything else but malice to be found there. Instead, intelligence shines through in her portraits, and curiosity, and often gentle, even goofy, good humor. Some dogs seem a bit melancholy, others positively joyous, but in all there is what might be best described as nobility.

Which is, of course, exactly what Gamand intended when she began taking pittie portraits in 2014, as part of her volunteer work photographing shelter dogs. The hope was that the images would help get the animals adopted, but Gamand, who was born and raised outside of Lyon, France, and now lives in New York, found herself unable to work effectively with them. A victim of a dog mauling in her teens, she had also bought into the propaganda about pit bulls and was uncomfortable around the breed.

"I wanted to do a project that would force me to hang out with a lot of pit bulls so I'd get to know them and get over my fear, but I was also curious to see if I could change the way society sees them," Gamand explains. "Back then, upwards of 800,000 pit bulls were being euthanized every year, and it was because of the public's perception of these dogs. My project was about portraying them as soulful beings, because even if we're afraid of something, it doesn't mean that being doesn't have a soul and fears and wants and feelings, that it doesn't deserve being treated with respect and dignity."

Almost as soon as she'd posted them, Gamand's images of the dogs in her handmade crowns went viral. She began taking more, finding the pitties surprisingly amenable to modeling their floral tiaras, thanks to the "sit and stay" training the shelters teach—and copious amounts of treats. She has since shot about 450 photographs, publishing the stunning coffee-table book *Pit Bull Flower Power* in 2018. Her work has helped the dogs immeasurably, resulting in adoptions for some that had been languishing in shelters for more than a half-decade.

Gamand sells her books—she's also published *Wet Dog*, a deeply charming collection of soggy doggy photos—and other goods through her website. The profits and the money she raises through her Patreon account help fund her shelter-dog images and other advocacy work, both here and abroad. Although Gamand is currently on break from her pittie project, it seems certain she'll return to it. Her enduring love for them will keep her working to save as many as she can.

"I feel like there are no species in the realm of souls," she says. "We're all on the same level, and if people could slow down and stop and look at animals in their eyes, they would see that. So what's special about dogs? Nothing more than any creature on earth, and everything at the same time."



Discover more about Sophie Gamand's work at [sophiegamand.com](http://sophiegamand.com).

Follow Jill Gleeson at [gleesonreboots.com](http://gleesonreboots.com).



CINNAMON THE HEDGEHOG

Follow Cinnamon's adventures on Instagram @cinnamon.hodgepodge.

# LOUISIANA'S ROUGAROU FEST

*Giving Folklore's Favorite Swamp Monster a New Image*

*by Jill Gleeson*

It's quite a scene here in Houma, a wee city of about 32,000 sunk so far south in Louisiana the next stop is pretty much the Gulf of Mexico. Drifting along the street with surprising grace and no little beauty is a papier-mâché egret, perhaps twenty feet long and white as snow, a tribute to the birds that call the surrounding bayous home. There are other massive puppets—like the egret, all created by local citizens—making an appearance tonight too, including a replica of a sugar skull and a Jack Skellington look-alike. They're whimsical and wonderful, but by no means the only highlight of the parade, which also includes a platoon of dancing witches, a float filled with mermaids, and a flash-mob-like coterie of zombies that replicate Michael Jackson's "Thriller" moves.

Pulling up the rear, helping lead the zombies when not cavorting with the masses lining the sidewalks, is the rougarou, the creature that inspired both the parade and the two-day festival during which the parade takes place. The most celebrated of all the critters that fill Cajun folktales, the rougarou "is like a swamp werewolf," says Melissa Durocher, destination development manager at the Houma Area CVB. "When we were growing up, every Cajun child understood that if you didn't listen to mom and dad, or you misbehaved, the rougarou would come and get you. Even when you were playing outside, mom would say, 'Come in before dark or the rougarou is going to be out.'"

But this rougarou—most years made flesh by former Louisiana state senator Norby Chabert, who owns the hirsute costume familiar to festivalgoers—has little bark, much less bite. That's thanks not only to the family-friendly nature of the fest but also the cause which it supports, the South Louisiana Wetlands Discovery Center, a nonprofit Houma organization that educates kids and teens about the issues facing the Pelican State's coastal communities. While the rougarou was once the star of a children's cautionary tale, he's fast evolving into a symbol of the fight to protect Louisiana's precious bayous against coastal land loss from subsidence and sea-level rise.

"The rougarou has become our Smokey the Bear," says Jonathan Foret, executive director of the Discovery Center and founder of the festival. "Smokey the Bear says, 'Only you can prevent forest fires.' Our tagline is, 'If the rougarou doesn't have a place to live, then neither will we,' because the rougarou is known to live out in the marshland. When I was a kid, we were taught to be afraid of the rougarou, but what's been interesting is that through the festival and our work he's sort of turned into a protector of the swamps. He isn't quite so menacing. It's more that he's protecting his home, and we need to help him, because

that in turn protects our home."

It's only keeping with tradition that the beastie's intents and interests should morph over time and place. Rougarou folklore evolved from European tales of the *loup-garou*, a werewolf. French settlers brought the legend with them to Canada; their descendants, the Acadians, imported it to South Louisiana, where they resettled after they were expelled from their homeland by the British in the mid-18th century. According to Chabert, who grew up in the countryside outside of Houma and calls himself "about as bayou as it gets," the rougarou legend, much like a recipe for shrimp okra gumbo, invites all to tinker with it.

"In the rougarou tale you have these consistencies, no matter where you go," Chabert says, "like it's a werewolf creature, it lives in the marsh all the time. And then you hear it only comes out in the full moon and other different things. As you go into the Cajun communities, you hear various versions of what the rougarou tale is, but it's a very predominant part of Louisiana folklore. Even the rednecks in north Louisiana know of the rougarou. They may have a different telling of it than we have down here, but it's still very much a Cajun swamp monster."

There is no doubt Rougarou Fest is helping keep the legend alive for future generations. Foret says it's not uncommon now for parents to pass along school reports and shoebox dioramas their kids have made about their favorite werewolf. But the festival, which debuted in 2012 and takes place the weekend before Halloween, preserves more than myth. It's also about helping ensure the survival of an entire culture. The traditions of the French Louisiana people, a group that includes not only Cajuns but Native Americans and Creoles, are richly and authentically celebrated at Rougarou. This is no coldly calculated corporate event.

"Jonathan's leadership has really enabled the festival to grow in the direction the patrons want it to grow," says Houma resident Shannon Eaton, who was last year's Rougarou Fest queen (see page 73, top left). "Instead of having these third parties come in and tell us how it should be done, we're able to make it truly something that the community dictates. I love the way Jonathan brought back the personality of Houma that I remember from growing up here."

Perhaps more than anything else, Foret has taken his vision for Rougarou Fest from a long-lost, much-beloved fair called Lagniappe on the Bayou, which was held in Chauvin, just down the road from Houma. A fundraiser for the local Catholic church, the annual event was discontinued in the mid-1990s but lives on in the hearts of all who attended it—and through Rougarou.



Photography by  
Rougarou Fest Photographers  
(except where noted)

# Rougarou Fest

Jill Gleeson



“When you went there was every kind of Cajun food you could imagine there—bacon-wrapped shrimp, jambalaya, gumbo, beignets. You name it, there was a food booth for it,” says Raegan Creppell, president of the board of the South Louisiana Wetlands Discovery Center Foundation and Rougarou Fest’s storyteller. “In addition to that, there were rides and games and Cajun music,” he says. “It was absolutely community and family-focused. Everybody came together and worked probably harder than they worked all year long on anything else for free because it was so important to our culture. It really had a huge impact on who we were as Cajun people.”

Foret has brought back some favorites from Lagniappe on the Bayou (*Lagniappe* is a Louisiana French word meaning a small, unexpected gift), including a beloved ice cream that was made from Pop Rouge, a local soda pop. “Jonathan got with our ice cream parlor owner, and they re-created it to sell at the festival,” says Eaton. “Another thing he revived is blackberry dumplings. He actually found the family members of the people who would cook it for Lagniappe and asked them if they wouldn’t mind setting up a booth at Rougarou. They drop the batter into hot oil, and it creates a dumpling, and then they drizzle the fresh blackberry syrup over it and it just melts in your mouth. So there are two treasured treats from way back that a whole new generation of little kids gets to experience, which is so great.”

