

# FAERIE MAGAZINE

*Celebrating the Extraordinary*

ISSUE N°

27

summer 2014

*turn your life into your own*  
**FAIRY TALE**

**DIY HOMES**  
*stunning & sustainable*

*a midsummer night's*  
**GARDEN PARTY**  
*+ how to throw your own!*

*it's road trip season! follow us on a*  
**SCOTTISH**  
*faerie trail!*

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To see further examples of Su's work, please visit her website [Sublackwell.co.uk](http://Sublackwell.co.uk). Items lovingly created and shipped directly from Su Blackwell's studio in London.

## looking for more **FAERIE?**

*A few months back,* on a rainy springtime afternoon, we asked our Facebook followers what they were looking forward to most about summer. We loved the passionate, dream-laden responses: fireflies, picnics, watermelon, drive-in movies, flip flops, barbecues, swimming holes, fruit plucked straight from trees and gardens. Not to mention the opportunity to put on a shell crown and head for the water (as our mermaidly cover model did). In these pages we tried to reflect that fairy tale sense of magic and freedom that summer conjures.

Regular columnist Lord Whimsy has some lush suggestions for a proper faerie road trip or two, while Laren Stover details her Scottish “faerie trail”—in which she trekked from hill to knoll to ruin, searching for (and finding) real-world magic. Cordwood pioneer Richard Flatau shares the stories of people who live in magical, natural spaces built with their own hands (we’re now imagining our own *Faerie Magazine* “Mermaid Cottage” offices). And Veronica Varlow has suggestions for how to turn your own life into a fairy tale.

Which is really what *Faerie Magazine* is about: real-world, natural beauty, the wonders of art and the places we imagine through it. Writing—and living—your own fairy tale.

And on that note, we hope your summer is full of magic and faerie road trips and adventures. Use our emails below and tell us all about it!

XOXO,

*Carolyn, Kim, and Anna*

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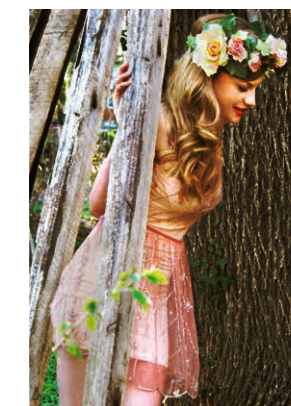
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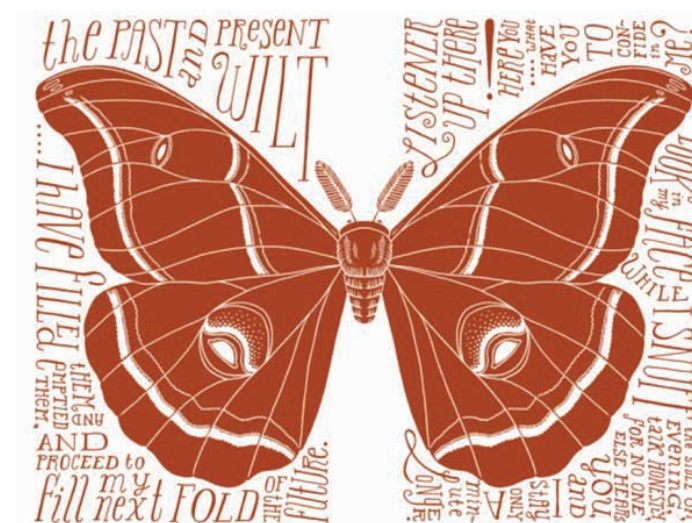
*New photography from Katerina Plotnikova!*

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On the [FAERIEMAG.COM](http://FAERIEMAG.COM) BLOG, take a look at Lord Whimsy's new tome Whitman Illuminated: Song of Myself

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# FAERY TEA CAKES!

by Courtney Petteruti

The perfect treat to serve at your garden party!

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups spelt flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp sea salt
- ½ cup soft unsalted butter
- 1 cup organic raw sugar
- 3 eggs (room temp)
- ½ tsp almond extract
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ½ cup sour cream
- ½ cup cream or milk
- Lemon zest
- ½ tsp nutmeg

## FROSTING

- 1 cup unsalted butter (softened at room temp)
- 3 cups confectioners sugar
- 2 ½ tbs rose water
- 1 tbs whipping cream
- Dash of sea salt
- ½ tsp vanilla extract
- 1 whole vanilla bean

## TEA CAKES

- 1 Combine the flour, baking powder, and salt. In a separate bowl combine the butter and sugar until the mixture is smooth. Add in eggs one at a time until they're incorporated. Then add in the almond and vanilla extract.
- 2 Slowly mix in the dry ingredients while alternating with cream or milk, and then add sour cream, lemon zest, and nutmeg.
- 3 Preheat oven to 350 and place batter in a greased muffin tin and bake for 20-24 minutes or until golden. (Use a toothpick or knife to check for doneness. If it comes out clean, your cakes are done!)
- 4 Place on a wire rack to cool.

## ROSE BUTTERCREAM FROSTING

- 1 Whip butter until smooth and slowly incorporate the confectioners sugar, while alternating adding in rose water and cream.
- 2 Add the vanilla extract and a dash of salt. Cut a vanilla bean in half, the slide a knife down the bean lengthwise to collect the tiny vanilla beans to add to frosting (they add a delightful touch to the buttercream).
- 3 Then choose any variety of edible flowers (be sure no pesticides have been used) and decorate the tops of the cakes. You can also dip the flowers in super fine sugar to add a sweet touch.
- 4 Enjoy!

Courtney Petteruti is a freelance artist and traveler. She lives in southern California, where she regularly bakes for friends and family with the aid of the Wee Folk.



*“Nature has always been my biggest inspiration source when creating,”*

says Istanbul-based artist Derya Aksoy. “I’m constantly amazed by every bit of it in my daily life. Paying attention to the details of a flower or studying how the veins on a bug’s wing are constructed ... it’s like meditation to me. On the other hand, we as souls always change the way nature does, and the butterflies to me symbolize personal transformation so beautifully. And then, of course, I love their extraordinary textures, patterns, and colors—and turning all these elements into pieces of art that women can wear and feel beautiful.”

To make her butterfly designs, Derya transfers real images of butterflies onto organza fabric. Learn and see more at [Etsy.com/people/jewelera](http://Etsy.com/people/jewelera) or [Faeriemag.com](http://Faeriemag.com).



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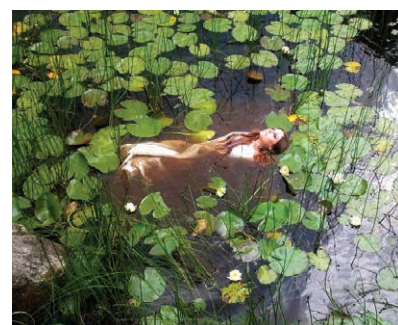
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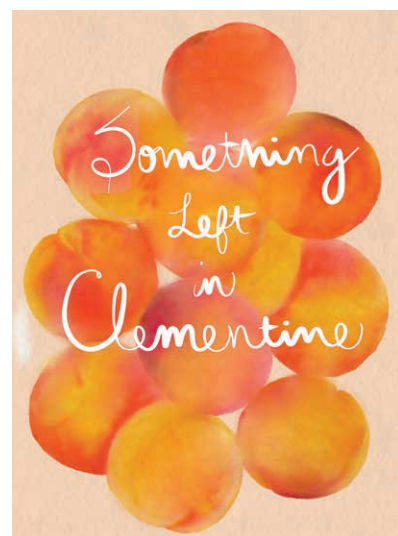
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## On Our Cover

Emily Soto & Fiori Couture

These images from fashion photographer Emily Soto and designer/stylist Susan Lafica of Fiori Couture celebrate that most fantastical and elusive of summer creatures, the mermaid. (The same team created the sumptuous “Hidden in the Flowers” fairy fashion spread in our last issue.)

Soto was excited about this shoot because she’s “inspired by fairy tales, romantics, and magical stories. It was fun making the fantasy come to life with [model] Sarina.” And Lafica has always loved the ocean and its myths. “As a young child I collected seashells and living in California that’s easy. But I’ve also collected them from Bora Bora, Hawaii, and the shores of Sicily.” She mixed these found sea treasures with crystals and vintage jewels to fashion the elaborate crown pictured here. The body suit in the photos was a gift to Lafica by her friend Shelly Merte-Whelchel. The suit originally belonged to Shelly’s aunt, a showgirl in Las Vegas in the 1960s. “She wore it while performing with Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, and the Rat Pack Show. I was honored when she gave it to me and I hope I’ve done it justice by styling it in a way that would make her proud. This is my way of paying homage to the ultimate show girl!”

Lafica calls this shoot “The Birth of Noleimire” and says it’s the beginning of a series of designer collections she’ll be creating. She’s currently collaborating on a big underwater project with photographer Brenda Stumpf and model Virginia Hankins (both featured in our spring issue as well) that will be spectacular—“my biggest production ever!”

Learn more about Soto at [Emilysoto.com](http://Emilysoto.com) and more about Fiori Couture at [Lafioricouture.com](http://Lafioricouture.com).

PHOTOGRAPHER *Emily Soto* STYLIST/DESIGNER *Susan Lafica at Fiori Couture*  
MODEL *Sarina Nash at Stars Model Management*  
LOCATION PROVIDED BY *Forever Young Parties and Events*

# Secrets to Making the Perfect Mermaid Crown:

by Susan Lafica



## Step #1

Start with a headband, a round heavy ribbon, or any other kind of round base.



## Step #2

Gather together all the lovely shells you've found (whether at the beach or the craft store). You can also add sea glass in beautiful shades of white, green, and blue.



## Step #3

Arrange your shells and jewelry on a large piece of paper to see how they'll look once you attach them to the base. You might want to sketch out your designs beforehand, or just create as you go!

*Step #4*

As the final touch, use strips of iridescent tulle or sheer ribbon to resemble seaweed.



*There are no rules.  
Just have fun as you create, and enjoy  
your magical crown fit for a mermaid.*

*A*h! Summer—sweet summer—is here at last, with its bright mornings and clouds of butterflies and bees over lurid blooms!

The scent of thawed earth and warm rains fills our heads while the luscious juices of watermelons and tomatoes run down our elbows. The drowsy afternoon heat only serves to sweeten the gentle torpor of this glorious season.

For many reasons, Summer is considered a time of ease, but for many of us it is also the time for that time-honored tradition, the road trip. There are destinations, near and far, that ignite the imaginations of faerie lovers, and I have visited many places that fit this description.

Here are three summer road trip destinations I've visited, and that I'd recommend to you seekers of all things faerie:



**Vizcaya, Miami, Florida** (Faerie factor 3):

This eccentric estate outside of Miami is a subtropical arcadia. The lush palms and flame-red bromeliads sear the eye with an intense array of colors not found elsewhere in the US, but it's the sculptures and architectural follies that steal the show. Most if not all of the slightly misshapen classical statuary—fauns, fish, gods—are carved from fossilized coral. Even the steps and balustrades are riddled with organic patterns left by undersea creatures that lived millions of years ago. The fantastical character of the statuary and urns at Vizcaya brings to mind the works of Aubrey Beardsley or even Edward Gorey. Grottoes abound in this garden, which doubtlessly serve as refuges from the blistering midday sun. The Spanish-style mansion and the Venetian-style mockup of a doge's barge in the harbor are charming, but the most bewitching nook in this garden is the cool, dim cave that is completely covered in elaborate patterns made of seashells, and features at its center a trickling fountain. This is a nymphaeum: an abode made for nymphs. Such a rarity in the Western Hemisphere! If you go, close your eyes, and stay very quiet and still. You're in a nymph's house, after all. Be a good guest.

**Victorian fernery, Morris Arboretum, Philadelphia** (Faerie factor 4): This is the last free-standing Victorian fernery in North America.

Located in the leafy, affluent Philadelphia neighborhood of Chestnut Hill, it is half-submerged in a south-facing hillside, ringed by century-old stonework and covered by a glass dome that resembles a turtle's shell. Within the dome of fogged glass is the glow of a lush, green oasis. This subterranean palace is alive with ferns of countless forms that hail from every part of the globe: plants of almost imperceptible delicacy grow on the walls of a small manmade cave, majestic tropical ferns flank the small footbridge over the pond, and a rare fern species from southeast Asia that shimmers a metallic blue are but a few of its wonders. At the heart of this balmy, pipe-ringed oasis is a black pool whose hissing water flows into a cistern covered in mosses. Any faeries in this place are of a deeply cultured, urbane sort, so dress accordingly.

**Hoh Rainforest, Olympic National Park, Washington** (Faerie Factor 5):

The grandeur of this place cannot be overstated. This is possibly the most salubrious spot in North America for faeries: it is secluded, silent, mild, and covered in mists. The Hoh River that runs from nearby Mount Olympus is blue from the glacial runoff, but the nearby streams are crystal clear and filled with ribbons of aquatic plants that sway in the current, emitting a green of such intense luminosity that I have never found its equal anywhere else on Earth. This valley is home to the world-famous Hall of Mosses, which rivals most cathedrals in its magnificence. Giant golden slugs and lacy, pink fungi can be found on the spongy emerald blankets that cover the ancient trunks of thousand-year-old trees, all of which lie below the ragged canopy of epiphytic mosses that soar above one's head. It is said that the greatest—and probably the most powerful—fairy ring on Earth is found in this valley. No one has ever returned from such expeditions, so it's best to admire this place in silent awe, and leave it as you found it. To witness such otherworldly beauty first-hand is sufficient magic for us mortals. A final note: this place will transform you. Do not go there if you wish to remain the person you've always been. You've been warned!

Enjoy your summer, my friends.

*Whimsy's latest tome is Whitman Illuminated: Song of Myself, which he wrote out and illustrated by hand. Learn more at [Lordwhimsy.com](http://Lordwhimsy.com).*



Susanne Dahle (the muse in Savi's music video, "Hang On," filmed in a beautiful mystic forest called Trollskogen or The Forest Of Trolls) refreshes her inner water spirit in a hidden part of a lake in a place called Skaar in Karmoy, Norway.

# A Midsummer Day's Beauty

by Laren Stover

Everyone knows that faeries like to party. Dancing all night is de rigueur on full moons, solstices, equinoxes, etc. But despite being wild and mischievous, faeries are nature spirits—the gods and goddesses of flowers, lakes, earth, grass, fire, wind, trees, and sea. They belong to what I call the society of impossible beauty—a kind of utopia with a higher set of ideals, a beauty of heart and spirit that's virtually impossible for mere mortals to achieve ... a beauty that's both supernatural and natural. What faeries achieve is succinctly explained by W.Y. Evans-Wentz in his book, *Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries*: "The natural beauty without awakens the divine beauty within."

Natural beauty means no chemicals, no toxins, and it goes without saying it means no animal testing either. No faerie would ever dream of wearing lipstick made of those tiny red crushed cochineal bugs or artificial dyes. They've been known to wash their hair in rivers, streams, and lakes, and sea faeries find seawater to be quite cleansing and even softening. When faeries do use shampoo it will not contain sodium lauryl sulfate, ammonium lauryl sulfate, dimethicone, or other creepy chemicals. Berries are suitable for staining lips. And it never hurts to know about the magical powers of the botanicals you're using to cleanse, nourish, soothe, and refresh.

Here are some of the most faerie-exultant products I love for summer.

## AVENA BOTANICALS

They say sniffing calendula flowers induces psychic dreams, mugwort strengthens prophetic powers and assists with astral travelling, and linden flowers empower love spells. But there are more reasons to love the ingredients in this luxurious **Fairy Flower Crème** than boosting your psychic prowess. The flowers and leaves, all organic and wildcrafted, are healing and rejuvenating to the skin. It's made in small batches to ensure freshness and it's free of any chemicals or preservatives. Avena's organic gardens produce seventy percent of the herbs they use. It's absolutely dreamy in lavender (my fave for visualizations) but they say even the unscented crème is delightfully reminiscent of its gardens.

## BOTTEGA ORGANICA

Zen-like and gently spoken, Dr. Paolo Manfredi, co-founder of this natural, anti-aging brand, grows the olives he uses for the oil in this one-hundred-percent organic skincare collection on his family's land in Italy. Designed in partnership with a world-renowned geneticist, all the botanical formulas contain "Natural Inhibitors of Senescence," scientifically proven to prolong the youthful state of human cells. Naturally, there's a magical aromatherapy benefit. Dr. Manfredi explains: "If you do things close to earth and close to nature, the mystical will come automatically." Feed your lips with **Soothing Lip Balm with St. John's wort**, a sensual formula infused with the medicinal herb famous for banishing gloomy moods and for breaking any negative faerie enchantments. And in the **After Sun Oil**, calming, visualization-enhancing lavender combines with wonder herbs St. John's wort and peppermint to soothe the effects of the sun. I can't make any promises but peppermint, used before sleeping, can offer glimpses of the future in dreams, and the ancient Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder said it excites love.

## KAT BURKI RAW BEAUTY

Get your faerie queen on with this **Beauty Elixir** that's got colloidal silver (a powerful healing agent and antimicrobial), "devo" (structured electrolyzed water), skin-repairing MSM, and skin-nourishing vita-nutrients provided by organic camu camu berries, grapefruit seed oil, raspberry seed oil, and carrot oil. Spray it directly onto your face for a refreshing beauty burst. My two faves: Rose Peony (healing, romantic, and guards against mischievous imps) and Cucumber (the ultimate cooling factor). Kat Burki says the Elixir boosts the powers of your entire skincare routine and is also powerful enough to be used on its own.



## 100% PURE

This line of carefully formulated skincare and fruit-pigmented cosmetics is toxin free and strives to use only pure, organic ingredients. It's vegetarian and gluten free. The non-waxy formula (jojoba oil, cocoa butter, shea butter, and beeswax) of its long-lasting **Fruit Pigmented Lip Creamsticks** won't feather or bleed—and the colors are made from fourteen kinds of berries, including cherry, plum, blackberry, pomegranate, and acai. Organic **Lavender Seafoam Facial Cleanser** combines lavender with sea-harvested kelp, sea lettuce, spirulina, French green sea clay, herbs, and fruity antioxidants, making this the perfect foamy cleanser for summer. And the **Kelp & Mint Volumizing Shampoo** is full of faerie botanicals to help thicken and fortify hair and leave you feeling heady.

## BALANCED GURU

"Beauty is reflected in how balanced our bodies and our minds are," say the company's founders. How true! Using certified organic ingredients, sustainable packaging, and aromatherapy to restore physical and emotional balance, this brand is faerie-pleasing in every way. Mix the **Antioxidant Facial Masque** (a powder blend of vitamins and antioxidant-rich berries, rosemary leaf, clove, and cinnamon) with spring or filtered water or honey, and you might be tempted to eat it. Cinnamon raises spiritual vibrations and increases our ability to tap into our psychic senses and clove heightens visualizations, which means this is an excellent mask to wear while doing a visualizing meditation—and when you're done ... glowing skin.

## HONEY GIRL ORGANICS

It would be hard to find a more fae-nourishing hair-loving spritz-on treatment for after sea and sun than the **Serum Hair Treat**—the secret to silken mermaid hair. Honey Girl says all its products not only nourish, moisturize, and heal with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, but they're all edible. Honey Girl is a grass-roots brand in Hawaii (land of sea sirens) started by a holistic beekeeper who whipped up the first batch of skin crème for his wife in their kitchen (she saw how soft his hands were from working with bee byproducts). I love its short and sweet ingredient list: organic extra virgin olive oil, purified water, beeswax with pollen and propolis, raw pupukea, and essential oils.



ILLUSTRATED BY Anna Vorgul and Shelagh Cully

Rosetta woke up suddenly. Her back hurt. She turned her head to look out the bedroom window. Dry heat lightning was hitting, firecracker hot, somewhere in the desert. The baby inside her, seven months along, was calm. Thank goodness. If it started kicking, she knew she wouldn't get any more rest that night. She closed her eyes and let the whirl of the air conditioner lull her. Tomorrow was grocery day. She sluggishly revised the list in her head. Not Ritz crackers, saltines. Orange juice without the pulp in it this time. Suddenly she sat up.

She sniffed the air a few times, jerking her head around in the darkness, desperate to figure out where it was coming from.

That unmistakable scent of peaches.

Her breath quickened. The scent was overpowering. Sticky-sweet and tangy, the odor got into her nose, her mouth, then went down into her stomach and woke up the baby.

She brought her legs over the side of the bed and put her hands on her stomach, comforting the child. Having this baby at thirty-eight was a miracle to her. And the closer the time came for the baby to enter this world, the more she wondered if she should be this happy. She began to wonder, if she were just one ounce happier, would she fall over the edge into the deep dark blue? Maybe it was her fear of being too happy that brought the scent, like a piece of her old life breaking off and floating back to her. Beside her, Ralph stirred, taking a deep breath through his nose and letting the air snore out of his mouth. Rosetta blinked until she was fully awake. She stood, a little unsteady,



and went to the bathroom. The peach scent followed her like an insecure child, clinging to her nightgown. She walked back to the bedroom and stood in front of the window, watching the distant dry heat storm. The scent wouldn't go away. In fact, the more she waited it out, the stronger it got. It was going to wake Ralph soon. She had to admit that she half-expected this. It wasn't a coincidence. She'd been writing the check for the electric bill that afternoon when she'd noticed the date. It was two months until the baby's due date, and two months exactly until the fifteen-year anniversary of her leaving Virginia. She'd had an old life, one before she came to Phoenix almost fifteen years ago. Before she'd left the hospital in Virginia she'd been given shock treatments. She'd agreed to them. She'd wanted to be shocked. She'd wanted to be startled, like someone pinching her arm to rouse her from a long, uncomfortable nap. But they'd told her, told her before the treatments, that she might have some memory loss. She'd liked that. It had been convenient. She hadn't wanted to remember.

She flared her nostrils at how strong the peach scent was becoming. "Okay, okay, okay, okay," she whispered, resting her forehead against the cool glass of the window.

It was how she'd been planning to take her life, back in her old life, back in Clementine, Virginia. She'd begun eating peaches, bushels of them. She'd been married back then. Ralph knew

about that. She'd told him she had married a man she didn't love. Which was true. But she didn't tell him that Mr. Minerva, her former husband, had loved her. Too much. Too overwhelming, peach-smelling much. She'd married him when she was twenty-three. She'd been just out of college and teaching high school biology. Mr. Minerva had been fifty-seven. He'd smothered her with attention. He'd called her his grace. She used to think he'd worshiped God through her, he'd been that thankful to have her.

She'd never hated Mr. Minerva, but that summer she'd gone from liking him to feeling nothing at all. All her life, decisions had been made for her. She should teach, because she'd never get a job on her own without a degree. She should marry Mr. Minerva, because no one else would have her. She should put all her savings into Mr. Minerva's account, because he would be retiring before her. She'd grown numb from her lack of participation in her own life. When she'd started eating a lot of peaches, Mr. Minerva humored her. He'd tried to cheer her up by bringing home a half dozen from a roadside

fruit stand on Clementine Highway every day. Rosetta would eat all of them—two that night and four the next day. She'd meticulously save all the peach pits in the cracked wooden cookie jar that was on top of the refrigerator. Funny how well she could remember that cookie jar now. The cookie jar had belonged to Mr. Minerva's grandmother and he'd loved it. She'd thought it was dreadful, painted black with one huge orange flower.

She'd planned to end her life on a Sunday. She'd refused to go to church all summer so it wouldn't seem unusual to Mr. Minerva. He'd said he understood





completely. She needed her rest. God forgives, he'd said. Don't you worry. When he went to church the Sunday she'd picked, she'd taken down the cookie jar and emptied the peach pits into the blender. They'd smelled bittersweet, dank. They'd looked like big thumbprints and she thought, how appropriate. She was going to grind all those identities down and consume them. Then maybe, for a few seconds at least, she would have an identity all her own. She hated to remember that part. She had settled on peaches because she didn't like apples. She'd learned in one of her classes at college that apple seeds naturally had trace amounts of cyanide in them, so her hope was that peach pits would have some sort of harm to them, too. And they were bigger, which was better.

The whole process of taking her life took longer than she'd thought it would. It had been difficult to grind up all those peach pits, and they made such an unappetizing, wet-sawdusty mess that she mixed in some vanilla yogurt just so it would all go down.

She'd poured the concoction into one of the beer mugs she and Mr. Minerva had received as a wedding gift from Rosetta's sister Tish. They'd never used the mugs before. Mr. Minerva didn't drink.

She'd been sitting at the kitchen counter, staring at the full glass, when Mr. Minerva came home. He'd tried to be cheery. He'd asked her what she had made for herself. She remembered watching in horror as he'd picked up the glass, eyed the contents, then smelled. Is this some newfangled health drink, he'd asked. Something to make you feel better?

For one mesmerizing moment, she'd considered letting him drink it, telling him she'd made it for him. Maybe she wasn't the problem with her life. Maybe he was. Maybe with Mr. Minerva gone, her head would stop spinning. Then she would be happy.

But when he'd lifted the glass to take a sip, she'd screamed. She'd stood and backed away, up against the refrigerator, as if he'd forced her back. But he hadn't moved. He'd figured it out. He'd dropped the glass and it shattered. The mess had covered his shoes and slid into the cuffs of his trousers. She'd kept screaming and Mr. Minerva simply watched her. She'd screamed until her throat closed up on her and no more sound would come out, so she just stood there with her mouth open.

That's when Mr. Minerva had checked her into an institution in Richmond, away from the scandal she'd stirred up in her small hometown of Clementine. She'd let Mr. Minerva do what he wanted.

She hadn't cared. But those people at the institution, they'd talked to her. They'd asked her things that no one had ever asked her before. Did she love her husband? No. Was she happy? No. Did she know who she really was? No. answer, which meant there was hope. She

hadn't been allowed to see Mr. Minerva for almost two weeks. Then hadn't wanted to see him. Her sister had come to the hospital once, but Rosetta hadn't wanted to see her, either. They hadn't been close. Tish was nearly nineteen years older, and had given Rosetta beer mugs as a wedding gift, knowing she was marrying a devout man.

The people at the institution kept asking her, Are you sure? Are you sure you want to divorce him? Rosetta had answered, Yes. Just Yes. No explanation why, no trying to convince them. They knew she wasn't crazy.

Mr. Minerva had tried so hard. And she knew she'd hurt him, hurt him deep down in that place where his spirit lived. Now she was living in her comfortable split-level house in Phoenix, married to a telephone repairman whom she loved and couldn't explain why. Why did she love Ralph and not Mr. Minerva? Her pregnancy had come as such a surprise to them both. Ralph was so happy. And so was she. She was happy.

But was Mr. Minerva happy? Did she not deserve this? It was two months until the fifteen-year anniversary of her leaving Virginia, right after she checked out of the hospital. She hadn't contacted anyone since she left. She had chased them from her thoughts. She'd forgotten about everyone until now.

She looked over her shoulder at Ralph. Why was the scent not waking him up? The baby kicked.

Rosetta left the bedroom and walked down the hall in the darkness. She padded down the stairs, the peach scent surrounding her and trailing behind her like the tail of a comet. She was afraid to look behind her for fear it might even be giving off its own light.

She stopped by the kitchen and grabbed the portable telephone, then went to the den. She turned on the small lamp at the desk where she wrote checks for the bills. She sat down and looked at the phone. She hesitated, then punched the numbers and waited.

Five rings. Six. Seven. Eight. "Hello?" a voice, soft and thick, answered.

Rosetta closed her eyes. God, it had been so long.

"Hello?" The voice said again, a little more awake, a little irritated now. Rosetta put her hand on her stomach. She even loved her stretch marks.

"Tish?"

"Who is this?"

"Tish?" she said again. "This is Rosetta."

Silence. "Rosetta? Are you kidding me? This is Rosetta?"

"It's me, Tish."

"Wh ... um. I thought ... " Tish took a deep breath. There was some fumbling around in the background, like she was turning on a light or putting on her glasses.

"Are you okay?"

"I'm fine." Her voice shook and she took a moment to swallow. "Tell me how you are."

"Well, I'm fine, too." She laughed a little, an unsure laugh. "God, I can't believe this. Let's see, well, I took early retirement from the county. And I have a granddaughter. Mindy, remember her? She had a daughter last month."

"I remember Mindy. She looked just like you." Rosetta remembered her sister's pregnancies, all five of them. Tish was good at being pregnant. Tish used to say so all the time. Her face was so pretty when she was pregnant, her figure tall and womanly. She didn't care for being a parent, but she loved being pregnant. "I'm pregnant, Tish," Rosetta said.

"Are you in trouble?" Tish asked in a low, gossipy voice. "Do you need money, Rose?"

"No, Tish. Nothing like that," she said quickly. Those insecure feelings she had as a child welled up in her again, just enough for her to taste them, to remember. Rose will never be as pretty as Tish, their mother used to say. She just wasn't made for good things. "I'm married. It's ... a good thing."

Tish paused. Rosetta could hear her breathing. "You left so suddenly. None of us ever thought we'd hear from you again," she finally said. "I remember your voice now. Where are you? Are you close?"

"No. I'm out west." Rosetta bit her lip. "How are things in Clementine?"

"Not much changes here," Tish said dryly, settling into a conversational voice, like Rosetta called at three in the morning all the time.

"How is Mr. Minerva?"

She could have sworn she heard the flick of a lighter, like Tish was now smoking a cigarette. "Well, now, he doesn't live in Clementine anymore, Rose."

Had she ruined him? Could he not face the world, the church, ever again after what she did? "Where is he?"

"He lives in Richmond. He married a nurse from that hospital you were in. Her name is Evelyn or Eleanor, or something like that. Last I heard they had three kids." Rosetta sat very still for a long time. "Are you still there, Rose?"

She thought she heard something upstairs. "I have to go now."

"You're saying goodbye?" Tish asked with surprise.

"Yes."

Tish sighed as if to say *how typical*. "All right, then. I can't stop you. Never could. I'd hoped you'd gotten sane, Rose. I guess you haven't."

Rosetta started to say something, to tell her how wrong she was, to explain what a good place she was in ... but instead she slowly took the phone away from her ear and hung up.

She cut off the light and sat in the darkness for a while. The baby was calm again. She tilted her head back and cried, letting go of this guilt she had carried around for so long, built up until it had finally begun to emanate from her.