Even better is that almost everything is provided by locals, from the volunteers who pick blackberries from the bushes they’ve planted in their backyards, squeezing the fruit and freezing the juice to save for the dumpling syrup, to the fishermen who donate the shrimp and crab used to make the festival’s gumbo and jambalaya. Along with incredible food, Rougarou Fest offers plenty of live Cajun music and games for children too, like the cypress knee toss, which gives kids the chance to throw rings around the swamp trees’ most distinctive feature. There’s also Creppell’s storyteller, who spins tales of the rougarou and other mythical bayou creatures, and the Louisiana French tent, providing those who speak the language a place to converse and those who don’t an opportunity to learn it.

An estimated 15,000 people now attend Rougarou Festival, which still manages to provide a very genuine peek into a culture and a land unlike any other in the world. “I think that there’s magic in the swamps that’s celebrated at Rougarou,” Foret says. “The swamp is often seen as a dangerous place, with dangerous animals and everything sort of rotting. You hear people use the phrase ‘We’re going to drain the swamp,’ as if that’s a good thing. The swamps are a beautiful, magical place that do so many things for our ecosystem. They filter the watershed! And we should learn to respect them and honor them.”

After a pause, Foret adds, “And it’s bigger than the Discovery Center too. Certainly, the funds that we raise go into educational programs, but I think we started this out thinking it’s going to be a fundraiser, and it is, but it’s turned into something much more important. And that is bringing a community together and celebrating who we are as a people in southern Louisiana. It is so much work, but there are so many benefits on so many levels.”



For more information, visit [rougaroufest.org](http://rougaroufest.org)

Follow Jill Gleeson at [gleesonreboots.com](http://gleesonreboots.com).



Photo by Lindsay Guidry





## Featured Artist

ADAM OEHLERS

British artist Adam Oehlers has been drawing for as long as he can remember and has always been attracted to themes rooted in nature and magic. “It’s a soft kind of magic I like to focus on,” he says, “with hidden sprites and creatures that are almost a part of the landscape. I try to tell a story through every piece. My overall goal is to induce a sense of nostalgia for the older viewers, reminding them of the childhood wonder that seems to get lost in adult life.” This has become even more relevant to him since having children, remembering how to play and reminding himself of how children might view the world. He’s also been collaborating with his wife, artist Nom Kinnear King, since they met fifteen years ago, who he says is an “endless source of inspiration for me.”

As a family, they take countless walks in the woodlands and countryside near their home in Norwich, having adventures and finding enchantment in “the stories that we make up for the kids and that they make up for us.” His art is about “trying to amplify the natural magic” that already surrounds them and remembering that “we are all still surrounded by a little magic, and though it’s difficult to see, it is there. You just have to look a little more closely sometimes.”

Find more of Oehlers’s work at [adamoehlersillustration.com](http://adamoehlersillustration.com) and on Instagram @adamoehlers.



# Looking for UNICORNS

BY BRIANA SAUSSY

I ate summer in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, in northern New Mexico. Aspens, standing tall and graceful on the steep mountainside, their white trunks with black striations gleaming brighter than white feathers under the full August moon. Just wait until a cloudless night, when the universe is open to view, and the Perseid meteor shower is in full swing, vivid enough that even the bright moonshine cannot drown it out. Coyotes yip and bark and laugh in the distance, as if enacting some long-lost Bacchanal rite, and the land smells delicious, as if every pore in the ground has been opened up by the late afternoon monsoon that comes crashing down and, just as quickly, vanishes. Sometimes, when the wind and the rain are just right, you can catch the scents of pinion, cedar, pine, juniper scrub, fir, chamisa, and sage, all at once. The trickle of a mountain stream, caused by snowmelt, gives a melodious backdrop against which the coyotes add their raucous chorus.

I am up in the mountains on this night with the man who will become my husband, but I don't know it at this point, nor does he. Right now, he is not even a boyfriend but a roommate who was game for watching for shooting stars on a mountain perch. This night will turn out to be our first date, but neither of us knows that either. I start to have a sense, a sense of something big moving over me, much like those thunderheads moved over the town earlier this afternoon, when he whispers into the cool night air a suggestion. *We should go look for unicorns, for surely if they can be found anywhere it would be here.* His eyes gleam mischievously, and we begin to walk up the mountain road limned in moonlight.

How does he know? I wonder. How does he know that unicorns have always held a special place in my heart? Ever since I was a very young child undergoing one major surgery and then another to repair the cleft pallet I was born with, a crystal unicorn, given to my mother when I was born, was one of my talismans. When I experienced my first serious heartbreak a few years before this fateful evening in the mountains, the crystal unicorn was found again and accompanied me through another arduous healing journey.

Healing is appropriate work for the unicorn. Legend tells that the touch of the creature's horn could heal any wound and draw out poison. Hildegard von Bingen, medieval nun and medicine woman, claimed that every part of the unicorn was magically protective and able to stave off both disease and injury. Moreover, the unicorn is the creature who dwells at the green heart of every forest. Hidden away and only seen by the pure

of heart and by virgins, the unicorn's presence is nevertheless felt throughout every wood and wild place. With them, such places are protected. But when the unicorns disappear, so do the forests. I find this is always interpreted incorrectly. Unicorns are never seen and therefore they don't exist is the common understanding. Rather, unicorns are never (or almost never) seen, because there aren't that many people who are pure of heart and sovereign enough to see them. The ones who do see such sights tend to share their miracles with keen discernment. And they don't disrupt forests. But those lacking heart and sovereignty, the knowledge of self (what "virgin" originally meant), are all too likely to look at a woodland and only see the going price of lumber and tract housing.

Walking up that moonlight road, stars above us, surrounded on all sides by white-trunked aspens with their gracious leafy crowns, I feel something move within me, literally feel it move

around my heart. It feels like I can't breathe, and I wonder if it's a heart attack for a moment, but just as quickly I disregard it. It is a shift in the inner constitution of my soul soil. Such a shift is so rare in life, you don't know it when it happens. This man I am walking next to has a specific key, and all the barrels and cylinders in the lockbox of my heart are rearranging themselves to match its

pattern perfectly. Our hands find each other in the moonlight, and we each think we catch a glimpse of magic.

I return home and find a few weeks later that my crystal unicorn is nowhere to be found. At first, I am concerned. Then I settle into fuller knowing. It is a talisman for deepest healing. It will venture off on its own when not needed, and when I need it again, I know that it will show up; this is the way these things work. Right now, my heart is healed and full, and even though I can't see what they are specifically, I know that there are adventures aplenty to come. This is what happens when you go looking for unicorns. You may or may not find them, but they definitely find you.

It is early March now. The sky is an unbelievable blue. The more we look at it, the deeper it becomes and there is not a cloud, not a single cloud in it. We are a few days away from the novel coronavirus being declared a pandemic, before stay-at-home orders, school closures, and market crashes. But we don't know that yet. The mountains are lit up by the high noon sun and in the foothills the winter snows are already beginning to melt. The higher up we go, the more snow we find. We are taking our two sons up the mountain, up to the place where we

*Healing is appropriate work for the unicorn. Legend tells that the touch of the creature's horn could heal any wound and draw out poison.*



first met, where our story began, where we looked and where we found. The youngest is not yet two and he has never seen snow. The oldest has, but it has been a long while. He is excited, jumping up and down in the backseat, chattering away like a magpie flitting from topic to topic.

We park and pile out of the vehicle. The snow in this spot has been heavily trod upon, but it is thick cream icing and there is plenty for the boys to scoop up and throw at each other. A little raven-haired girl on a bright green disk sled slides down the mountain and over the frosted creek, sliding perilously close to the winding road. She catches herself, whooping and hollering with joy. The boys hold my hands, the littlest one sinking deep into the drifts, the oldest holding on with warmth and strength. He has heard the story of how mommy and daddy fell in love, and he looks shyly out over the valley with the aspen trees standing naked and proud in this late winter afternoon. *Are there unicorns out there mommy? Are there really? I ruffle his corn-silk hair. You'll know only if you go looking for them.* A pause, and then: *But if I were a unicorn, there is nowhere else I would rather be.*

The moment breaks. He becomes interested in hiking further up the hill, but unused to icy terrain and new-colt clumsy, he needs help and takes on a wheedling tone as he calls my husband to assist.