There was nothing wrong with being happy. She blew her nose in the kitchen before she went back to bed. She crawled in next to Ralph. She was just settling in when he sat up on his elbows.

"Are you all right?" he asked, his voice slow with sleep.

"I'm fine, honey," Rosetta said, reaching up to touch his chest. "I just remembered something I left behind, that's all. Turns out, I don't need it. It's okay."

"Would you like a glass of water?"

"No, thank you. But could you open the window, just a crack?"

The air conditioner was on and the heat was record high outside, but Ralph was already sliding out of bed.

He opened the window, then tucked himself back in next to her. He reached over and rubbed her belly like he did every night. Sometimes he did it in his sleep.

"Something smells fruity. Fruit salad," he said sleepily. There was a long pause. She thought he had drifted off. But then he spoke again, his speech slurred.

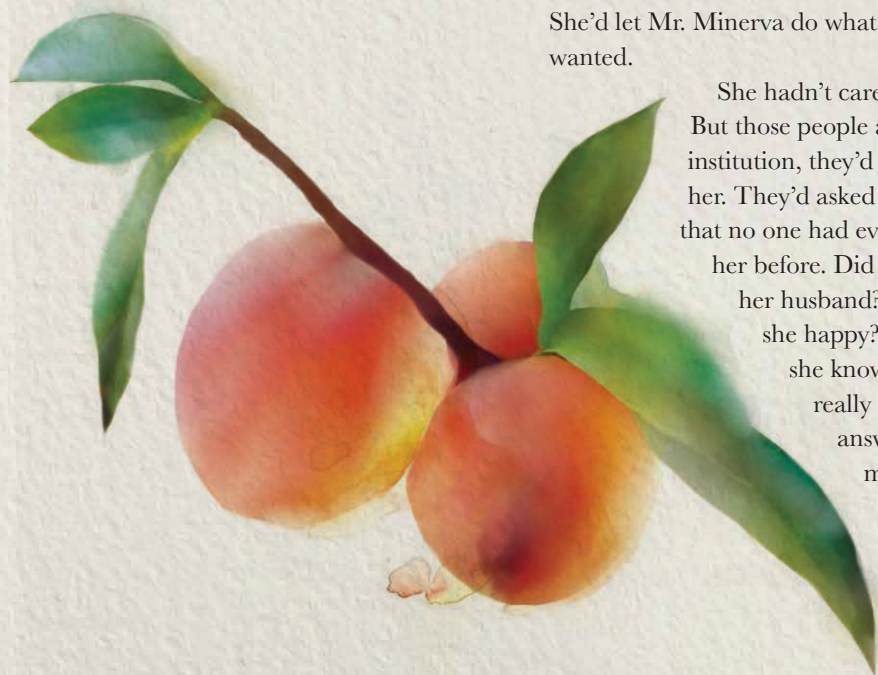
"Nope, it's gone. I'm dreaming, Rosetta. I'm dreaming."

The peach scent in the room was fading.

Rosetta smiled and took a deep breath of the warm, dry air coming in through the open window.

There was nothing wrong.

*Sarah Addison Allen is the New York Times bestselling author of several novels, including Garden Spells and her latest, Lost Lake. Learn more at Sarahaddisonallen.com.*





# *A Glass of Goodness:*

BOTTLING the TASTE of FOREST and FIELD

*by Nan K. Chase and  
DeNeice C. Guest*

**F**or many years, while our children were still small, enjoying the fruits of summer meant running through open fields in search of wild berries, or stopping at roadside farm stands for picked-this-morning goodness. Summer's fruit meant sticky faces and hands from the juice of strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, peaches, and grapes.

Smiles and contentment all around, for nothing tastes better, nothing feels better than Earth's still-warm nectar. Nothing compares to those precious memories.

But with our children now grown, the two of us have spent the last few years making a new set of memories based on Earth's bounty plucked from dewy meadows, sun-kissed fields, and deep within the forest (and from our home gardens, too, of course). Today our passion is gathering the harvest of every season to create juices, wines, dusky meads, luscious syrups, and even pure herb and flower teas.

Life after children threw us together in Asheville, North Carolina, an enchanted city nestled in the bosom of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Here, where wildflowers bloom almost all year long and the crystalline sound of falling water sparkles in the air, we learned to harness every mouthwatering bit of Nature for our daily enjoyment. We found ourselves living in the wild heart of the land, connecting with the woodland spirits and surrounded by possibilities.

One of the joys of making new friends is learning about shared interests and skills. We quickly discovered that we both loved to raise our own fruits, vegetables, flowers, and herbs; we also liked discovering food and drink possibilities in abandoned orchards or along city streets or hiking through the woods. We both loved the same old-fashioned domestic jobs, too: canning, winemaking, dehydrating, and cooking in general. And we had years and years of experience between us. What better way to celebrate a friendship than by creating something new and unique together, something useful to others. Together, we developed a guide to help gardeners and cooks everywhere begin erasing the industrial fingerprint from their diets, as we were doing. How about a garden cookbook?

Our professional backgrounds couldn't have been more divergent: DeNeice a scientist specializing in earth science, the study of the planet, and Nan a no-nonsense investigative reporter with a nose for corruption and graft. But these unusual strengths meshed perfectly when it came time for us to write a garden cookbook. A scientific approach was needed to make the recipes work consistently (and deliciously), and writing discipline was necessary to organize the material and make it flow.

Both of us had loads of our own canned goods on hand but we were tired of jelly and jam. Both of us, coincidentally, had begun to experiment with making fruit juices, wines, meads, and ciders both hard and sweet. And both of us had a thing for crabapples, those marvelously tasty little fruits that most gardeners and

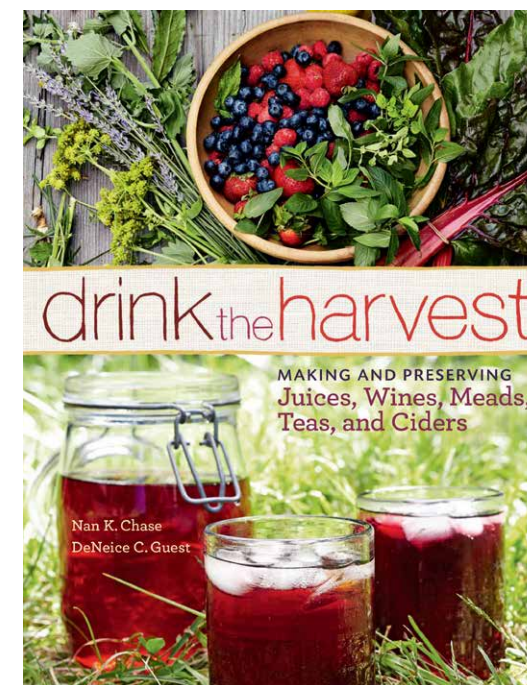
cooks overlook. So we started working on crabapple recipes—pasteurized juice and hard cider, mainly—and the project grew from there to become *Drink the Harvest: Making and Preserving Juices, Wines, Meads, Teas, and Ciders*. Along the way we discovered other treasures, like prickly pear cactus and birch sap.

Juices are so versatile, good for everything from making healthy kids' drinks to signature cocktails. And juices do even more in the kitchen. They are the basis of myriad other delicacies; once you have made a batch of strawberry juice you can save it for the winter by canning or freezing, or you make dreamy wines and meads (that's just wine made with honey instead of sugar to make fermentation go), or you can boil some of it down for syrups to use in cooking or at the table.

Juices, at least those made at home, allow a cook to control the amount of sugar, salt, and seasonings used. The result is the true flavor of the ingredients, not masked by unknown additives. Juices allow a gardener to eliminate waste from the yard, to gather up all of a bumper harvest and preserve the bounty. We abhor seeing fallen fruit rotting on the ground ... and instead visualize that unrealized harvest as bottles of beverages lined up on a shelf.

Most of all we love making beverages for the joy of connecting to the Earth-Mother and keeping some of summer's essence for the rest of the year. Come join us!

*Nan K. Chase is the author of Eat Your Yard! and DeNeice C. Guest is a scientist who has been brewing up garden beverages for decades. They both live in Asheville, North Carolina. Their new book, Drink the Harvest, serves up dozens of ideas for bottling Nature's bounty.*



### SAY IT WITH HERBS

Here are some summertime herbs that add a bit of magic when combined with your homemade beverages:

**MINT** cools runaway summer passions and clarifies your point of view in any situation. Add a sprig of tender mint leaves to a glass of peach or other juice and inhale deeply.

**LEMON BALM**, as the name suggests, is a balm for the heart and eases the pain of love. Bruise the leaves of this bright green herb before dropping them into a glass of dark berry juice, and enjoy the lemon aroma.

**CHAMOMILE** soothes a busy brain and helps you focus on a new job at hand. A pot of chamomile tea can be sweetened with any fresh garden syrup.

**PARSLEY** has strong magical and medicinal powers to heal sore bones and joints and to infuse vitality. Use this flavorful herb to make a tasty garden wine.

**BASIL** fosters prosperity and abundance. Combine basil leaves with any fresh fruit juice for a feeling of well-being.

# BERRY JUICE

**PREP TIME:** ABOUT 2 HOURS,  
PLUS OVERNIGHT FOR JUICE TO SETTLE, PLUS CANNING  
**MAKES:** APPROXIMATELY 4 QUARTS

Berry Juice is thick and delicious. This recipe works well with blackberries, raspberries, gooseberries, blueberries, serviceberries, currants, and other ripe berries, either alone or in combination. Use Berry Juice as a pure juice drink or in a smoothie, as a flavor base for carbonated beverages, as a mixer for alcoholic drinks, as a topping for ice cream or other desserts, as a main ingredient in ices and frozen treats, as a milk substitute with cereal, or as an ingredient in baking recipes (to color icing, for instance). Berry Juice is also a super health drink with cancer-fighting properties as well as vitamin C and various trace elements, dietary fiber, and compounds that boost heart health, all bound up in a gorgeous package. To keep the flavor lively and the color true, add both ascorbic acid and a little sugar during the canning process. Although berries can stain clothes and kitchen towels, they are otherwise easy to work with because of their small size and relatively clean growth habit off the ground.

- 1 Put the berries into a large nonreactive stockpot, and then add filtered water to barely cover the fruit. Bring the contents to a boil.
- 2 Reduce the heat and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring and mashing the berries as they cook, or use an immersion blender to grind the berries. Stir occasionally to avoid sticking, and skim off any foam.
- 3 Line a large colander with two layers of cheesecloth dampened with filtered water. Set the colander over a large bowl, making sure that the colander sits well above the bottom of the bowl so that the juice can flow freely.
- 4 Slowly pour the hot berries into the colander.
- 5 Leave the juice to strain for at least 1 hour. Do not squeeze or force the berries through the cheesecloth, or the juice will become cloudy.
- 6 Refrigerate the juice overnight in a clean covered container to let solids settle to the bottom. The juice will clear. For canning, ladle the juice out and discard the solids.

This juice can be used immediately or preserved by canning.

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 flat (12 pints) berries (about 8 pounds), rinsed and picked over
- Filtered water, enough to cover berries
- Ascorbic acid,  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon per quart of juice (for canning)
- Sugar, 2–4 tablespoons per quart of juice (optional, for canning)

## BEYOND JUICE

Once you have made juice from summer fruits, it only takes a few cups of your bounty to go a new level of enjoyment: fruit and herb syrups. It's simple to create syrups that burst with taste highlights. In a saucepan, combine 1-2 cups of fruit juice with an equal amount of sugar, add sprigs of your favorite edible herb, and bring to a boil, stirring until the sugar dissolves. Simmer for 5 minutes, then strain and bottle in a decorative swing-top bottle.

Serving suggestions: glaze for roasted meats or vegetables, cocktail mixer, topping for waffles or pancakes or ice cream, flavoring for smoothie, child's soft drink.



## STRAWBERRY JUICE

**PREP TIME:** ABOUT 2 HOURS, PLUS CANNING

**MAKES:** APPROXIMATELY 3 QUARTS

Strawberry Juice makes a special treat because the flavor takes an unexpected turn when the berries cook. They lose their cloying sweetness and become a subtle and satisfying drink or mixer. Kids and adults alike enjoy this bright crimson juice. The flavor is actually a little tart, like cherry juice. There's so much liquid inside fresh strawberries that converting the berries to juice doesn't take as long as with other fruit. To keep the color bright and the flavor lively, be sure to add ascorbic acid and a little sugar during the canning process. After the juice has been canned in a boiling-water bath, it really pops, and the flavor is wonderful. It thickens slightly into a lovely, jewel-like liquid that is best diluted in a glass with ice and club soda or water.

**1** Put the strawberries into a large nonreactive stockpot, and then add filtered water to barely cover the fruit. Bring the contents to a boil.

**2** Reduce the heat and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring and mashing or blending the berries as they cook. Stir occasionally to avoid sticking, and skim off any foam.

**3** Line a large colander with two layers of cheesecloth that have been dampened with filtered water. Set the colander over a large bowl, making sure that the colander sits well above the bottom of the bowl so the juice can flow freely.

**4** Slowly pour the hot strawberry liquid into the cheesecloth-lined colander.

**5** Let the juice strain for at least 1 hour. Do not squeeze or force the strawberries through the cheesecloth, or the juice will become cloudy.

This juice can be used immediately or preserved by canning.

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 quarts fresh strawberries (8–10 pounds), hulled
- Filtered water
- Ascorbic acid,  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon per quart of juice (for canning)
- Sugar, 2–4 tablespoons per quart of juice (optional, for canning)

### CANNING NOTES

Measure the juice by carefully ladling it off the sediments. Pour the measured juice into a nonreactive stockpot. Simmer juice at 190°F for 5 minutes. Remove from heat. Add sugar, if using (2–4 tablespoons per quart), and stir to dissolve. Add ascorbic acid to sterilized jars ( $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon per quart). Fill the jars with liquid, leaving  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch of headspace. Apply sterilized lids and bands, being careful not to over-tighten. Process both pint and quart jars in boiling water bath for 15 minutes, adjusting for altitude.

# PEACH JUICE

**PREP TIME:** ABOUT 2 HOURS, PLUS OVERNIGHT  
FOR JUICE TO SETTLE, PLUS CANNING  
**MAKES:** APPROXIMATELY 4 QUARTS

Nothing beats a fresh peach, and we don't pretend that our Peach Juice comes close to that flavor sensation. But you can capture some of summer's enjoyment for the whole year when you make this beverage from the ripe local harvest. Peach Juice works well as a mixer with other fruit juices, too. More important, Peach Juice can be used to extend richer juices like blackberry or blueberry, stretching the berry yield. Peach Juice by itself, while good, doesn't have the pizzazz of Berry Juice, but the available quantities are often so much greater. Be sure to use only perfectly ripe, unblemished fruit for this juice. It may be necessary to cut out some spots, but you can nibble on those overripe bits as you work, or sprinkle them on top of ice cream and drizzle with chocolate sauce for a quick treat.

**IMPORTANT:** Processed peaches tend to darken once they are exposed to oxygen, and the flavor can change. So it is imperative to add ascorbic acid during the canning process to stop any discoloration and deterioration in flavor.

- 1 Put the peaches into a large nonreactive stockpot, and then add filtered water to barely cover the fruit. Bring the contents to a boil.
- 2 Reduce the heat and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring and mashing or blending the peaches as they cook. Stir occasionally to avoid sticking, and skim off any foam.
- 3 Line a large colander with two layers of cheesecloth that have been dampened with filtered water. Set the colander over a large bowl, making sure that the colander sits well above the bottom of the bowl so that the juice can flow freely.
- 4 Slowly pour the hot peaches into the colander. Be careful not to splash the hot liquid.
- 5 Leave the juice to strain for 24 hours. Do not squeeze or force the peaches through the cheesecloth, or the juice will contain extra pulp.
- 6 Refrigerate the juice overnight to let solids settle to the bottom. The juice will clear somewhat, but it remains slightly cloudy due to the pectin haze that forms.

This juice can be used immediately or preserved by canning.

RECIPES EXCERPTED FROM Drink the Harvest ©Nan K. Chase and DeNeice C. Guest



## INGREDIENTS

- 12–15 pounds of peaches\* (about 25–30 medium-sized peaches), cut in half and pitted
- Filtered water
- Ascorbic acid, ¼ teaspoon per quart of juice for canning
- Sugar, 4 tablespoons (¼ cup) per quart of juice (optional, for canning)

\* Any quantity over 10 pounds works well.



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TURN YOUR LIFE INTO  
*A Real Life  
 Faerie Tale*

by Veronica Varlow

**F**t was a Saturday night and I was on the floor again. Jack White was blaring from the speakers, candles flickered around the room, and everything that I ever wished for was right in front of me. Literally.

My orange-handled scissors had snipped my dream life out of magazines, photos I printed off the internet, and vintage postcards I'd found in thrift stores. With one final click of the scissors, I cut out my favorite photo of myself—the one where I look the most like “me”—and placed it right in the center of everything.

It was 2006. I was working as a temp in a job I hated. I had never been anywhere, had never travelled beyond the two states I had lived in. My self-confidence was at an all-time low. The faerie tale life I had dreamed of since I was little had not arrived. I knew I had to take matters in my own hands.

Each night, I would light a candle in front of my dream collage and sit there and look at it for ten minutes before bed. In it, I was surrounded by famous landmarks from all over the world. Renowned burlesque performers stood beside me, cheering me on. My film, *Revolver*, that I co-wrote with my husband Burke Heffner, was being projected onto a screen with a packed audience full of people appreciating it. A vintage typewriter swirled words.

Within less than a year, I was contacted out of the blue by musician Emilie Autumn, who wanted me to perform burlesque and sing on tour with her. The tour has taken me all over the world for the past eight years. I have since seen every single one of the landmarks I pasted on that original collage.

I started getting more and more opportunities with burlesque and was able to quit my day job. Last year *Revolver* surpassed the funding we needed to make our film on Kickstarter, against all odds. And I started my Danger Diary blog almost two years ago; it now has over forty thousand readers per month.

Dreams can come true. And if I can do it, ANYBODY can. Here are my seven tips to turn your life into a faerie tale.

*Tip #1: See It and Believe It.*

We are very visual creatures—we need to see it to believe it! Cut out pictures of everything (travel, love, abundance, awesome job) you want to bring into your life and put a photo of yourself in the middle of it all.

Hang your collage in a place where you can see it every day. Light a candle and sit in front of your collage for ten minutes a day. Let your eyes and mind take in those photos and you'll start to believe that all the things in them are possible.

When I made my first collage, I glued crystal jewels on my head in the photo so I could see myself as “queen” of my world. My self-esteem was so low at the time that seeing the candlelight flicker on those jewels and seeing a photo of myself surrounded by the things I wanted to grow in my life had a huge impact. Not only did my self-esteem rise, but my dreams started to come true.

*Tip #2: Find Your Co-Conspirators.*

Partners-in-crime can help bring a dream to life. Surround yourself with people who support the biggest dreams you can muster and encourage you to keep fighting during the rough times. Kick the people who naysay your dream to the curb. Friends who are negative about your dreams are not your real friends.

Reach out to people who are doing things that inspire you and befriend them. Help each other succeed in your goals.

*Tip #3: Get a Game Plan.*

Don't be overwhelmed with feeling like you need to accomplish your biggest dreams by tomorrow. Start small and break down those things into little steps. As Lao Tzu said, “The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

*Tip #4: Tell Everyone About Your Dreams.*

Being vocal about what you want will help you get it faster. Be bold and tell peo-

ple about what you dream of. They might be able to help you in some way or connect you with people who can. Shout it from the rooftops!

*Tip #5: Keep Your Eyes Open To Opportunity.*

Seek out ways to get your “foot in the door” of your dreams. Volunteer, take classes, and intern. When I started burlesque, I was a “pick-up” girl for two months. I helped the burlesque girls in the show and collected their costumes to bring backstage after a show. It helped me learn to be on stage in front of an audience and helped me gain confidence to do my own shows.

*Tip #6: Kill Your Excuses.*

It can be scary launching into our dream lives because everything is a mystery. Embrace being a “wild risk taker.” When pursuing our dreams, we're pushing ourselves into the unknown and taking a chance. Sometimes we want to make excuses or give up because we're trying to do something we've never done before. Don't. Keep fighting. Remember that all your heroes and people you look up to went down this same unknown road.

*Tip #7: Don't Compare Yourself To Others.*

Be proud of who you are and how you rock it! Comparing yourself to others is a trap. Seeing the world as a competition against others isn't fun. Instead, compare yourself to the You from yesterday. Have you improved? Are you learning and growing in the direction of your dream life?

If not, every day is a chance to start anew! If you are, then keep pushing forward. I'll be right there with you ... as we write the faerie tale of our own existence.

*As a burlesque star, Veronica has graced stages from Paris to Prague to Australia. This year marks her eighth world tour with musician Emilie Autumn. She was recently featured on MTV's MADE for her inspiring story and cabaret artistry. She and her partner-in-crime Burke Heffner are in currently in pre-production for their cross country road trip film, Revolver. Learn more at [Dangerdiary.com](http://Dangerdiary.com)*



# Eowyn Ivey

*On Fairy Tales, Inspiration, and The Snow Child*

INTERVIEWED BY CAROLYN TURGEON  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY VIONA IELEGEMS

Eowyn Ivey's award-winning 2012 debut novel *The Snow Child* tells the story of a husband and wife who move to Alaska as a new start and a welcome distraction after suffering a personal grief. Life is harder than they expected, and the winters brutal. One night, in a rare lighthearted moment, they make a girl from snow, shaping her from the season's first falling flakes. The next morning, a blond-haired girl appears in the trees. Inspired by the Russian fairy tale of the Snegurochka or snow girl, *The Snow Child* is both poetic and immersive, perfectly calling to mind the completely unique and relatively untouched wildness of the Alaskan wilderness.

**FAERIE MAGAZINE:** Can you tell us about the Snegurochka fairy tale that appears in *The Snow Child*? Where did you come across the tale? What was its appeal for you?

**EOWYN IVEY:** I found a children's version of the fairy tale while I was working at Fireside Books here in Alaska, and it was one of those lightning bolt moments. I read the book standing right there at the shelves, and I thought, "Wow, this is it." I wasn't looking for an idea—in fact, I was in the middle of writing a completely different novel. But there was something about the story, this mix of the beauty and danger of the northern wilderness, the couple's intense longing for a child, that just set me on fire. I ended up abandoning that first novel and diving into *The Snow Child*.

**FM:** Did this tale spark the whole novel for you?

**EI:** In many ways I was coming at *The Snow Child* from the opposite direction than other fiction I had written. Instead of having the characters in mind and then following their paths, with *The Snow Child* I had a basic plot structure almost instantly, but I had to discover who these people were, how they had come to Alaska and what this child would mean in their lives. At the same time, along the way, I felt the freedom to at any time leave the traditional plot line if I wanted. The fairy tale provided this wonderful framework around which I could work.

**FM:** Have you always loved fairy tales (if you do!)?

**EI:** To be honest, I have never been enamored with fairy tales. As a child, I often found them flat. The characters are simple outlines and there is this sense of "this happened, and then this, and then this," in a plodding way. I read a lot of fairy tales, but I always left slightly disappointed, like I was hoping for more. Yet something about the Snegurochka fairy tale spoke to me. Maybe that is one of the interesting aspects of fairy tales—because they are plain in their structure yet speak to so many universal experiences, we are then able to fill in our own details.

**FM:** Why do you think fairy tales continue to be so popular and have such an important place in our culture?

**EI:** This is fascinating to me. I didn't realize as I was writing *The Snow Child* that I was riding a tide of interest in fairy tales. I was just following my own inspiration as a writer. But there is a clear resurgence of books and movies and television shows inspired by fairy tales,





and this is the question I keep asking myself—why now? What is it about our culture that at this moment we are so drawn to these stories? I haven't come up with an answer, but I would love to hear other people's thoughts about this.

**FM:** Do you have any favorite Alaska fairy tales, myths and/or legends?

**EI:** It's funny because right after I say I'm not particularly drawn to fairy tales, now I'm going to tell you that my current novel is largely inspired by Alaskan fairy tales. In *Shadows on the Wolverine*, I am working with Alaska Native myths and the legends told by gold miners and other adventurers. One of the elements of Alaska indigenous stories I love is the fact that the line between wild animals and humans is permeable. Bears, otters, wolves all at different times take human form and interact with the people, and they are sometimes threatening, sometimes helpful. There are also recurring Alaska stories, among both explorers and Natives, about lake monsters and mountain spirits that give me goose bumps.

**FM:** How does being an Alaska native inform your writing?

**EI:** Alaska is where I start as a writer. Alaska is a complicated place, wrapped up in a lot of romantic notions and stereotypes. At the same time, even having grown up here, it remains mysterious to me. Somehow it manages to be beautiful, terrifying, lonely, tranquil, and overwhelming. It can both isolate people and bring them together. Maybe this is true of all places, but for now I have more than enough material to work with right here.

**FM:** Do you believe there's anything magical inherent in Alaskan life, or the Alaskan landscape? Does incorporating myth and fairy tale into your writing somehow better capture the Alaska you love?

**EI:** I suspect that no matter where I grew up or made my home, I would have been drawn to the myths of a place. Before I came across the Snegurochka fairy tale, I was writing modern realism set in Alaska, and to be honest I was bored with it. As a writer, I needed to give myself permission to bring just a little bit of mystery and magic to the everyday. The fantastical elements are somewhat self-serving—they make the process so much more fun and thrilling for me. And at the end of the day, that excitement I feel as a writer is my primary motivation.

**FM:** Your book in part deals with the solitude and darkness of an Alaskan winter. Have the long winters had an effect on storytelling traditions there, do you think? And/or on your own love of stories and fantastic tales?

**EI:** I have always been an avid reader, and I do find I read more during the long, dark winters. So do a lot of people up here. I have to say, I think per capita we have an incredible concentration of creative and artistic people in Alaska, and I sometimes wonder if the extremes of the landscape help foster that.

**FM:** How have you responded to the reaction that *The Snow Child's* received (and your Pulitzer nomination)? Did you ever anticipate such a reaction when you were writing the book?

**EI:** It has been astonishing. Going into the process as a bookseller, I felt I had a fairly realistic grasp on how difficult it can be to get published at all, much less have a book get any attention among the many being released each year. Thanks to *The Snow Child*, I can now write full time, and my family and I have gotten to travel more than we ever would have been able to otherwise. But on a day-to-day basis, my life here in Alaska is very much the same as it has always been. And I'm grateful for that.

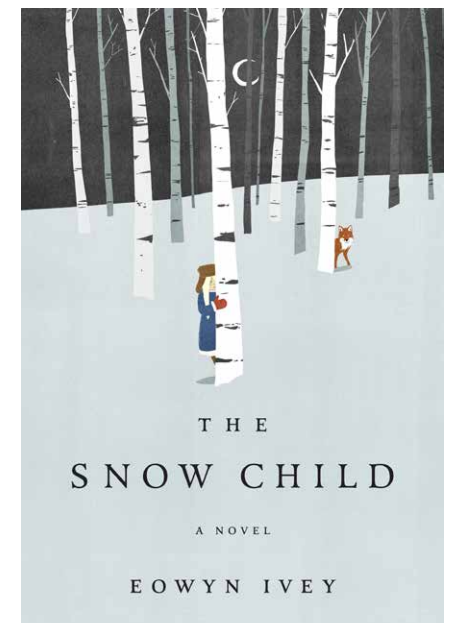
**FM:** What are you working on now?

**EI:** I'm almost done with a draft of my next novel, *Shadows on the Wolverine*. Like *The Snow Child*, it takes place in Alaska. It is even set on the same imaginary river I created in *The Snow Child*—the Wolverine River. But I am going back in time to an 1885 military expedition into the heart of Alaska. As the men venture farther into the country, they begin to encounter fantastical creatures and spirits. I am writing the story entirely through the diaries of the colonel leading the expedition, letters from his wife Sophie, newspaper articles, reports, and other documents.

**FM:** Do you have any advice for other writers working with fairy tale and myth?

**EI:** I always hesitate to offer up guidance, because there are so many different ways and reasons to come to writing. Personally, I do best when I write what I am craving as a reader.

But I won't hesitate to give this advice—read, read, read. Writing can feel like a solitary art, but in fact we are working within a wonderful, rich tradition, and to be active participants, I think we really need to engage with it.



# GARBED in the GARDEN

*by Grace Nuth*



DRESS BY PAM YOKOYAMA  
©SUSANNA FONG



DRESS BY VASHTI CASSINELLI

A profusion of thriving blooms spill from the waist of her gown to the grass at her feet. Moss spreads across the bodice and one shoulder. Flaring fronds frame her neck and shoulders. It's a gown fit for Mother Nature herself, but it's a creation of human (albeit very talented) hands.