I look over the land. Snow and ice are melting. Waters are running. In the stories, the unicorn touches its horn to the land and the waters rush forth, bringing with them life and

sustenance. As it happens, all this healthy, life-calling, topside activity wakes a ravenous dragon that is never satisfied until it has eaten and devoured everything. They are forever enemies, the unicorn and the dragon, locked in a mortal dance. In the weeks following I will watch them play out their mythic drama in real time. We all will. The dragon shows us, as all monsters do, the things we would rather not see: disease, panic, hoarding, cruelty, bluster, ignorance, faithlessness, and death. We would rather not see them, but we need to. We need to remember they are here too. We need to remember also because where the dragon is, you know the unicorn must be close by. The unicorn meets every ill with bedtime stories cast out into the world, seeds planted in the good earth, restaurants feeding the hungry, sidewalk chalk art on pavement, and ten thousand daily small kindnesses we never hear about but know happen, most especially in times of trauma and horror.

What will emerge from the duel between the unicorn and the dragon this time around is still not clear. But I think there will be far more pure hearts and sovereign people emerging from their homes and hollows when the time is right. I hope they go looking for unicorns. I'm sure the unicorns will find them. The adventure is only beginning.



Find more of Briana Saussy's work at [brianasaussy.com](http://brianasaussy.com).

A woman stands in a sunlit forest, her arms outstretched. She wears a crown of branches and a sleeveless, high-necked dress covered in intricate silver and black beadwork. In front of her is a table with a purple cloth, set with several dark, textured ceramic bowls and plates. The background is a dense forest of tall, thin trees.

# THE MESSENGERS BANQUET

by THE WONDERSMITH

*Photography by CRAIG CRIST and THE WONDERSMITH*



When I think of a “call to adventure,” I picture a mysterious invitation hidden in the woods inviting a lucky hiker to a whimsical dinner party, or perhaps a note tucked lovingly into a book offering a mysterious tea party in the woods. Those are the kinds of invitations to wonder that I like to deliver to the world as Miss Wondersmith. But the call I received was quite different.

I felt the sirens reverberate through me in the back of the ambulance as I struggled to focus on staying conscious. I could feel my heart pounding and the pain in my abdomen that had been crippling me for weeks clenching harder and harder. The next forty-eight hours were a blur of IVs, tests, and the fog of excruciating pain. When the doctors told me I needed emergency abdominal surgery, I surrendered. Surely nothing they could do to me would hurt more than the pain I was already in. My chronic illness is complex and confusing, which is why I completely missed the signs of a severely failing gallbladder and stage-three endometriosis; I was so used to the excruciating pain caused by other conditions that I assumed I was just having a particularly bad flare.

I was released from the hospital just in time to gingerly crawl into bed and spend Halloween having my own spooky night of pain, strange hallucinations of wild creatures dancing around my dreams. That marked the first in a long line of painful nights and a very slow recovery. As I sat in what felt like unending discomfort, I gazed longingly out my window at the changing leaves and felt forgotten, left behind. Mother Nature was continuing her dance through the seasons, whether I was able to join in or not. The isolation and captivity of illness filled me with grief. To cope, I eventually stopped struggling and allowed myself to sink further inward, where I had stores of memories of wild animal encounters. Those memories began to take form in my mind, as if each animal had some specific message to deliver. I started sketching, which soon gave way to sculpting, the familiarity of earth in my hands a deep comfort as I meticulously gave form to the animals that occupied my thoughts.

For months I worked on a series of matching ceramic pieces illustrating twelve of the animals that appeared so strongly to me when I needed company the most. I titled them my Messengers Series, and I poured my heart into them as I slowly recovered, picturing a fantastic banquet, Wondersmith-style, celebrating those same animals someday when I was finally better and could lead a large gathering once again. I sculpted from my sickbed, a tarp over the top of my blanket to keep clay out of my pajamas. Some days I could work only for an hour or two. Other days, not at all. And though I still grieved my disconnection from nature and from my friends, I fell into a profound softness, noticing

the beauties of isolation and feeling the presence of those wild creatures in my heart the whole time.

Finally, I started to feel well enough to move around a little bit. I could walk to the kitchen and back with only a little pain! I even felt well enough to sit outside some days, all bundled up against winter’s chill. I could see the light at the end of the tunnel, could imagine short springtime walks full of wonder and a glorious reunion with the natural spaces I missed so dearly. Just days later, ironically enough, the first coronavirus case was confirmed in the U.S. This time it wasn’t just my life that was put on hold; it was the entire world’s.

Sudden, forced isolation is painful. I could feel the palpable grief and fear of those around me (accompanied by plenty of my own as well). Those early days were excruciating. Now, months later, there is still so much that is unclear. Our futures have all gone a bit fuzzy. Where do we go from here?

Almost without exception, *everyone* has entered a space between, a liminal state. This space is unsettling. Many people are grieving the life they knew before this pandemic, knowing that nothing will be quite the same when it is over. Some are seeing this as an opportunity, a time to rebuild and redefine what is important to us as individuals and as a collective culture, or even as a planet. Others are grieving lost loved ones, taken far too soon. Emotions are all over

the board as we struggle to comprehend the depth of what is happening around us or *to* us. In those moments when you feel yourself growing harder, I beg of you: find the softness.

I picture the liquid brown pools that form the eyes on a newborn fawn, just learning to walk. I remember the awe of locking eyes with a raccoon as we both ate our breakfast on opposite sides of a tidepool. (My granola bar perplexed him as much as his agility in smashing shells with rocks astounded me.) I feel the hairs on the back of my neck prick up the same way they did when I learned to gracefully cede my huckleberry patch to a mama bear and her two curious cubs. There is magic that can happen in those moments of wild connection, where suddenly you cease to be anything at all, just a current of wilderness that flows through the creatures that surround you. When you are looking for comfort, listen to the birds and the trees and the beasts. *Listen*. Can you feel it? Can you feel the wilderness in your blood, in your lungs, in your heart?

Let it reclaim you. It’s okay to become a little bit quiet, a little bit feral, a little more interwoven with the wilderness that fills us, whether we can access it physically or not. Wherever you go and however you feel, it will always be there for you. If you open yourself up, the Messengers will come.

Visit *The Wondersmith* online at [thewondersmith.com](http://thewondersmith.com).

FOR MONTHS I WORKED ON A SERIES OF MATCHING CERAMIC PIECES ILLUSTRATING TWELVE OF THE ANIMALS THAT APPEARED SO STRONGLY TO ME WHEN I NEEDED COMPANY THE MOST.



**Raven and California Poppy:** “Sit with me softly,” intones the gentle poppy, soothing you with her soft presence. “I’ll be with you in grief as long as you need.” You watch the powerful raven cross between worlds, carrying the responsibility of precious cargo. He knows that death is part of living and that his mercurial presence helps keep those wheels spinning. Let his black feathers blanket you in comfort for a moment to remind you that endings can be the most beautiful beginnings.

**Deer and Mugwort:** Mugwort whispers, “Come away with me. Let us travel in the spaces between.” In the bleary softness of dreamland, the white stag joins you. “I’ll keep you safe here.” Inhale the grounding richness of the mugwort’s soft leaves and find that balance of careful focus and total release. Let the swirls of lucid dreaming carry you—you may be surprised at what you find.

**Golden Crowned Kinglet and Violets:** Despite his flashy feather do, golden crowned kinglet can be difficult to spot up high in the dense foliage where he hops about, serenading the woods with his echoing song. Little flashes of orange are the only clues to his true whereabouts. Like kinglet, sweet innocent violet has some secrets of her own. Underneath her fragrant purple flowers and green heart leaves, she has an entire other family of pearly blooms hidden underground, just in case. Both remind you: Things aren’t always what they seem.

**Bear and Huckleberry:** Bear is contentedly munching in a patch of huckleberries. When she sees you tentatively picking at the edges, she says, “Honey, if you’re hungry, eat!” Bear knows how important it is to trust the messages from her growing body, since they are what will allow her to survive a long hibernation. Huckleberry is honored to be part of her feasting. She knows her berries taste amazing and hopes you will release the shackles of shame to taste them for yourself. Sweet summertime berries come only once a year. Eat up!