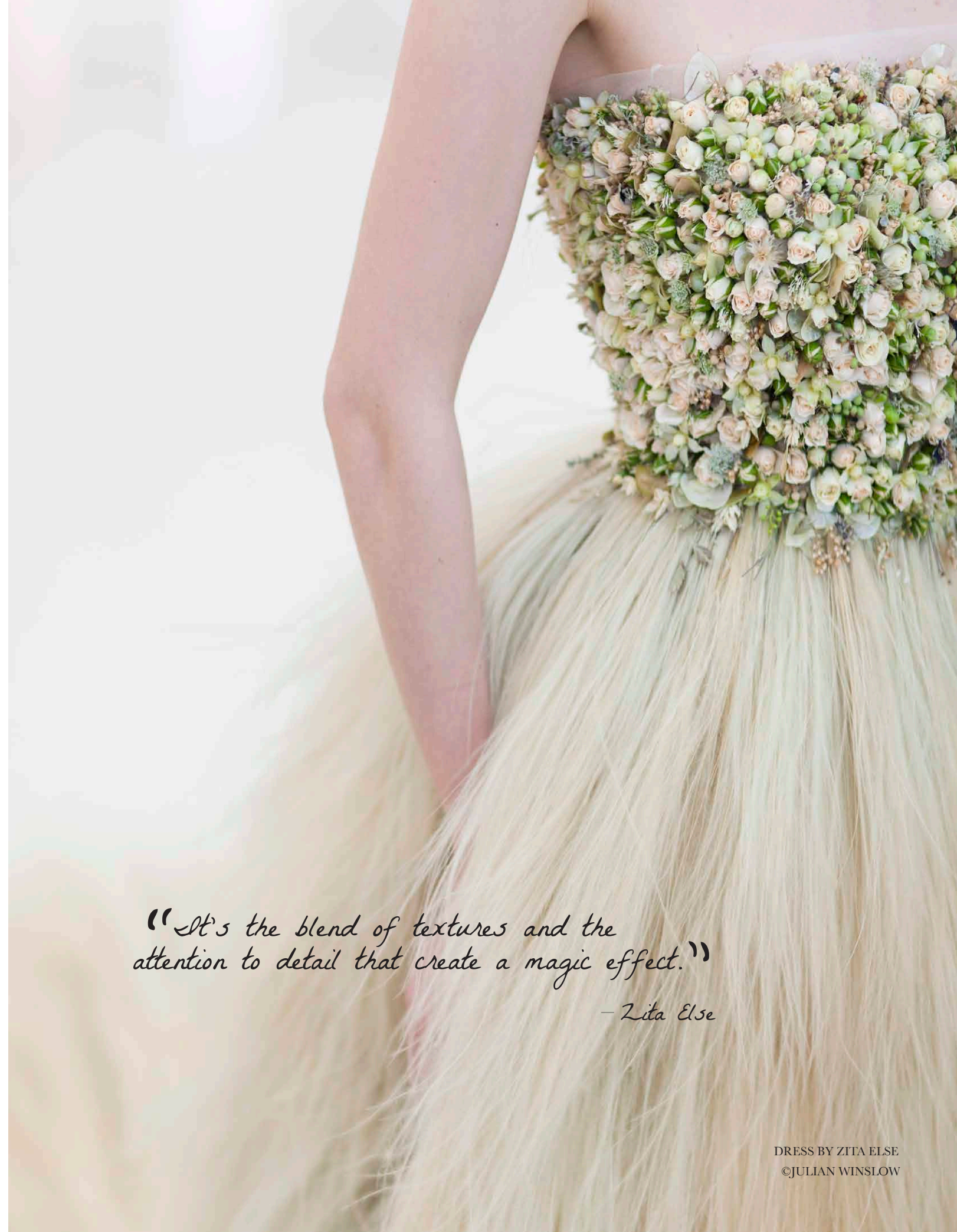
These days a number of talented artists are using flowers, moss, and other bits of nature to create extraordinary organic gowns, shoes, purses, and accessories. The life spans of these living garments may vary, but their transitory nature only makes them that much more magical and enchanting.

Artists like Sandra Alcorn, who hails from Tasmania, are making gowns from single leaflets and tiny filaments, painstakingly creating tiny and intricate gowns for the smallest of sprightly Thumbelinas. Inspired by the beautiful garden view she saw from her studio window, Alcorn created her first design in a "Garden Fairy's Wardrobe" series four years ago. Her designs are created for one imagined fairy character, a "social butterfly who requires a variety of garments for her wardrobe." While her designs are inspired by her work and her garden, "even when I'm traveling I'm thinking about and creating new designs for [my fairy's] wardrobe. I've made seaweed gowns on trips to the coast, and tropical flower dresses from my sister's garden on Magnetic Island. I love the ephemeral nature of creating the dresses."

Other organic gowns are meant to be worn for an event, or a series of events. Artists often create a supportive structure and build the garment on it. A few of these creations include their own methods of sustaining the plants—through small vessels for water, a base layer of moss that has been wet down, or sometimes even pots of soil for whole rooted plants. Others have no means of sustenance, but are made from plant materials that are known for having a long life or that have already been dried. Most, if not all, of them will only last so long before, like so much magic, they disappear back into their elements, disintegrating and wilting back into the earth from which they came.

Flower artist Vashti Cassinelli grew up painting pictures of fairies in flower dresses, inspired by Cicely Mary Barker's work. When she began her business as a florist, her goal was to offer people more wildly and naturally designed wedding flowers using native species. Thinking outside the box comes naturally to her, and her flower hats and dresses helped her live out her childhood fantasies of flower dresses. "I try to think carefully about the ethics of my work and the origins of the flowers despite the ephemeral nature of my couture. My creations are Cinderella-esque and designed to last for the duration of a night or event." Her rose gown seen in this article used over five hundred scented English roses and was commissioned by the sponsors of the Chelsea Flower Show.

Designer Zita Else was teaching one of her own Concept & Design classes at her Design Academy in Kew, England, when she discovered how to translate her signature floral embroidery technique from a glass vase to a piece of material—and she quickly created her first full bridal gown. Now she uses all sorts of delicate plant



*"It's the blend of textures and the attention to detail that create a magic effect."*

*— Zita Else*

DRESS BY ZITA ELSE  
©JULIAN WINSLOW



SLIPPER BY FRANÇOISE WEEKS  
© JAMIE BOSWORTH

DRESSES BY SANDRA ALCORN  
© SANDRA ALCORN

material for her gowns—rose buds, tiny flower heads, seed heads, seeds, shells ... “It’s the blend of textures and the attention to detail that create a magic effect,” she says. She starts work many weeks before a wedding, sketching the dress and making up the material base before sourcing the materials and putting it all together. About a week before, she works with a team of up to five florists to assemble a skirt of skeletonized leaves, or Stipa grass. A couple of days before the wedding, she adds the fresh floral embroidery bodice. Though made for one special, unforgettable day, her gowns can last many months, even years, if kept in dry conditions.

Another type of floral gown may have the longest life, but is never actually meant to be worn. Gowns for your garden, often created on a wire mannequin base, start with a stuffing of peat, moss, and/or other organic material into which various flowers, usually succulents, are placed in a way to form a gown and skirts. The result adds a touch of capricious charm to your garden or outdoor space, as if a faerie Cinderella could be arriving at any moment to claim her organic ball gown.

Pam Yokoyama of 4 Seasons Painting and Landscaping created a beautiful example of this kind of gown from a wire dress form and succulent plants. She began by planning out how many succulent plants would be needed to create each row of the “gown” worn by the dress form. Smaller succulents were used toward the top, and larger ones for the fuller skirt. “Once I had it planned out, I used container soil to plant each succulent in rows going up the dress form. I compacted the soil around the succulents, but I used a thick but pliable wire to attach a large piece of landscape fabric across the bottom of the dress to catch any excess dirt that fell.” Succulents are a wonderful plant to use for this type of project, she says, because they only require water about once per week.

Other artists have even gone beyond the gown to also create gorgeous accessories—purses, shoes, and even umbrellas composed of blossoms and greenery. Some of these are made to be used and worn, some are made more for our imaginations, but all are utterly charming. Françoise Weeks is a Belgian florist who specializes in a unique and textural style. Her line of “Floral Forward” designs of botanical haute couture purses, headpieces, and shoes showcase her years spent honing her craft.

So the next time you take a walk in your garden, or by a meadow's edge, just imagine you are a magical seamstress looking out at a shop filled with bolts of cloth, ribbons, and trims. Perhaps the next Mother Nature masterpiece will be of your own design!

*Grace Nuth is a blogger, artist, and model living in central Ohio.*



by Tricia (Fontaine) Saroya

# A MAGICAL MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM PARTY

**F**or those of us enamored with faeries and myth, the idea of sipping dandelion wine from hibiscus cups and nibbling on honey cakes in a forest clearing is nothing short of ambrosial. If you don't have a convenient hundred-acre wood in your backyard, you can still throw a charming, magical garden party sure to delight your friends—and attract the faeries, too!

Here's how. First, pick as natural a setting as you are able. Any large beautiful natural focal point will work, like a tree, a flower garden, an ivy-covered wall, a fountain set in nature ... anything that's beautiful and natural. Next, mix in more natural elements—greenery and flowers, plants, driftwood, tree stumps, pine cones, branches, moss, and so on. Then add touches of glamour and sparkle with crystal, candles, fine china, candelabras, glittered goodies, mercury glass vases or candle holders, chandeliers, glass bell cloches over a tiny plant ... anything sparkly and beautiful. The mix of natural and elegant is a wonderful, and unexpected, combination. Consider the surprise of seeing a crystal chandelier hanging outside in a tree. A beautiful china set on a tablecloth of moss. A satin tablecloth covered with fine china—and a lichen- and mushroom-covered branch centerpiece.

For one of my own parties, I covered an old wooden table in sheet moss so that it dripped off the ends. I placed the table under a low branch from a two-hundred-year-old sycamore tree; the natural arch created by the branch made a lovely frame. I then wrapped vines and wisteria blooms around the branch, and let them trail onto the table, where I placed potted ferns and orchids. I also tucked more vines and clusters of flowers into the plants on the table.

You don't have to break the bank on flowers to achieve that luscious look. Use your own houseplants and place them in the center of the table. Ferns, pothos, and Creeping Charlies are especially lovely. Hide the pots with moss, leaves, bark, and vines. Include whimsical elements, like a birdhouse with a plant inside or a bird's nest tucked into the top of a plant. Let tree branches



radiate from the center. Add in blossoms, moss, real mushrooms from the grocery store, and sparkly bits like crystals, brooches, strands of pearls, figurines, and shells. Tiny vignettes are a delightful surprise for the guest who spots them. Set a fake frog or dragonfly in a mini grotto created by the moss and branches. Hide a little faerie chair, a small statue, or a vintage bottle with a single flower in it. Remember that faeries like offerings—and have a hard time resisting anything shiny! Keep layering the natural elements by placing bark or a large leaf under your plates or silverware. Create a placemat out of feathers for a fun, whimsical touch. You can cover your table in beautiful cloth with a “runner” of moss and plants. If you do use a tablecloth, consider something fun and whimsical. Layer a fringed silk or velvet shawl over burlap. Have the burlap only go midway to the ground and use a base cloth of heavy velvet, satin, or other rich material. Again, the layering of seemingly disparate elements mixed with nature is always wonderful.

I particularly love mismatched plates and stemware. (A fresh, pleasing combination that adds a sense of order to the chaos.) It feels more personal as each guest has a unique piece chosen just for him or her. You can unite the overall feel with a color story that carries on throughout the table. For my party I chose all shades of green and mixed it with lavender and purple and touches of peach. Though not necessary, the unifying colors help to keep the table from looking too messy.

If you really want to create an impressive statement, dedicate a table to the most luscious dessert spread your guests have ever seen! I hung a “table” from a tree and set out a beautiful array of sweets sure to delight even the most tentative of faeries. I cut a round shape



out of three-quarter-inch plywood and screwed three heavy duty hooks into it. Then I hung the “table” with rope over a low branch and hid the ropes as well as the table with moss and vines. I made sure to have lots of greenery trailing off the edge for a very foresty look. Mix in beautiful fruit and berries along with gorgeous candies and you’ll have a breathtaking result!

If your party continues into the bewitching hours, create a truly enchanting mood with twinkling light from numerous sources. I like to start with faerie twinkle lights strung throughout the grounds (just regular Christmas lights). Then I hang lanterns everywhere I can and place loads of candles all over. Keep your candles behind glass to prevent them from blowing out in a breeze; this will also keep them safe and catch any melted wax. As far as lighting goes, the more the better. You really can’t have too many candles or twinkle lights when you’re creating a most magical ambiance. For seating assignments, write your guests names on small leaves, bark, or beautiful pieces of fruit like green apples or small Japanese eggplants. Use a gold or silver marker for added sparkle.

Fun party favors could include a scrolled poem tied with a beautiful ribbon (“oh what fools these mortals be ...”), packets of seeds, pressed flowers, herbal teas, tiny potted herbs, cooking seasonings ... anything woodsy and natural. One lovely idea is a perfect acorn tied in a burlap bundle, with oak-related legends and myths written on some handmade paper and tied to the bundle. Go sparkly with homemade magic wands or vintage brooches, which you can pin onto napkins at each place setting. Tiny bottles with glitter and labels saying “faerie dust” are also sweet. Just let your imaginations run wild. Tap into your inner child and see what would delight him or her. We’re all enchanted by magical settings and creativity!



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For a fun alternative, consider a magical outdoor mermaid party! For the event I created, I was lucky enough to be able to set the table right by the ocean. The music of the crashing surf was icing on the cake! To create this look I started with old wooden tables, sort of a driftwood color. I then painted mesquite branches in the colors of the sea and sprinkled glitter over them while the paint was still wet. I glued on shells and painted patterns with glitter glue to create fun “coral” reefs, which I nestled into glittery rocks. This was the base structure that ran along the length of the table. I then tucked in all sorts of unusual flowers and vegetables that looked like they could be found underwater: blooming artichokes, succulents, spider mums, orchids, green and Spanish moss, cabbage rosettes, kale, a fun dreadlock-looking flower called Amaranthus ... truly anything slightly odd or different is great. I also placed shells and glass float balls here and there to continue the ocean theme. If your party goes into the night, then placing little colored LED lights under the glass balls or inside the shells gives a beautiful glow later in the evening. Place candles under blue and green glass. At night the effect of all this lighting is truly magical!

Consider writing your guests’ names on shells or small pieces of driftwood. Party favors can be anything from fish seasonings set in beautiful containers to shiny shells or ocean-themed poetry. Scroll up a secret wish for each guest and set every wish in an old bottle with a cork. Think of all the things that used to enchant you as a child. If you have kids, get them in on it. They’ll love it and will help you add more imaginative whimsical touches.

Whatever you do, remember to have fun with it. That is truly what the faeries want us to do!

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*Tricia is an event designer and artist living and working in Santa Barbara, California. She’ll travel anywhere with her band of faeries to help create a magical event just for you. She just launched a series of DVDs to teach you how to work with flowers and create the most beautiful professional floral arrangements. For more information, visit [Triciafountaine.com](http://Triciafountaine.com) and [Triciafountaine.blogspot.com](http://Triciafountaine.blogspot.com).*



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A woman with long, dark hair is lying on her side on a tiled floor. She is wearing a long, flowing, golden-yellow dress with a ruffled bodice and a delicate necklace. Her eyes are closed, and her expression is serene. The floor is composed of square tiles with a repeating sunburst pattern. In the lower-left corner, there is a large, circular, ornate tile design with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns in shades of brown, gold, and blue. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the dress and the details of the tiles.

# LOST IN A FAIRY TALE...

*in which we pair a few enchanting poems from Theodora  
Goss's forthcoming Songs for Ophelia with the lush fairy  
tale images of photographer Viona ielegems*



## Autumn's Song

You are not alone.

If they could, the oaks would bend down to take your hands,  
bowing and saying, Lady, come dance with us.  
The elder bushes would offer their berries to hang  
from your ears or around your neck.  
The wild clematis known as Traveler's Joy  
would give you its star-shaped blossoms for your crown.  
And the maples would offer their leaves,  
russet and amber and gold,  
for your ball gown.

The wild geese flying south would call to you, Lady,  
we will tell your sister, Summer, that you are well.  
You would reply, *Yes, bring her this news –  
the world is old, old, yet we have friends.  
The squirrels gathering nuts, the garnet hips  
of the wild roses, the birches with their white bark.*

You would dress yourself in mist and early frost  
to tread the autumn dances – the dance of fire  
and fallen leaves, the expectation of snow.  
And when your sister Winter pays a visit,  
You would give her tea in a ceramic cup,  
bread and honey on a wooden plate.

You would nod, as women do, and tell each other,  
*The world is more magical than we know.*

You are not alone.