**Evening Grosbeak and Yarrow:** Resilient yarrow has learned to put down roots wherever he may travel. That’s why evening grosbeak admires him so much as his feathered compatriots fly great distances and spread out over the landscape in search of tasty treats to forage. It’s so important to be adaptable, and sometimes what you need to thrive is a little exploration and a challenging new terrain.

**Pileated Woodpecker and Ferns:** Ferns whisper among themselves, speaking nostalgically in an ancient language about their first days on earth. They pause to listen as those mysterious words are returned by the pileated woodpecker. Yes, he and the ferns have a long history together. Though we are too young to know their words, the feeling of ancient magic runs in our veins too. Feel it.



**Raccoon and Passionflower:** Passionflower laughs at the endlessly curious raccoon as she watches him wash fruits and explore hollowed logs and stare into her own entrancing blooms. She knows the importance of curiosity too as she winds her vines upward in endless exploration, exploring nooks and crevices for her tendrils to take hold. “Where will your passionate curiosity lead you?” asks the raccoon as he scampers after her.

**Owl and Nettle:** As you move through the woods, a sharp sting on your leg conveys a clear message: Pay attention! Nettle doesn’t mean to hurt you (and in fact is ready to share many gifts with those that stay vigilant of her warnings). She knows the importance of keeping your senses tuned. Once she has your attention, she winks at Owl, who is constantly surveying the forest with glowing eyes and focused attention. Be present here, they both remind you. The forest holds such beautiful secrets to uncover.

**Wolf and Aspen:** The tall quaking aspen trees know the importance of community. Though they may look like individual beings, these sisters are all connected underground to one large organism, a huge family gathered together to form a forest of gold. The wolves gather here, too, howling together in harmony. How wonderful it is to be part of something so much larger than yourself.

**Chipmunk and Acorns:** “It’s always best to be prepared,” explains the chipmunk, busily gathering up acorns as fast as he can scurry. The ancient oak nods his approval with a smile, his laughter dislodging more acorns to fall. He knows the chipmunk will help his children by helping himself. Bounty is meant to be shared, after all, and lasting wealth comes from giving.

**Fox and Elderflower:** Elderflower’s fragrant blooms stand proudly at the edges between ecosystems, between worlds. Fox knows of her importance as a threshold garden as he, too, travels between meadow and forest, city and wilderness. Let Elderflower bewitch you with her ethereal blossoms: This is the gateway to adventure! Fox’s eyes sparkle with anticipation as he asks “are you ready to cross over into a new realm of exploration?” The tip of his white tail is a beacon as he deftly leaps across, pausing only for a moment to see if you will follow.

**Otter and St. John’s Wort:** With sparkling eyes, the otter’s mischievous glance needs no words to accompany it because the meaning is clear: Come play with me! Soon Saint-John’s Wort comes giggling along. Despite his serious name, he knows that life is too short not to have some fun, and there’s no better guide than the otter. Will you follow their example and join them under sweet sunlight? They would be so joyful to have you!





### GOATS IN TREES

In Morocco, on the road from Marrakech to Essaouira—and throughout the southwestern part of the country where Argan trees proliferate—goats will climb onto the spindly branches and munch on the trees' delectable nuts. We'd think this photo was fake if editor-in-chief Carolyn Turgeon hadn't seen it with her own eyeballs and snapped this unbelievable image.

# THE UNICORN HANDBOOK COVER SHOOT

BY CAROLYN TURGEON

Coming up with a cover image for *The Unicorn Handbook* posed a bit of a challenge. The two previous books in the series, *The Faerie Handbook* and *The Mermaid Handbook*, both featured wistful, ultra-romantic photos on the cover, the first by Kirsty Mitchell and second by Emma McEvoy. So *The Unicorn Handbook* needed a photo in the same vein. But despite popular belief, wistful ultra-romantic photographs of unicorns aren't so easy to come by. And what does a real unicorn look like, anyway?

The obvious choice seemed to be to find a big white horse, not to mention a fair and possibly virginal maiden, and photograph them together so that they could both occupy that alluring oval circle on the glimmering, foil-stamped cover. And then either Photoshop a horn on said magical beast or subject the horse to a temporary fashion accessory it might not appreciate. It was hard for me to imagine how we might pull off this shot without making it look like a still from an 1980s film or the cover of a *Trapper Keeper*. Maybe I underestimate the unending allure of the white horse, but this seemed less than ideal.

When I showed Elizabeth Sullivan, my editor at Harper Design, one of my favorite unicorn images of all time—Raphael's classic painting *Young Woman With a Unicorn*—she suggested re-creating *that* image for the cover. I thought that might be too untraditional—or, technically, too traditional—for them and was delighted by the suggestion. What could be more perfect, I thought, than re-creating a unicorn of old in a modern portrait?

Thus began the process of finding a baby goat up for the task. This involved a number of phone calls on my part to various Maryland farms, and then waiting for a new crop of baby goats to be born, and then settling on a heartbreaker named



Mario, who agreed to be our star model even though he was brown with black-and-white stripes. The unicorn in the Raphael painting is also brown, and Mario was astonishingly beautiful, so he seemed to be the right choice and also, as it happens, my one true love.

On the morning of the shoot, I drove to Mario's home, Emma's Daisyhill Farm in Glenelg, Maryland, and met photographer Steve Parke, model Sarah Bentman (who also appeared on the cover of our autumn 2018 *Outlander* issue), and hair and makeup artist Nikki Verdecchia. I was also armed with a goat-proof yet super glamorous gown from Jill Andrews.

Mario proved to be a bit of a diva, but that's to be expected when dealing with unicorns. There are about 5,000 outtakes of Mario squirming in Sarah's lap and occasionally trying to make out with her and

generally doing anything other than what we wanted him to do, but the law of averages demanded that among those thousands of outtakes, Mario would look appropriate in a few. And by appropriate I mean fabulous.

At that stage, there was some disagreement about what needed to be done to make Mario, through the wonders of Photoshop, more unicorn-esque. Some felt he should be more baby goat-ish, others more horse-ish. Some that he should stay more dark, others than he should gleam a more silky white. On the following page you can see Mario's gorgeous transformation from baby goat to unicorn, in a series of images by Steve Parke, as well as the resulting masterpiece.

A week after the shoot, I went back for goat yoga at the farm, though I accidentally didn't do any yoga and mostly just hung out with my new best friend.

What does Mario think of the final cover? Sadly, now that he's famous, he no longer returns our calls.



*The Making of a Unicorn*

BY STEVE PARKE



## A Q&A WITH THE UNICORN HANDBOOK AUTHOR (and *Enchanted Living* editor) CAROLYN TURGEON by Rona Berg

**Rona Berg:** Why did you decide to tackle unicorns next, after fairies and mermaids?

**Carolyn Turgeon:** My editor and I contemplated other creatures (who may or may not be the subject of future handbooks), but I was really excited to delve into unicorns for this third book in the Enchanted Library series. To me, fairies and mermaids and unicorns make the perfect magical trio, all three having inspired obsessions and myths and lore all over the world, pretty much in every place and in every era. And all three have their deep, dark traditional lore and their modern kitschy counterparts—a contrast I find especially fascinating. I mean, look at the *Lady and the Unicorn*, the unicorns of Leonardo, or the countless images of the sacred hunt, where the unicorn becomes a Christ figure symbolizing purity and suffering and unspeakable beauty. It's such a stunning contrast to your sparkly unicorn cupcakes and bedroom slippers and eyeshadows—that rainbow kitsch you can find everywhere now. So I'm pretty excited to have a whole magical set now with this third book, featuring so many of the writers and artists we see in *Enchanted Living*.

**RB:** If you had to describe the source of the unicorn's pull and power, what would it be?

**CT:** I think there are a lot of answers to this question, but in this issue devoted to magical beasts of all kinds, I'd have to say that the unicorn is about as magical and wonderful a beast as you can imagine, with its beautiful glimmering horn that can purify water and heal those who are ill, its extreme rarity, the idea that only a virgin can tame him. I mean who doesn't love the bad boy who has a soft spot only for you? The unicorn is wild and ferocious and magic and not of this world, but he'll bow before a virgin and fall asleep in her lap. Personally, some of the most enchanted moments of my life involved encounters with wild beasts: seeing humpback whales bubble-net feeding in Alaska, swimming with a wild manatee in Florida, hearing wolves howl at the moon at a sanctuary in Pennsylvania. One of my favorite moments in film is from an Italian movie, *Stanno Tutti Bene*, when an elk stands in the middle of a freeway, forcing all the cars to stop, and everyone gets out of their cars to stare in awe. I think that a magnificent wild beast resting its head in your lap in the



midst of the forest is the culmination of all that ancient, primal magic.

**RB:** Okay, let's talk about unicorn fashion and beauty. *The Unicorn Handbook* offers many irresistible DIY unicorn projects. What are some of your favorites and why?

**CT:** When I first imagined *The Unicorn Handbook* and how I might incorporate fashion and DIY and so on along with the old-time mythology and art, I immediately pictured that stunning image of artist Kerli wearing a unicorn circlet by Firefly Path. It's a sort of bejeweled headband with a white icicle Christmas ornament extending from the forehead. I don't know how many people can pull off the circlet look—I don't think I could!—but it can be so beautiful, especially on Kerli with her starlight

hair and pale skin. Sort of wild and pure at the same time, like the unicorn. I was very happy when JoEllen Elam Conway agreed to write a tutorial for the handbook. Even if you wouldn't wear a circlet every day (though, why not if you can pull it off?) there's always an occasion or two for which unicorn style is required.

**RB:** What do unicorns love to eat?

**CT:** Unicorns, like fashion models, are rarely depicted with food and almost never photographed eating, so I can only really conjecture. We do know, from *Alice in Wonderland*, that they are partial to plum cakes and so we included that recipe in the handbook and also here in this issue (see page 92).

In the book, the Wondersmith also offers a recipe for Unicorn Funfetti Treats, for both unicorn and human consumption, made of rolled oats, bananas, apple slices, and a bright pink beet juice icing. I also wanted to include a lot of lavender and violet since I imagine unicorns with a delicate appetite and fondness for purple, and I suspect they also might occasionally snack on leaves and moss and flowers and fruit and moonlight, all the pretty things you find in the forest.

*The Unicorn Handbook*, the follow-up to 2018's *The Mermaid Handbook* and 2017's *The Faerie Handbook*, was published by HarperCollins in June 2020 and is available at [enchantedlivingmag.com](http://enchantedlivingmag.com) and wherever books are sold.

## The Magical Cats of Fairy Tales

BY SARA CLETO AND BRITTANY WARMAN

Here in the Grove  
ART BY CHARLES VESS



## The Magical Cats of Fairy Tales

Sara Cleto and Brittany Warman

If you've ever spent any time with a cat—black, brown, tabby, white, calico, gray, orange, or otherwise—you know that, despite appearances, they are no ordinary domesticated pet. They are, rather, the exceptionally rare kind of magical beast who might deign to eat a treat or two from your outstretched hand and nuzzle in for a skritch on the top of their head but always remain a little fey.

The connections between magic and cats, and the idea that cats are never exactly what they seem, are long established. The cat was worshiped in ancient Egypt, feared as an agent of the devil in early Europe, and associated with a huge variety of folk beliefs, folk magics, and folktales. Perhaps the most famous folk association we have with the cat in the West is that of the witch's familiar, a creature who helps a witch with her magic potions, catches rides on her broomstick, and even sometimes allows her to take over his body in order to wreak particular mischief. But there is also the enormous Cat Sith of Celtic folklore, the fairy-like Norwegian forest cats of the goddess Freya, and the monstrous Yule Cat of Iceland. Some folk beliefs suggest that cats can see planes of existence we humans cannot, and that when you see a cat seemingly staring at nothing ... well, let's just say it might *not* be nothing.

Fairy tales provide a natural habitat for cats. In these stories, cats can be kind helpers, dastardly tricksters, or even both in the exact same tale! Here are a few of our very favorite fairy tales featuring wondrous and magical cats.

**“Puss in Boots” (France)** - While this story is actually much older than Charles Perrault's version, his is by far the most famous tale of the cat who helps his (or sometimes her) owner achieve wealth, glory, and a princess to boot. Puss is clever, resourceful, and determined to prove his worth in the world. The fact that he can talk, of course, makes him more than a bit magical!

**“The White Cat” (France)** - In this tale, by Madame D'Aulnoy, a princess is enchanted into the form of a beautiful white cat. As a cat, she rules over her feline subjects, even coordinating magnificent battles and engaging in delightfully witty banter. She skillfully wields her own magic: She effortlessly produces the impossible items her prince needs for his quests and places them inside tiny nut shells. Not all sweetness, however, she can also scratch the prince at a distance as a way of reminding him to remember and believe in her!

**“The King of the Cats” (England)** - In this charming tale from England, a man happens upon a glorious cat funeral. One of the cats participating comes forward and tells him, quite insistently, to tell someone with a strange name (sometimes Tom Tildrum) that someone with an equally strange name (sometimes Tim Toldrum) has died. The man is bewildered and recounts the tale to his wife when he gets home. Their own housecat suddenly jumps up and exclaims, “Then I am the king of the cats!” and rushes up the chimney never to be seen again. Clearly this family didn't realize that they were housing royalty!

**“Kisa the Cat” (Iceland)** - In this lovely tale from Iceland, a queen's beloved cat helps her gain a child of her own. Soon after the princess is born, however, the cat and her

kitten vanish. Many years later, Kisa, a beautiful cat, appears and tells the princess that she is her sister. The princess is frightened at first, and her handmaidens scare Kisa away, but her mother realizes that she must be the small kitten who vanished. The princess goes out into the woods to find Kisa again, only to be kidnapped by a giant! Kisa is able to rescue her, and she requests her only reward be that, when the princess is married, she may sleep at the foot of the bed. The morning after the princess's marriage, Kisa transforms into a beautiful girl. Both she and her mother had been enchanted to be cats until they could find and do a kind deed that had never been done before—which is obviously difficult, but nothing is quite impossible for cats!

**“Two Kind Cats” (Italy)** - In this Italian tale, a merchant sails to a land where everything has been destroyed by mice. The king of this land wishes to trade with the merchant but has nothing left. The merchant, who is a very kind man, goes to his ship and brings back his two beloved cats, Baccio and Bianca. When he lets them go, they quickly take care of the mouse problem, and the king is so grateful that he showers gifts upon the merchant. When the merchant gets back home, a rival merchant is jealous and wants the same gifts for himself. When he arrives in the distant land, he offers beautiful silks and the king thinks he has nothing to equal them. One of his wise men finally came up with the best gift they could offer him—two of Baccio and Bianca's kittens. The two cats had been the most wondrous gift they had ever received, and they wanted to give the rival merchant the same gift. As the rival merchant sails for home, he realizes that to receive joy you must bestow it on others and vows to learn to be more kind and generous. Ah, the magic of cats at work!

We recommend you read these tales out loud to your own cat—and remember to remind her that she's just as magical as these feline heroes!

Sara Cleto and Brittany Warman are folklorists, authors, and teachers. They both completed their PhDs in English and folklore at the Ohio State University in 2018. They are the co-founders of The Carterhaugh School of Folklore and the Fantastic, where they teach courses on fairy tales, creative writing, mythic adaptation, and more. Their award-winning poetry and fiction can be found in Uncanny Magazine, Apex Magazine, Enchanted Living, Liminality, Mythic Delirium, Goblin Fruit, and others. Find more at [carterhaughschool.com](http://carterhaughschool.com).



### THE CATS OF EGYPT

Photographer Kristin Reimer captures some of the stray and feral cats who populate the streets of Egypt in the photos above, in an homage to a time when cats were revered and worshipped. “Cats in modern Egypt may not hold the same status as their ancestors,” she says, “but they can still be found enjoying lives of pleasure.” The project spanned three trips and extended from Cairo to Alexandria to Siwa Oasis on the Egypt-Libya border to Bubastis, the ancient site of worship dedicated to the cat goddess Bast, where Reimer found “a single cat enjoying the digs.” Follow Kristin Reimer on Instagram @[photomuse\\_kristin](https://www.instagram.com/photomuse_kristin).