Listen: the pines are whispering their love,  
and the sky herself, gray and low, bends down  
to kiss you on both cheeks. *Daughter, she says,  
I am always with you. Listen: my winds are singing  
autumn's song*



## The Witch-Wife

Light the fire, sweetheart. I am cold,  
cold and wet to the skin.  
I have been chasing, over hill and dale,  
a ewe that heard a wild dog wail  
and would not come in.

Then why are you wearing dancing-slippers,  
spotted with clay?

I heard a wind in the willows,  
tossing them all day,  
so I dreamed that I was dancing  
like the trees, and began prancing  
about the house, in play.

And why are flowers tucked into the waistband  
of your dress, my sweet?

I passed a patch of poppies while walking in the wheat  
and took the scarlet to adorn me.  
Surely, love, you cannot scorn me,  
looking so neat?

You are lovely, but the golden ringlets of your hair  
are tangled and wild.

Did I not tell? I met in the meadow  
an enchanting child,  
who caught her hands in my tresses  
while giving me soft caresses  
that soothed and beguiled.

You answer calmly, my dear, but your eyes  
are strangely aglow.

And what is there in that?  
A moment ago  
I saw your face in the glass,  
and I think me a lucky lass  
to have caught such a fellow.

He lit the fire and went out  
to pen the ewe  
while the flames changed the white of her cheek  
to a ruddy hue.  
Then she rose and put on a cauldron,  
and when he appeared  
he wondered at the vigor  
with which she stirred and stirred.



## The Willow's Story

The willow was once a bride, and dressed herself in white,  
and veiled herself with laces, and blossoms filled her hair,  
but her love he rode for London in the middle of the night,  
galloping by the churchyard, and left her waiting there.

She wandered by the river, her eyes grown dull and wild,  
her satin gown gone ragged, her white feet bruised and bare,  
and never spoke nor halted, but went as though beguiled  
by fairer visions than appeared in common air.

She threw a bunch of posies her fingers did not hold,  
she turned to lift a veil the wind would never stir,  
and bowed and smiled, then danced about the rain-drenched wold  
in invisible arms, and kissed someone not there.

At last, the story is told, they changed her into a tree,  
they being whatever gods possess both pity and power,  
so on she silently dances, according to decree,  
with the wind for her bridegroom, and the perching birds her dower.

## The Elf King's Daughter

It is the Elf King's daughter,  
with the leaf-light in her eyes,  
that greenish twilight beneath the beech boughs  
where only the hum of flies

disturbs the lilies of the valley  
and ferns their fronds unfurl.  
How dare I stir or show my presence  
to the Elf King's girl?

She sits so still upon the boulder,  
the leaf-light in her hair  
casting a greenish pall on its goldness.  
Mortal, stare

at her small feet shod in leaf-green velvet,  
her small hands pale and fay,  
among the wood anemones  
in early May.



A woman in a white wedding dress and veil stands in a misty forest, holding a bouquet of white lilies. The scene is ethereal and atmospheric, with soft lighting and a dense canopy of trees in the background. The woman's dress is intricate, with lace and ruffles, and her veil is long and flowing. The overall mood is romantic and dreamlike.

## The Bride

Her gown, it seemed a thing made out of mist,  
as though the dewy air  
had gathered in a cloud about her form  
to clothe a shape so fair  
that nothing coarser could adorn it than  
a layer of atmosphere.

The diamonds in her hair were like the beads  
upon a spider's web  
that dazzle mayflies in the morning light,  
and dangling from each lobe  
of her white ears she wore a water-drop  
that would weigh down Queen Mab.

She drifted, feather-like, across the lawn  
in tenuous radiance  
as her three brothers, sporting new frock-coats,  
pocketed their pence,  
and the ogre stood by the verge of the tenebrous wood  
with infinite patience.

**THEODORA GOSS** is the author of several anthologies of poetry and short fiction as well as *The Thorn and the Blossom*, a novella in two-sided accordion format. She teaches classes on reading and writing fairy tales. "I love fairy tales," she says, "because they are so realistic: we all face wolves and want to go to the ball. Their realism is on another level, a symbolic level. But they are fundamentally about what we fear and desire. That is why they have lasted so long and are continually rewritten. They are about the deepest, most fundamental parts of ourselves." The poems here will be collected in *Songs for Ophelia*, forthcoming from Papaveria Press. Visit [Theodoragoss.com](http://Theodoragoss.com).

**VIONA IELEGEMS'S** inspiration comes from "fantasy worlds such as old story books and children's fairy tales." A long-time fairy tale photographer and otherworldly costume designer, she tries to "grasp the elegance and gracefulness of women, freezing time, opening doors to other dimensions." She also hosts neo-romantic balls and historically inspired dinner parties and picnics in many fantastic locations across Europe. Learn more at [Viona-art.com](http://Viona-art.com).



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# TOP OF THE MARI

by Jo-Ann Mapson

**t**he year was 1962, I was ten, and this trip was not the first time away from home, but it was my first visit to San Francisco. My great aunt was wealthy from her second husband's death, and she loved to spend money on artwork, travel, and her nieces and nephews. On trips, usually by train, she always traveled first class. While she sat in the club car, drinking, smoking and reading *The New Yorker*, we kids ran freely through the train, something our parents would never have allowed. While she was occupied, I tried out my fake English accent on passengers, made up great stories about my life, and practiced lying.

This time it was only me going with her to San Francisco. We stayed at The Mark Hopkins hotel, now The Intercontinental, in a suite that felt bigger than my family's entire house. From the windows I could see The Golden Gate—where people sometimes committed suicide, flinging themselves to the water, mostly dying on impact. No one had died on me yet, so I found this macabre notion fascinating. Also I could see downtown, with the skyscrapers, Nob Hill, and the San Francisco Bay, neighbor to the Pacific Ocean, which I loved. Somewhere out in the middle of the water was Alcatraz, a prison at one time, and I was dying to see it but also afraid.

After a room service breakfast with toast, butter pats, tiny jars of jam, eggs, bacon, and half a grapefruit, all delivered under silver domes with starched linen napkins and china, my aunt drank her coffee while looking out those windows and smoking a cigarette. Two years later I'd smoke my first one. When she stubbed it out, it was time to go exploring in the big city. The doorman flagged down a cab, though my aunt could whistle for one like a New Yorker. First stop was the Muir Woods, the first time I'd seen redwoods in a forest. Despite my blue crepe dress and white gloves, my aunt didn't mind me lying down on the ground in order to look up at the massive trees. In fact, she did, too. "Instant vertigo," she said, and I filed the word away to look up later. "Or like the feeling of a drug making its way through your system," she said, and I wondered what that meant. The scent of trees, moist duff, moss, lichens, and ferns ruined me for the ordinary landscape I lived in back in Southern California.

Nights there we could smell the orange marmalade plant and hear the train going through town. There were orange groves at the end of our street, but soon there wouldn't be, replaced with ranch houses and subdivisions. "Let's wander," she said, and we explored the trees with their soft furry bark, showing the burned-out goose-pens and how the tree kept growing around it. She pointed out fungus that grew vertically up the tree, looking like mushrooms, which I'd die before eating. "Redwoods have a symbiotic relationship with redwoods," she told me. "That means they benefit from each other, do you understand what I mean?" I nodded. Walking across a suspension bridge scared the hell out of me, but if she could do it, so could I.

After that, we went to Ghirardelli, where they made chocolate, and she let me eat as much as I wanted instead of lunch. I marked this day forever as the moment when my ten-year-old self discovered the habitat where I belonged. San Francisco's multi-faceted beauty swelled up inside of me the way I felt at Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. For that one night, our tiny church transformed into a cathedral, but after Christmas it turned ordinary again. Then I had only the possibility of my brother being made to stand in the aisles because the pews were full. I felt the sweat drip down my arms, and watched my brother, waiting for him to faint. If the day were warm enough, he'd go down like a tree onto the linoleum aisle and that meant we got to leave early.

The San Francisco air was salty and cool, and everywhere I looked, I saw Victorian houses, smelled sourdough bread cutting into the sea air, and depending on which way our cab turned, I could see the Golden Gate bridge in its rusty-orange color. We drove down crooked Lombard Street, up and down those impossible hills, and spent a few hours in Chinatown. "Run along," my aunt said, and sat on a bench to smoke a cigarette. I touched the lions guarding the gate, and then walked around unsupervised. There were smoked ducks hanging in windows, other food I didn't recognize, silk kimonos and jade. With my few dollars I bought a tiny jar of perfume that came in a balm.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 92

# TINY ENCHANTED WORLDS

from THE SLUG AND THE SQUIRREL

## some mossy tips:

- One thing to remember when using moss: it doesn't have roots, so it takes water from the air, meaning it doesn't need much. Overwatering will kill it more than dryness will, so be careful. As long as the moss isn't stiff or brittle, there's no need to water it!
- And moss seems to do better when you mix different kinds of it—the same way that planting different varieties of blueberries will help the fruit thrive.
- Moss takes time to acclimate but rest assured, it does come back green again!



*T*o me, every little thing has its own life, its own story," says Jose Agatep, who uses found objects to make the gorgeous terrariums seen here. "People throw beautiful, unwanted things away all the time. I'm always looking at the sidewalk. I always take a moment to see more than what my eyes are telling me."

As a child in the Philippines, Jose watched his parents spend countless hours working in their garden, transforming the world around him into a lush haven full of mango trees, orchids, and all kinds of vegetables and flora. Occasionally his father would fashion a terrarium as a surprise for Jose and his siblings—a tiny living world that enthralled and enchanted. But it would be years before Jose made a terrarium of his own. One Christmas a few years ago, he wanted to give gifts to his two closest friends, Christopher and Matthew, who had been encouraging him to be creative. He found an old bottle under the kitchen sink and started gathering plants and objects around his

then-home in Philadelphia. The results were stunning. When Christopher and Matthew encouraged him to make more, *The Slug and The Squirrel* was born. Before long, Jose was selling his terrariums to ardent fans, supplying them to Anthropologie, and being featured in the *New York Times Magazine*. For the first time, people called him an artist.

Today Jose's San Francisco studio is filled with rocks, driftwood, moss, and other bits of ephemera he's collected while roaming the streets and antique fairs of the city. He also heads to the mountains, beaches, and forests as often as he can, constantly on the lookout for unusual materials. And he's become friends with some of the nursery owners in Half Moon Bay, who allow him to pick around their yards for malnourished and deformed plants. He never knows what he'll find, or what kind of story he'll end up creating. Once, he says, he found a broken doll discarded on the side of the road, and ended up using the broken head on the

top of a terrarium. "There was something sad about her expression," he says, "and something lonely and sad about the plants I used, to tell that story." He doesn't plan these narratives, but happens upon them. Which is what he likes: finding what's hidden in the world and bringing it to life.

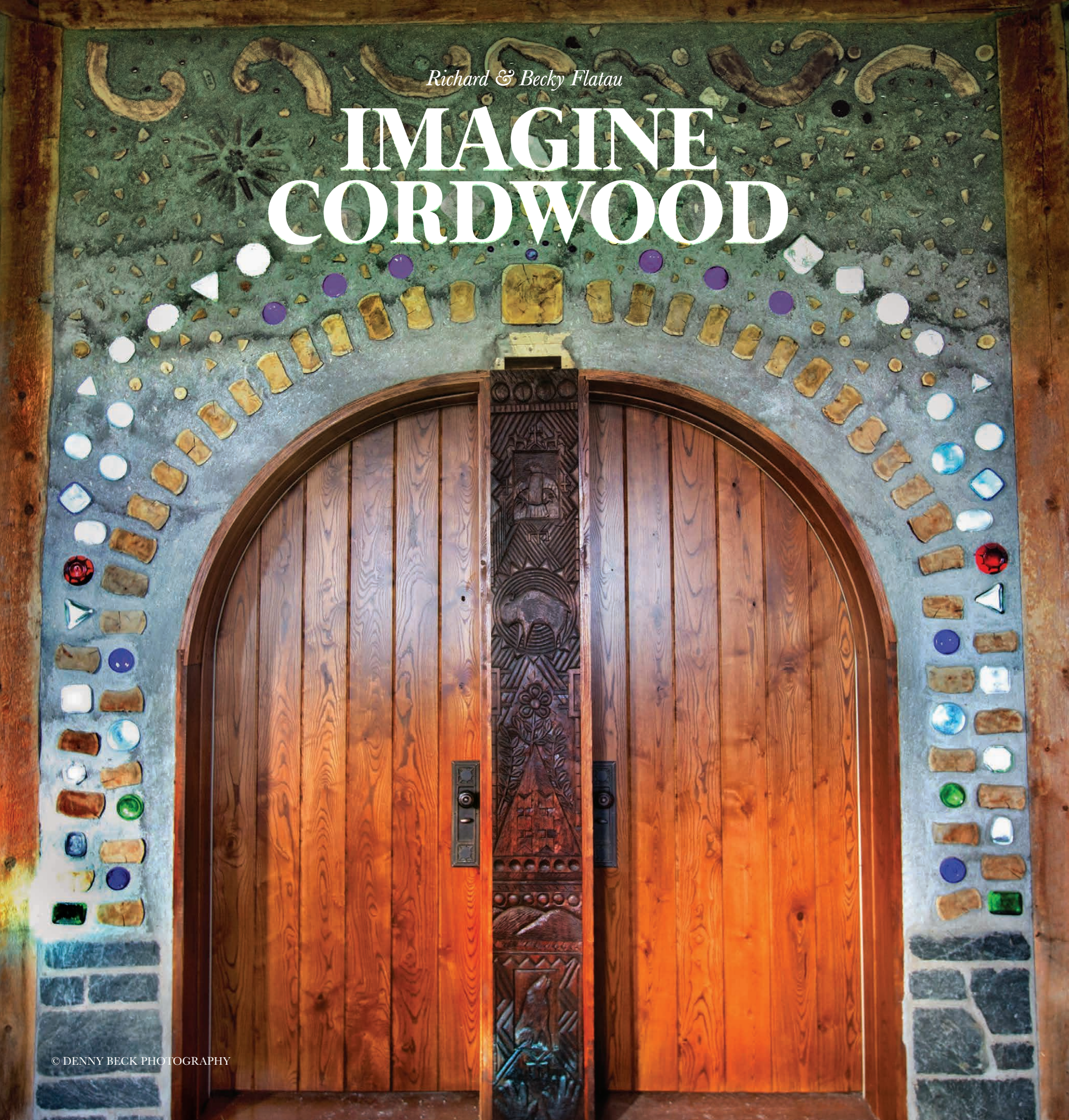
In his studio, too, he'll start from "one tiny thing in mind," an idea or an image or a feeling. He'll pick a vessel from any number that he's collected—ancient jars, bottles, pocket watches, glasses, vases, etc.—and start gathering various rocks and plants and shells and bark and other textures on hand. He'll add in a rock, for instance, and see how it looks. Does it look like a mountain, a cliff, a beach? For him, each object holds life and meaning, and the materials themselves direct him. A rock he thinks will lie flat ends up sideways. A fern will unfurl in an unexpected direction. Stories will reveal themselves. "It's like I'm helping the materials be the way they want to be," he says.

Learn more at [Slugandsquirrel.com](http://Slugandsquirrel.com), and find Jose's designs at [Faeriemag.com](http://Faeriemag.com) and [Paxtongate.com](http://Paxtongate.com).



Richard & Becky Flatau

# IMAGINE CORDWOOD



## CORDWOOD ALONG THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

Kristine Beck

Imagine a building style that encourages creativity and whimsy yet manages to be energy efficient and code compliant. If this combination appeals to you, then you should get acquainted with cordwood construction. Cordwood uses natural materials, many of which come from the forest and/or have been recycled or repurposed. It's cost-effective and utilizes many of the less-than-perfect materials (like hollow centers of cedars, crooked limbs, and downed trees) that might otherwise end up on a trash heap. And the results are stunning.

Cordwood enthusiasts have built cottages, cabins, playhouses, art studios, saunas, yoga-meditation centers, doghouses—you name it, you can build it. Using cordwood, people have erected wonderful “Singing Cordwood Cabanas” in Venezuela and stunning new country cabins in Europe. Cordwood saunas in Minnesota and cabins in Idaho are dotting the landscape.

Cordwood is basically a wall system that uses short log ends, stacked and mortared like a row of firewood, with insulation in the center cavity to provide warmth in winter and coolness in summer. Colored glass bottles placed within the mortar matrix give the look and feel of stained glass. Embedded seashells, gems, and stones can further personalize the structure to the owner's desires. Using rot-resistant softwoods, a choice of mortars (cob, traditional, papercrete/adobe, lime putty), and a natural insulation material (sawdust), these buildings make for DIY projects that are both imaginative and fulfilling.

Though cordwood construction has been around for more than a century, it's enjoyed a renaissance in the last few decades and has become an intriguing and distinctive natural building style of the twenty-first century. For many people, cordwood may be the answer to a long-anticipated summer cottage, winter hideaway, or cozy home. It just takes a bit of research and planning.

As you look at the outstanding examples of cordwood and cobwood (cordwood plus cob mortar) on the following pages and hear some builder's stories (including our own), I hope you'll be inspired to learn more—and maybe even try it yourself.

In Fountain City, Wisconsin, on a gorgeous site overlooking the mighty Mississippi River, Kristine Beck has created a teaching/sharing center and a repository for her family's lore. After purchasing a portion of the family farm, she set to work creating a cordwood chapel, a stone circle, a labyrinth, and a dolmen using motifs inspired by mother nature. She lovingly calls the thirty-acre site Kinstone (pictured at left).

“I created Kinstone after a career in software that numbed my spirit, my sense of magic. The need for reconnecting to the Earth and all of its glory drove me to make a major change in my life. I'm a self-proclaimed “megalithic maniac,” a lover of stones. Kinstone is full of standing stones, three stone circles, a dolmen, a labyrinth, and a fabulous thatched cordwood chapel. Designed and built with the help of Wayne Weisman (a master permaculture designer whom I describe as an earth-lover and Sufi mystic), Ivan McBeth (a Druid who hails from Glastonbury, England), and our multi-talented stone mason, builder, and site manager, Jarad Barkeim, the place is permeated with seasonal and celestial alignments, buried tokens, symbols, and simple magic.

“The chapel has become the heart of Kinstone. Visitors seeking respite, quietude, and joy can find it in the encircling walls of this sacred structure with its well-knit combination of the elements. Earth, wind, water, fire, and spirit have been woven into the walls by over two hundred hands. The sun, moon, and stars, and the spirits of the trees, flowers, and creatures of the air and earth are all honored there. Behind the arched doors, under the thatched roof, exists an enchanting balm of wonder, refreshment, and love that gets right into one's soul.”

Kinstone Permaculture Academy offers workshops (cordwood, cob, straw/clay, permaculture, bee keeping, planting, foraging, etc.), demonstrations, and touring events near Fountain City, Wisconsin. For a closer look at their offerings, visit [Kinstonecircle.com](http://Kinstonecircle.com).



©KIMANNA CELLURA-SHIELDS

## CORDWOOD AND MERMAIDS IN COLORADO

*KimAnna and Michael Cellura-Shields*

KimAnna Cellura-Shields has always loved mermaids. So when she decided to build a cabin using cordwood in Del Norte, Colorado, naturally she created “The Mermaid Cottage.”

“Before I decided to build with cordwood I did a little studying and investigated other forms of alternative building. Although I have a great appreciation for other natural styles, from the first time I saw cordwood construction it was love at first sight! Like a siren to a sailor, it called to me. Besides the fact that I have always loved the smell, look, and feel of wood, the bottles in the wall (when the sun shines through) are truly magical! When I was building the Peace of Art Cafe and then the Mermaid Cottage it was just so darn exciting putting in those bottle walls! Most nights I would work into the wee hours of the morn, then grab a few hours sleep and get up at the crack of dawn just to see the light cascade through those bottles for the first time. I will say that putting a lot of bottles in a wall does take more time, but in my opinion it is so worth it! It feels like you’re living in a beautiful kaleidoscope.

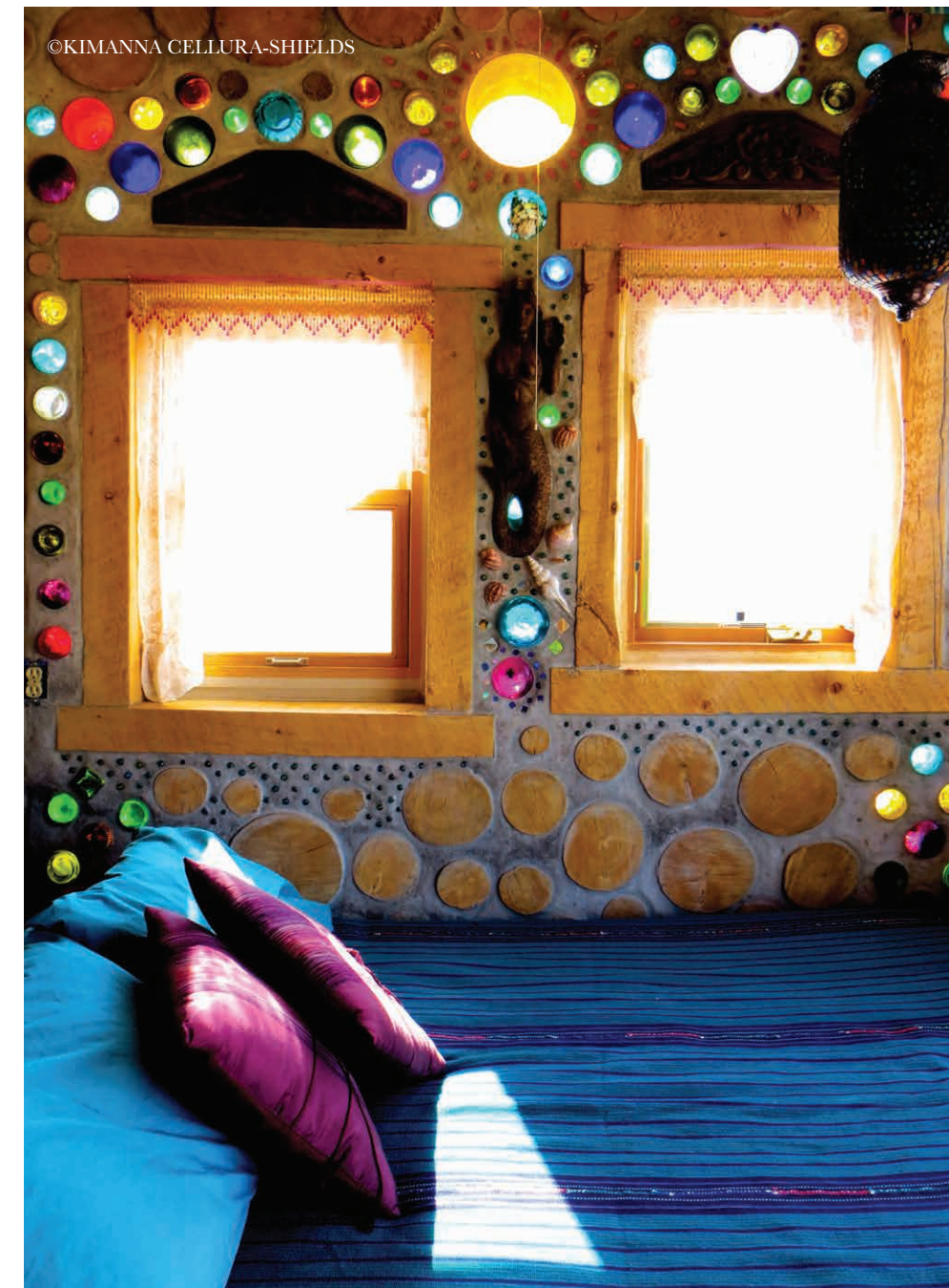
“Another reason I love cordwood? There’s no end to how creative you can get. You’re limited only by lack of imagination. I love mermaids and lots of them ... so they became the theme for our cute little cordwood cottage. My favorite wall was also the hardest to do—the all-bottle mermaid shower wall. I combed second-hand stores for fun glass treasures like candy dishes, light globes, and bottles to plant in the walls. I also embedded broken statues, fossils, dead trees, and more into the wall for a funky twist. It’s a great way to recycle, too.

“I totally recommend this style of building to everyone, even if you just use it for one wall of the project. Have fun, the sky’s the limit!”

Learn more at [Mermaidcottage.org](http://Mermaidcottage.org).



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©HEIDI VILKMAN



©HEIDI VILKMAN

## CORDWOOD IN FINLAND

Heidi Vilkmán

In the South of Finland, Heidi Vilkmán has built a gorgeous cobwood cottage with her bare hands on the site where she was born. Using materials from the earth, she constructed “Elaman Puu,” or “Tree of Life,” over two summer sojourns.

Heidi built her cottage with a variety of natural building techniques, including a rubble trench foundation, roundwood frame, and an earthbag stem-wall dressed with stone. She also incorporated straw bales and cob and cordwood (cobwood). A living roof tops off her creation. In Heidi’s words:

“I was born pretty much where the cottage stands, and adore the forest, plants, and nature around it. When by pure accident I came across a book on building with cob, I literally fell in love with the concept, the medium, and the stunning photos of natural homes! As an artist, I love working with clay, so the thought of sculpting my own house just seemed too delicious to miss! When I’m inside my cottage, I feel I’m wrapped inside Mother Nature’s womb, which is strong, giving, and nurturing at the same time. My cottage is an homage to the trees and forest where I grew up—and I’ve filled it with my art that tells a story about how nature offers me infinite magic and inspiration.

“Nature’s shapes, forms, and textures inspire me—a lot of this inspiration has been used in my cottage. I also believe in magic and fairies (I do, I do, I do), so there are bits of magic to be found in the cottage, and there will be even more when it is finally finished (complete with a ceramic magic mushroom garden). As I’m intending to use the cottage as a seasonal artist studio, the space will be filled with my own wood sculptures, glass hangings, ceramic plaques, and paper cuts. All my work has nature motifs running through it, so the artwork blends seamlessly into these surroundings. Just as when I was planning and building my cottage, my intention is to make my work blend into the forest, to almost become an extension of it. Apart from a bit of plastic, everything in the building is natural and most of the building materials came from within hundred-meter radius from where it stands. All in all, the cottage is my homage to the trees that saw me grow up and Mother Nature that gives us all we need, and more.”

For additional information about Heidi and her other artistic pursuits (jewelry, crafts, cards), visit [Heidivilkman.com](http://Heidivilkman.com).



©RICHARD FLATAU

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Richard and Becky Flatau

Richard and Becky Flatau built their cordwood home in 1979 amidst a glaciated forest in northern Wisconsin. After publishing an article about their building experiences in *Mother Earth News*, they were deluged with queries and visits. They started hosting workshops, writing books and magazine articles, and doing interviews on television and radio.

The Flatau’s relish living in their cedar cordwood home, and have delighted in nature’s beauty and bounty for thirty-five years now. They harvest maple syrup, heirloom apples, wild asparagus, and plums, and the forest surrounding them abounds with wildflowers, stones, ferns, and mosses—where the whisper of wings might be heard.



Flatau’s recently published guidebook, *Cordwood Construction Best Practices*, is available at their online bookstore at [Cordwoodconstruction.org](http://Cordwoodconstruction.org)



Sarolta Bán

# USING ART TO HELP SHELTER DOGS

Eight bulbs growing roots, children riding origami cranes, umbrellas floating in water glasses—Hungarian artist Sarolta Bán has been creating surreal photographs for a long time, combining everyday elements in unusual, magical ways. She's also an animal lover. On the hunt recently for a new canine friend, she was disheartened to see how difficult it is for many shelter dogs to find the homes they need, especially without the benefit of beautiful photos that can really showcase their personalities and grab potential adopters' hearts. Bán realized she could help.

In March 2014, her Dogs with Images project was born. The idea? To let people all over the world submit photos of shelter dogs (and other animals) and then create wonderful, whimsical images of them using the same techniques she uses in her regular artwork. When a featured dog is adopted, the new owner receives a print copy of the dog's photo. The general public can also purchase prints of each piece, with a portion of the proceeds going to a shelter associated with the featured animal.

Almost right away the project received much more attention—and entries—than Bán ever anticipated. “I expected maybe fifty entries,” she said, “but it's now well over five hun-

dred.” Though Bán can only create surreal photos for a few submissions (ten so far), all the photos submitted are displayed and shareable from the project's Facebook page, [Facebook.com/photoallegoryofsaroltaban](https://www.facebook.com/photoallegoryofsaroltaban).

The stories themselves have been heart-warming. Jasmine had been at a shelter in Szeged, Hungary, for four years before the project united her with her new family in Austria. A Youtube video shows the little beagle mix lying happily on a couch with the family's two other dogs and bounding through a grassy yard. Pit mix Tanya was adopted by a New York City family after seven years in a shelter in Yonkers, New York (and through the heroic efforts on the part of NYC animal welfare project Mr. Bones & Co. and Fox news anchor Beau Berman as well as Bán). A Youtube video shows Tanya running around with her new family in a park and lying with a child's arm around her.

By now, Bán has already extended the project through late June 2014, and she says she'll likely extend it at least once more considering how well it's doing and how much good it's doing—not only for the animals she's featuring but in raising awareness generally. “I'm so happy when a dog is adopted,” she says. “But I'm even happier when people tell me I've inspired them to do something similar—and use their own talents to help abandoned animals.”

To learn more about the Dogs with Images project, visit [Facebook.com/photoallegoryofsaroltaban](https://www.facebook.com/photoallegoryofsaroltaban) and [Saroltaban.com](http://Saroltaban.com).



# RED RIDING HOOD and the WHITE SHEPHERDS of LUXEMBOURG



©LYNN THEISEN Cloak by FairyTas



©LYNN THEISEN



©LYNN THEISEN

Croatian artist and model Sanda Zikic had the idea for this Little Red Riding Hood shoot after spying a gorgeous fairy tale red cloak by designer FairyTas on Facebook. She's always loved fairy tales, and was even called Snow White as a teenager because of her pale skin and back hair. "I always believed that all fairy tales had some truth inside them," she says. "My family and I escaped the Balkan War in 1993 and moved to Luxembourg, and since then I've loved fairy tales even more, as they always had a happy ending."