*From The Unicorn Handbook*

THE UNICORN'S  
*Looking-Glass Cake*



RECIPE AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIELLE PROHOM OLSON  
(A.K.A. GATHER VICTORIA)

THE UNICORN'S  
*Looking-Glass Cake*



Lewis Carroll's famous classics *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Alice Through the Looking-Glass: And What She Saw There* are filled with references to magical food. There is the Queen of Hearts's famous jam tart, Bread-and-Butterfly pudding, and the Looking-Glass cake that Alice serves to the Lion and the Unicorn.

In *Through the Looking Glass*, the Lion and the Unicorn take a break from fighting and settle down for a snack. The White King calls out, "Ten minutes allowed for refreshments!" and immediately trays of white and brown bread are produced. The Unicorn turns to the White King and demands, "Come, fetch out the plum-cake, old man! None of your brown bread for me!"

When the cake is produced, Alice tries to cut it up, but it

remains stubbornly whole. The Unicorn tells Alice that she does not know how to manage Looking-Glass cakes and instructs her to "carry it round first, and cut it up afterwards," after which it magically divides itself into pieces!

Plum cake in the 19th century had no plums (a Looking-Glass cake indeed) and was really a fancy fruit cake, usually served at weddings and special holidays like Christmas. For this plum cake, the recipe was adapted from the recipe found in the enchanting out-of-print gem *The Alice in Wonderland Cookbook: A Culinary Diversion*. While this is a classic recipe for old English plum cake, it now features more of the fruits and nuts that unicorns are reputed to love. These include apples and hazelnuts, the fruit of trees under which the unicorn is said to be found!

Makes one 8-inch round cake

*½ lb. soft unsalted butter*  
*½ lb. superfine sugar*  
*3 large eggs*  
*2¼ cups all-purpose flour*  
*2 teaspoons baking powder*  
*½ cup dried apple slices*  
*½ cup currants (or substitute golden raisins)*  
*½ cup mixed candied citrus peel*  
*6 tablespoons raisins*  
*4 tablespoons whole or halved hazelnuts*  
*4 tablespoons walnut pieces*  
*1 teaspoon ground cinnamon*  
*1 teaspoon ground allspice*  
*⅓ cup brandy*

**DIRECTIONS**

Preheat the oven to 300°F. Line a round 8-inch cake pan with parchment paper and set aside.

In a large bowl, cream together the butter and sugar until fluffy.

In a small bowl, beat together the eggs. Gradually whisk them into the creamed butter-sugar mixture.

In a medium bowl, sift together the flour and baking powder. Mix into the wet ingredients by degrees until dry and wet ingredients are incorporated.

Fold in the fruit, nuts, and spices. Add the brandy.

Transfer the batter to the prepared cake pan. Bake in the oven for 1 hour at 300°F. Reduce heat to 250°F and bake another two hours (or until a toothpick inserted into the center emerges clean).

Remove cake from oven and let cool in the pan on a wire rack.

When cool, turn out the cake, cut into slices, and pass around.



Follow Danielle Prohom Olson (a.k.a. Gather Victoria) on her blog at [gathervictoria.com](http://gathervictoria.com).



**"DONKEY"**  
by Vasilisa Koverzneva  
Instagram @vasilisk.v



## WRITING THE NIGHT SKY: AN INTERVIEW WITH SHVETA THAKRAR

by Grace Nuth  
Illustration by K.A.K. Lecky

**Enchanted Living:** Can you tell us a bit about the story of *Star Daughter*?

**Shveta Thakrar:** I sure can! Here's my elevator pitch: As Sheetal nears her 17th birthday, her buried stellar heritage starts to come out—and she accidentally burns her human father with her flame. Only pure star's blood can save him,

so she has to go on a quest to the heavenly realm to find her starry mother. Unfortunately, the only way to get that drop of blood is to win a celestial competition she never signed up for.

Also, I tried to fill the book with both shadow and light—lots and lots of (star)light.

**EL:** What was your inspiration for creating this book?

**ST:** Neil Gaiman's and Charles Vess's illustrated novel *Stardust!* I love that book, and it made me want to write a brown-girl version about a star whose mother was from a Hindu constellation. So I did.

**EL:** Can you tell us more about the mythology that permeates this book and your other work?

**ST:** I'm Hindu and grew up with so many amazing stories from the mythology, so once I realized I didn't see books using that, I knew I wanted to write them. Hindu dharma is an ancient faith (really, it's many smaller, regional faiths and traditions brought together under one umbrella), and the stories are so clever, complicated, interesting, and fun. People are heroes, people are villains, people are both at once ... and there's so very much to play with!

**EL:** Music plays an important part in this story. What role does music play in your own life, and how was it interpreting and describing the experience of music through words?

**ST:** I love music! I even (very occasionally) play the harp. I always have music on while writing, and when my husband and I drive anywhere, we listen to a CD—yes, a CD. We're old-school like that. It taps into moods and atmosphere for me, which unlocks the doors to my imagination.

The translation was interesting, and I wonder even now how successful I was. But I think in terms of imagery, so I tried to describe how it would look and feel and sound through that lens. Imagine golden and silver notes flying through the air!

**EL:** I've read many of your stories, and one thing I've noticed about your work is how you manage to take concepts and mythology that aren't as well known in the West as, say, fairy lore, and make them accessible for any reader, regardless of background. How do you do it?

**ST:** I think being a liminal kid—caught between cultures—helped me understand how to bridge the gap. So when I write about something, I have a pretty good intrinsic understanding of how to explain unfamiliar concepts in a way that doesn't look like explaining. For any writers reading this, the trick is to weave that information in through context clues and description the same way you'd do it with anything else.

**EL:** In your novel, the world of the celestial court and its sidereal song of the stars is so vivid and fully realized. How many of the details of the court came from Hindu mythology and how much was your imagination?

**ST:** It's definitely a hybrid. The gods, mythical beings, and *nakshatras* (constellations) mentioned are all straight from Hindu myth, but the description of Svargalok is all my invention, as is the starry court and its inhabitants.

**EL:** If you had to perform in front of a group of gods and goddesses, in a critically important performance, what would you play? And what beautiful garments would you wear?

**ST:** Oh, goodness! I suppose I would have to get better at playing harp *really* fast, and I'd put on an Indian outfit I adored as a child—but in an adult size, obviously: rich purple chaniya choli with silver ribbon detail. And of course, lots of ornate Indian jewelry and a bejeweled bindi.

**EL:** Sheetal is such a very relatable protagonist, and her struggles are universal. But your side characters also are wonderfully realized and easy to love. Even your “bad guys” in the story have their own motivations that are flawed but understandable. How do you strike the balance in how much detail to give even the smaller characters? And will we see any of them reappear in any future works? I could imagine any of them having their own novels or short stories.

**ST:** This a wonderful compliment! Thank you. Honestly, I had to work at it and keep in mind that everyone is the protagonist in their own tale, so I asked myself what would make them complicated enough to work as a character. No one is one-dimensional, even if they aren't central to the main character's story.

As for whether you'll see the characters pop up again, I can't promise anything, but I also won't say it's off the table. How's *that* for ambiguous?

**EL:** Your books are filled with lush prose and vivid imagery. I have to imagine you live quite an enchanted life. What are some ways you bring enchantment into your day-to-day experience?

**ST:** I read lots of fantasy, I listen to evocative music, I decorate my living space in a domythic fashion, I wear clothes and accessories that evoke the feeling of being in a fairy story. I have a rich imagination and love to feed it by wandering into strange little shops full of colorful things. Above all, I surround myself with like-minded people, people who also long for the magical and the numinous, who understand that not everything can be perceived by the five senses. We need community, particularly in a world that has forgotten the power of living an enchanted life.

**EL:** What do you hope to accomplish with this book? Do you have an ideal reader, or an ideal way one might react to reading it?

**ST:** I want to help people who haven't been represented in fantasy feel seen, and I want those who have been to appreciate the beauty in other cultures. My ideal reader is my child self, the little girl who didn't get books like these but should have, and I definitely write to celebrate desi readers. But beyond all that, I hope *Star Daughter* speaks to everyone who reads it, desi or not.

★ COMING OUT FROM HARPERTEEN IN AUGUST ★

## AN EXCERPT FROM STAR DAUGHTER

by Shveta Thakrar

Sheetal got up and moved to the window. She stared at the great dark sky that arced over everything like an infinite ocean, taking in the uncountable coruscating stars, and wished as hard as she could. Her palms pressed against the glass, she wished and wished, fiery desires that left her lips as soft song—a call to the sidereal melody.

She swam in the night's glittering waves, feeling them flow in and out of her with each breath, nourishing her. It felt so good to sing for herself, with no one listening, no one judging.

As she watched, beyond the window, the faces of the stars came into focus. Most were from outside the royal court, the commoners, if such a thing could be said of stars, but the court was present, too. Sheetal picked out Nani, Nana, Charumati, Padmini, Kaushal, and even Rati.

She pored over their features, all glorious, all serene. She took in the way they flared against the heavens, both person and ball of flame.

If she reached out, she could almost touch them ...

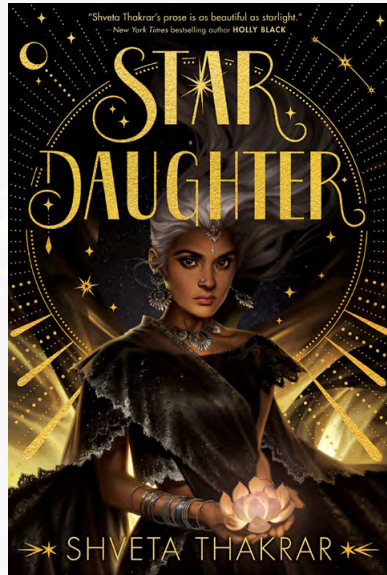
Their song came to her gradually, silence ripening into something more. She could be among them, could ascend to her rightful place in the constellation. In the sky. In the cosmos, where everything was born of the play of shine and shadow, fire and frost.

Here, there was no pain, no disappointment. No estranged boyfriends, no dying dads. No self-doubt.

*"Join us."*

In that moment of dream and dance, Sheetal wanted nothing more.

She lifted a hand to the heavens. Someone, she wasn't sure who, reached out in return, and once their fingers



met, Sheetal stepped through a door dark as night. Her mortal eyes fluttered shut, and when she opened them again, she was the sky.

No, that was wrong. She *wore* the sky, had wrapped it about her like shadow-stained silk. She danced with it, within it, spinning softly, so softly, a sway here, a slow turn there. She whirled and floated, twirled and dipped, changed places with partners, and changed again.

She breathed her family, sang their story. Their flesh was her flesh, their skin her skin.

Here, there was no question of being liked, only of belonging.

The light, the song, laced itself through her, knitting her to the

nakshatra. With luminescent eyes, she saw the spirits of the stars passing over the sky, blazing across millennia. She saw the beginning and the end, and she swirled past everything in between.

Stars were born; stars died. A sun blinked out; a black hole loomed. Below, in the mortal realm, a queen conquered; a fool felled a king. An artist painted; an assassin slew. How fast, how brief, these mortal lives. A twinkle of a star's lifespan.

Yet they smoldered with a fire all their own, these humans. They raged with passion and creativity, nurtured by the dust of the stars, the glistening marrow of silver bones.

Humans needed stars, Sheetal thought as she watched her mother in orbit, and stars needed humans. They were all part of the great drama, the slow and continuous spiral of creation and destruction, and they all played their roles.



*Shveta Thakrar, a part-time nagini, draws on her heritage, her experience growing up with two cultures, and her love of myth to spin stories about spider silk and shadows, magic and marauders, and courageous girls illuminated by dancing rainbow flames. Learn more at [shvetathakrar.com](http://shvetathakrar.com).*

*Grace Nuth is a writer, artist, and model living in central Ohio with her husband, black cats, and a garden full of fairies. She is also co-author of The Faerie Handbook. To follow her projects, please visit [gracenuth.com](http://gracenuth.com).*

*K.A.K. Lecky's illustrations can be found at [kacleckyillustration.com](http://kacleckyillustration.com).*



Photographer Katerina Plotnikova captured this magical scene at Zoo Studio Kovcheg near Moscow, with model Nikki Evans and these ultra-stylish fawns. See more of Plotnikova's work on Instagram @\_katerinaplotnikova\_ (and on page 52 of this issue).

# AT HOME: THE ANIMAL KINGDOM

by Rona Berg

There is no better way to bring the enchantment of the natural world into your home environment than with a revolving motif of magical beasts: unicorn cushions and carvings, winged lynx cushions, serpent- and dragon-festooned wallpaper, and more. These fantastic designs of enchanting and alluring mythical animals that symbolize strength and power add beauty and an aura of mystery to any home. Drawing the admiration of mere mortals through the ages, they have kept us awestruck—and still do!



## Lynx With Wings

Emma J. Shipley is a graphic artist who draws each of her designs by hand and transfers them onto beautiful scarves, cushions, and wallpaper. She is inspired by mythology, travel, and the unpredictable beauty of the natural world. The Lynx Cushion (shown above, on the couch) shows a pair of winged lynx with fantastical peacock tails, flying through the sky against a backdrop of stars and foliage. The design, in a range of beautiful colors, is printed onto a silk-cotton-blend fabric with a scalloped-edge border. [emmajshipley.com](http://emmajshipley.com)

## Unicorn Planter

The Charleston Gardens Fantasy Unicorn Planter is a thing of beauty, and you will want this beautiful creature standing guard in your yard. (There is also a majestic swan version.) Lightweight and weather-resistant, each piece is cast from sand and stone, reinforced with fiberglass, and treated to create the look of old stone. The colorations may vary, as each piece is treated individually. Made in the U.S. [charlestongardens.com](http://charlestongardens.com)

## Zodiac Cushions

The House of Hackney Triplicity Medium Velvet Cushion Fire cushions are perfect for bringing enchantment to any room. They are made in England from rich cotton velvet and filled with British wool, with elegant tassels and a Persian-carpet style backing. The Triplicity Fire cushions feature the signs of the Zodiac that make up the fire element—Aries, Sagittarius, and Leo. And to make it even harder to resist these beauties, for every order placed, House of Hackney makes a donation to a Friends of the Earth fund, intended to double the U.K. tree cover by 2045. Planting trees is one of the most effective ways to mitigate climate change, and trees provide shelter for wildlife. [houseofhackney.com](http://houseofhackney.com)

## Birch Wood Cats and Owls

J. Drew Silvers's father was a carpenter, and he took to woodworking. Most of his pieces are made from reclaimed birch barn wood. As the artist says, "I find beauty in repurposing and bringing new life back to the materials that some would otherwise consider useless." His wood-hewn animal shelves—we love the puckish Petite Brown Cat Wood Carving and Crystal Shelf and the Brown Owl-Shaped Wood Carving and Crystal Shelf, both carved from birch—can be laid flat as an organizer or tray, but each piece is ready to hang on the wall and comes with pre-installed hanging hardware. [jdrewsilvers.com](http://jdrewsilvers.com)

## Caspian Unicorn

The Caspian Wallpaper series, featuring unicorns and regal British lions in a backdrop of glorious flora, is inspired by the world of C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*. In a range of rich and somewhat monochromatic palettes—the silver version adds a bit of shimmer to the room, while rose gold warms up any space—the pattern is exotic, elegant, and utterly enchanting. [emmajshipley.com](http://emmajshipley.com)

## Serpents, Dragons, Unicorns

Decorated with unicorns, serpents, dragons, and more, the House of Hackney Cosmos Wallpaper Midnight looks modern, yet features antique constellation mapping that creates an alluring vintage effect. Hand-painted illustrations of creatures represent all twelve astrological signs, as well as Pegasus, Canis Major, and Ursa Minor. The wallpaper is eco-friendly as well as beautiful, using PVC-free materials and created to make a minimal environmental impact at every stage of manufacturing. [houseofhackney.com](http://houseofhackney.com)



Follow Rona Berg on Instagram @ronaberg

## HOW TO SCULPT YOUR OWN Baby Dragon

A TUTORIAL  
BY TATHARIEL



Dragons! These magical creatures hold a special place in our enchanted hearts. The glorious winged beasts are a personal favorite of mine, and I simply love incorporating them into my art. Follow along with me as I guide you through this sculpting tutorial, step by step. May you create and breathe life into many a magical creature with the power of your limitless imagination and mystical fingertips.



## LET'S GET STARTED!

Tools you will need for creating this polymer-clay baby dragon:

- Polymer clay (I used FIMO Classic) in the colors of your liking
- Sculpting tools and brushes
- Acrylic paints and varnish
- Aluminum foil
- Glass eyes
- Smooth, clean surface (I like sculpting on tiles)

Note:

You can use any type of clay, and don't worry if you find yourself short of sculpting tools—go for a hunt for some in your kitchen drawers if you need to. You can get far with a toothpick, needles, or a butter knife. My favorite tool is actually a broken seam ripper from my grandmother's sewing kit (the white, small one on the left of the picture). Let loose and improvise!

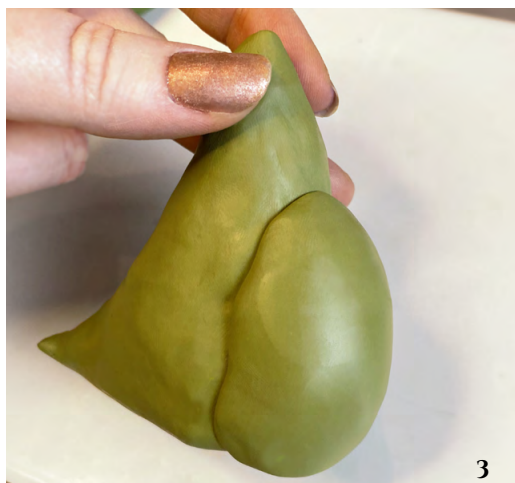


**STEP 1:** Start by shaping an armature for your baby dragon out of tinfoil. This will save clay and help your creation to cure completely in the oven.

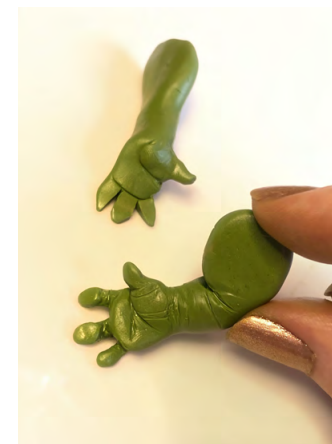


**STEP 2:** Add clay to the armature. Cover it completely and smooth it out.

**STEP 3:** Block out and start shaping the baby dragon. Here you can see me adding a belly and smoothing out the edges. At this point I'm also adding more clay to the chest and back area.



**STEP 4:** It's time to make tiny fingers and toes! Start by making four clay balls and rolling them into cylinders. Make them a little larger at one end, to create the shoulders and thighs. The smaller end will become the hands or feet. Flatten the smaller end into a paddle shape and use a blade to cut little segments. Now pinch, pull, and shape them into fingers and toes. For the thumbs, I made two tiny cones, flattened out the largest side, and made a slit through it. Attach this to the sides of the hands and smooth out.



**STEP 5:** For the teeth and claws, you simply roll tiny white clay balls and make them pointy at each end. Cut them in half to make a matching pair. Bake them in the oven (follow the instruction of the clay you're using). I always make way more than I need in lots of different sizes and shapes to keep my options open.



**STEP 6:** Sculpt two horns and two wing spikes (from the same white clay). Cure in the oven together with the teeth and claws. Let them cool while you keep sculpting.

Take the now cured claws and press them down into each finger and toe. If you like, you can make cuticles from tiny rolls of clay to cover up and rough the edges.

**STEP 7:** Back spikes! Make a long flat shape and smooth out the edges. Create a wiggly crisscross pattern (keep the biggest shapes centered), and smooth out with a brush. (You can use a bit of baby oil to make it look softer.) Now make little spikes and press them down to the center of this back piece. Place smaller spikes near the end. This is a fun way to add dramatic texture to your piece.



**STEP 8:** It's time to sculpt the head. Make a ball out of aluminum foil, just like you did for the body. Cover it with clay and create a little snout. Grab another piece of clay and shape the jaw. Now add the eyes and slightly cover the top and bottom part of them with flat rolls of clay. Smooth and shape everything out.



**STEP 9:** Add the legs, arms, and head to the body and smooth out. At this point I'm also playing around with a bit of texture by dotting a ball tool on the surface. Make sure the anatomy of your baby dragon is where you want it before you start detailing.

**STEP 10:** Attach the spiky back piece and sculpt it into place. Try merging it into the body by adding texture to both the back and the body of your creation.

**STEP 11:** Make little "wing and horn holes." I use a ball tool for this.



**STEP 12:** Give your baby dragon some cute fangs and horns! Simply press the already cured, white pieces into the clay. You can play around with the look, and give it as many or few teeth as you wish. For the horns I added a ball of clay for each one of the "horn holes." Push the horns in place, and shape the clay around them.



**STEP 13:** Wings! Make a pair of two L-shaped "wing bones" like in the picture, and cut out two matching "bat wings" that you attach to the "bone." Shape and texture as you wish! Press the wing spikes in place.

**STEP 14:** Detail your dragon and make the all the little finishing touches before you send your baby dragon off to the oven to be cured into a solid piece.

**STEP 15:** Paint and varnish your beautiful enchanted creature!



Thank you for following along with me on this artsy adventure. I hope you had as much fun as I did! May you continue to fill this wondrous world with many magical creations and share the joy of making them! —Marita Tathariel

Follow Tathariel on Instagram @tathariel.



## FROM OUR READERS

This month we asked our readers:  
Tell us about your favorite magical beast! (Domestic,  
farm, woodland, or mythical—they're all fair game!)



Illustrations © Guinevere von Sneeden

My favorite "beast" is the selkie. Growing up near the ocean I was always enchanted by the seals playing gracefully in the waves or flopping on the sand. When I learned there was a creature that could turn into a seal, I was smitten immediately.

—Anetka Bonacorso

Swans are, without a doubt, my creatures. In the spiritual tradition to which I belong, swans have a very deep and rich lore and importance. But I also just love them for what they are. True, they can be highly defensive if they perceive a threat, but to see them with their mates and their families is just beautiful. I love swans in every world. And Aengus Aisling is the most beautiful of the swan- maiden stories, in my opinion.

—Niamh Swan

I actually think all nature is magical—I don't have a favorite. Everything has a story and a wonder. From frog song at twilight to the sound of hummingbird wings and the small footprints of fox journeys across the snow, it's all magical to me.

—Sunshine Livingstone

My favorite magical beast is the wee hedgehog. Every time you see one with that whimsical face you just have to smile. They're so cuddly looking, so cute, it brings joy the same way a laughing baby brings. We need smiles and happiness even in wee doses. Hedgehogs bring big doses.

—Karen

Firebird! Symbols of happiness and luck in Russian mythology.

—@katiarichard

Amphibians of all kinds are completely magical to me (metamorphosis! living on land and in water!), but toads have a special place in my heart. They are the perfect mixture of mundane and magical, sensitive and hardy, domestic and wild. They delight me at every turn.

—Juli Anna J Herndon

Hippocampus is definitely my favorite, not just for being the perfect companion for a mermaid but they also are the exact expression of beauty and elegance.

—Kassandra Mauren

I love many magical beasts, but my true favorite is the tiger. It has a majestic combination of raw power, stealth, elegance, and beauty but is also able to display playful cuteness and affection. And tigers are fire-themed, with their golden-orange coats and smoke-black stripes, which is always a plus.

—Francisco Vargas

My absolute favorite mythical beast is the griffin, though I also adore the thunderbird from *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them!*

—@nympharah

Ravens. They talk to each other, hold wakes for their dead, and know how to find magical objects in the mundane. (Everyday objects become tools and more.)

—@magicklamp

I have an affinity for the jackalope: half jackrabbit, with antelope antlers. They're said to roam the plains of the U.S. I love antelope and deer, elk, anything with antlers, and bunnies are my everything animal. They're realm walkers, bouncing from the fairy realm to the human realm. I love them so.

—Rhiannon Rose Willowfae

Gliding around under the moon and stars with outstretched wings and bright eyes—owls are definitely at the top of my favorite magical beast list.

—Baily Bianchi

For as long as I can remember I have loved dragons. Growing up I was always seeing them flying in cloud formations and hoping they could fly me to school so I didn't have to take the bus.

—Venita Evens

From Author Maria Rosestone

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