Once she had a red FairyTas cloak of her own, she imagined adding a dog or two to the vision and started

asking around for huskies, wanting the "huge contrast" of their pale fur. "I didn't want to represent the typical Red Riding Hood," she says. Then she discovered Wäiss Schéiferhënn Lëtzebuerg, Luxembourg's White Swiss Shepherd Association, an organization founded in 2011 to bring together lovers of the breed. "I contacted Joe Muller from the organization," she says, "and asked if he and his members were interested in collaborating, and he said yes." She also asked a friend of hers, photographer Lynn Theisen, to participate as well.

On the day of the shoot, nine dogs showed up. "It was magic to have these beautiful animals next to me,"

Sanda says. "They're just so majestic and powerful." And some proved to be naturals: while many of the dogs ran about and wanted to play, "some of them acted like pros and stood perfectly still, posing for the camera."

Now she's planning a new "Ice Queen" shoot with the white shepherds this winter.

To learn more about Luxembourg's White Swiss Shepherd Association, visit [Wsl.lu](http://Wsl.lu).



©LYNN THEISEN



# A SCOTTISH FAERIE TRAIL

*Laren Stover's enchanting destination guide has peacocks, a hidden hotel on a loch created by a Celtic goddess, a legendary faerie hill, and a magnificent eighteenth-century live-in pineapple. Fly to Edinburgh and begin a twelve-day road trip to some of the most magical and Gothic haunts from Midlothian to the Highlands. And unless you have wings, you'll need hiking boots.*



Decorating the Witchery guestbook's opening page



The unfinished 1826 National Monument of Scotland on Calton Hill

When I was five, I made my first wish list. It started like this: Elves and faeries. Houses for the elves and faeries. Hats, shoes, dresses, capes, pants, shirts for the elves and faeries. Dinosaurs.

We all know that the triceratops is extinct, but elves and faeries are merely elusive. There are plenty of eyewitness accounts: scholars, clergy, travellers, artists, pipers, children, mystics, milkmaids, fishermen ... it seems that anyone can see the wee folk if they want to be seen, or if you accidentally sit upon their forest home. Most of these sightings happened long ago, of course, in a less skeptical time. Some of the most fascinating accounts concern Reverend Robert Kirk, author of the seventeenth-century masterwork *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns & Fairies*.

Reverend Kirk is said to have visited with his subjects on a knowe behind the church of his first parish in Balquhider, Scotland, and was eventually “taken” on Doon Hill in Aberfoyle for telling their secrets. (Faeries, it must be admitted, are not always nice.) In pursuit of my childhood dream, I wanted to visit these locations and some other sites of faerie activity I’d read about over the years. My husband, Paul Himmlein, wanted to research eighteenth-century Edinburgh for his historical novel. And so we planned a trip to Scotland.

Here we go ... non-stop from Newark to Edinburgh!

**DAY 1: JULY 12 – ARRIVE EDINBURGH (MIDLOTHIAN)**

Staying at **The Witchery by the Castle** is like being in a costume drama. This ancient Gothic inn, which sits atop Castle Hill, is the first choice of history-loving faerie seekers visiting Edinburgh—and it’s where we’re staying for three nights. Witches didn’t fare well in sixteenth-century Edinburgh, and the owner, James Thomson OBE, named his hotel in their memory. He’s decorated

the rooms with tapestries and antique theatrical embellishments that he’s traveled to the world to find.

In Scotland, no one is shocked when you ask if they believe in spirits or faeries. When I ask Mr. Thomson if he’s ever seen a faerie, he tells me about a clear, cold night soon after he first purchased the Witchery. He was upstairs in the turret and heard the voices of children singing below. He went downstairs and found no one there. Later, he learned the building was once a music school for children.

When we arrive, our rooms—in the turret—aren’t ready yet; we’re the very first guests to stay in the newly decorated suite, formerly Mr. Thomson’s study. Roxy, the playful Puck of the Witchery (maître de faerie), hoists up our luggage; he makes us tea while we “freshen up” in splendid temporary chambers with tartan-covered walls, a bust of Queen Victoria, and a canopy bed.

What do you do on your first day in Edinburgh? We have vegetarian haggis at a pub in the Grassmarket and buy a Vodafone on Princes Street (we’ll be glad we did later).

Finally, we’re able to check into the Turret Room. It’s over-the-top fabulous. We spy a blank antique guest book on the windowsill; that evening, after dinner in **The Secret Garden** at the Witchery, Paul and I take notes about the faerie tale we plan to write in it.

**DAY 2: JULY 13 – EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY GHOSTS**

Way too early, Roxy carries a tray up the four flights of worn, curving stone steps to our room and sets up our breakfast. He wins my heart forever when he glances over at me, still in bed, and calls me a pixie.

The day is filled with eerie, macabre, and historical wonders as we explore the remains of eighteenth-century Edinburgh as research for Paul’s novel: the hauntingly beautiful **St. Cuthbert’s Cemetery**, where body snatchers would be likely to

sneak in; the steep **Old Fishmarket Close**, where doomed sea creatures from lamprey to skate were sold; and the **Grassmarket**, where the gallows were erected for public hangings.

Not far from the former execution site, we find the **Hula Juice Bar** at 103-105 West Bow Street (free wifi). Finally, faerie drinks! Rose Lemonade, Sparkling Elderberry, and a wonderful fresh-pressed Pink Lady juice of apple, lemon, lime, ginger.

If you have to have a chic tartan throw of Scottish wool (and we did, in river-peggle blue and heather brown), **Anta** at 93 West Bow Street is the place.

Crave oysters, shrimp, and Champagne? There’s **Maxies Bistro & Wine Bar** at 5b Johnson Terrace overlooking Victoria Street and West Bow down to the Grassmarket. If ale or Scotch (Scottish faeries in the novel *The Good Faeries of New York* are famous for loving it) is your thing, **The Bow Bar** at 80 West Bow (some one hundred and fifty single malt Scotch whiskies are available) is a must-visit.

And if you have a good eye for vintage fashion, you mustn’t miss the musty, jam-packed second-hand shop **W. Armstrong & Son**, 85 Grassmarket. It’s got everything from kilts, sporrans, and tartan shawls to 40’s tea dresses, military uniforms, and pixie ankle boots (yes, they call them that). There’s even an Egyptian-style sarcophagus.

Nothing like fleeting views of ghosts from the past to create the urge to stay alive, and so we head to dinner.

If elves and sea nymphs foraged greens for your salad, you’d have what we ate at **Wedgwood**, a restaurant at 267 Canon-gate on the Royal Mile. (Paul insists I mention it’s the street that connects the Castle with Holyrood Palace, where the ghost of Agnes Sampson—who was tortured in 1592 after being accused of witchcraft—is said to roam.)

Untamed, sharp, bitter, sweetly pungent, and enchanting—who knew little greens could be so bold—the wild-for

aged salad consisted of orache, wild garlic pods, sea purslane, beach coriander, sea sandwort, sweet cicely, aniseed, wild rose, and willow flower; it sparked new sensory sensations and I wondered if I would have strange dreams after eating it.

## DAY 3: JULY 14 – THE FAERIE BOY OF LEITH

Faerie investigators will want to explore **Calton Hill**. If you have the second sight, you'll see a set of giant gates that lead to an immense faerie hall deep inside the hill. Calton Hill wasn't always decorated with historic monuments and buildings; in the late seventeenth century it was a burial ground. It's said to be where the Faerie Boy of Leith (he was about ten) would visit with the wee folk every Thursday evening. He would enter through the gates to play a drum while the faeries danced and banqueted. He told of travelling to Holland and France with the faeries to frolic; though it felt like days, he always returned home that very night.

The location of the gates remains a mystery, but there are tantalizing clues. In 1795, Herman Lyon, a dentist and early podiatrist, bought a burial plot on Calton Hill. No longer marked today, it was mapped on the Ordnance Survey of 1852 as "Jew's Burial Vault." Two centuries later, the *Edinburgh Evening News* reported that two men had found a small hole on top of the hill and rediscovered Lyon's tomb. Their description suggests that the site may have originally have been a cave or fissure. Perhaps this is the entrance that the Faerie Boy used when he went to drum for the faerie folk.

Serious researchers would be wise to go at night. Ideally on a Thursday!

Other excursions: an adorable, witchy little pharmacy called **Napiers**, 18 Bristol Place, famous for its herb and plant remedies. It even sells Faerie Organics makeup. Napiers' weekend detox pack and hangover remedy make excellent gifts.

**Greyfriars Art Shop**, 1 Greyfriars Street, for watercolors to decorate the opening page of the faerie tale we're writing in the guest book.

At 50 Candlemaker Row, we pass **Venus Flytrap Tattoo** (the artist, Charlotte, specializes in Asian-influenced Deco and Gothic designs) and two doors down is **Still Life**, a quaint claustrophobic vintage/junk shop—crockery, tea sets, heaps of books, and piles of paintings. Watch your step!

At four o'clock, gluten-free tea at **The Scotsman Hotel**, 20 North Bridge.

Late dinner at a most excellent Thai restaurant, **Dusit**, 49A Thistle Street.

Before bed, we finally write our faerie tale in the Turret Room guest book. Paul uses watercolors to write, "Once Upon a Time."

## DAY 4: JULY 15 – TO THE HIGHLANDS! (ARGYLL & BUTE)

As we're packing, Mr. Thomson and Roxy come up to the Turret to say goodbye. The room is filled with old books, and I've become attached to a leather-bound volume of *Pearson's Magazine* from 1897 with an article on the art of palm reading and an illustration of faeries. Mr. Thomson, a gentleman of the highest order, offers it to me as a parting gift.

Roxy tells us of one of his most treasured antique shops, and before checking out, we dash over to 49 Cockburn Street to see **Cavanagh Antiques**. (Mr. Thomson and Roxy stay to read our faerie tale.) There's a splendor of tarnished teapots, kilt pins, brooches, and curios, but what we're looking for is cufflinks. Never mind that Paul has over two hundred pairs, including tartan cufflinks and porcelain Robert Burns cufflinks. Here we find a pair of Scottie dogs, the perfect souvenir.

After collecting our luggage at the Witchery, we take a taxi to the car rental place and get our Volvo wagon. Next stop, the Highlands! But first, Paul has to get used to driving on the left side of the road. Within five minutes, we've struck the curb and have two flat tires. That's where the extra insur-

ance comes in ... and the Vodaphone. An hour later, we're on our way again.

At 7:15 p.m., we arrive at the **Ardanaiseig Hotel**, a treasure hidden away in the Highlands on the shores of Loch Awe. They serve us a gorgeous supper (they know I'm gluten/meat free) in an apple-green dining room. On the wall is a large painting in the style of a Dutch Master, in which the men sitting around the table include Mick Jagger, Ringo Starr, Bryan Ferry, Frank Sinatra, and Henry Kissinger. Scotland just gets curiously and curiously.

## DAY 5: JULY 16 – PUGNACIOUS PIXIES: FAERIES CAN BE TERRITORIAL

The reason we brought our hiking boots across the Atlantic is that in Scotland, there's no such thing as trespassing. Anyone is allowed to walk anywhere as long as no damage is done; an open gate must remain open and a closed one closed. The hotel packs us a lunch and we're on our way. With map in hand, we walk the long drive of the Ardanaiseig, turn down the road, and proceed another half mile before slipping into the fields through an open gate. Everything is wet and green. The sky is a changeable charcoal grey. The ground is soggy and recently tilled by some gargantuan machine that gouged the hillside and left water-filled furrows two-feet wide. We carry on playing a crazy game of hopscotch, balancing on hillocks and leaping across gullies. Eventually the incline increases and the trenches end. It begins to drizzle as we continue up the soggy hillside. It's like walking on a sponge. The grass is long and ready to seed. Shafts of reddish-gold wave in the breeze. We're determined to reach the summit of **Creag Thulach** (Craig Tulloch), where legend has it that a man traversing the hill sat down to rest and take in the view. That's when two faeries appeared. They were annoyed at where the man was sitting and debated whether or not he should be punished.



*A Goblin (aka Urisk) is said to inhabit a cave at the base of Ben Venue (Corrie of the Urisks), a site en route to Aberfoyle. Bring boots.*



*Let's have tea!  
Drawing room at the Ardanaiseig Hotel*



*Loch Arve, created by a careless Celtic goddess, as seen from Kilchurn Castle*



*The remains of Kilchurn Castle*

The faeries resolved to let him go with a warning that he never sit on the hill again.

The next time the man was crossing the hill he decided to see if he'd just dreamt the faerie episode. As soon as he seated himself, the sprites appeared, knocking him down and pinching him black and blue. The little bruisers finally let him run off but warned if he should return, things would be much worse. It has been conjectured that the man was sitting upon the faeries' home.

The wind grows stronger as we approach the crest. As if to welcome us, the clouds part and the sun streams down. When we reach the top, we find some flat rocks—perhaps the same ones that the man sat upon—and dare to have our lunch. It's easy to see why faeries would be attracted to such a remote and beautiful place. And though no wee folk appear, we do catch sight of a large beetle, perhaps pulling a faerie coach invisible to our eyes.

#### **DAY 6: JULY 17 – DRIVE TO OBAN, GATEWAY TO THE HEBRIDES**

Over a breakfast of oatmeal, haddock, and poached eggs, we decide to drive into Oban. The port town is known for its whiskey distillery, and for its ferries to the Hebrides (it's called the gateway to the islands). It's not far from Ardanaiseig, as the crow flies, but by car it's a different story—especially if you drive through magical **Glen Lonan**. Be prepared to stop for sheep! There's nothing you can do except reach for the camera when a herd of fifty decide to cross your path. Though slow going, the glen is beautiful, its hills covered with a patchwork of deep greens and burdock browns.

The waterfront shops of Oban, though a bit touristy this time of year, are charming nonetheless. If you're looking to buy some Harris Tweed, this is an easy place to find it. Our favorite shop by far, however, is a little gourmet place called **Kitchen**

**Garden**, 14 George Street. It's full of surprises—from marzipan mice to edible rainbow flowers to fine Champagne to Indian spices. We stock up, knowing that in a few days we'll be moving into the Pineapple, a self-catering property.

The young girl behind the counter picks out some chocolate-sprinkled hedgehogs and green-chocolate frogs for Paul. I film her on my iPad as she recounts a fairy tale she swears is true. (She tells us we can look it up on Google ... the ultimate authority.) In the 1940s, on the Island of Iona, the girl says, a woman heard faeries on a nearby hill calling to her. In the evenings she would try to walk out to the hill but her family always ran out to bring her back. One morning she couldn't be found. A party went searching for her in the wood, and eventually found her at the top of the faerie hill—dead. "Faeries are kind of evil," the girl warns us, as she loads our treats into a white paper bag. We smile politely and head for dinner.

## A Scottish Faerie Trail

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Oban is also known for having the best seafood in Scotland. We sample some of it at **Ee-Usk**, right on the North Pier, with spectacular views of Karrera and the hills of Mull.

### DAY 7: JULY 18 – BOATING ON LOCHAWE TO KIL-CHURN CASTLE


Our final day at the Ardanaiseig. After breakfast, we book the boat to take out on the loch and order a picnic lunch. Down on the dock, the boat master gives us life preservers and instructs Paul on how to start the motor and steer. He says it will take us about fifteen to twenty minutes to get to castle.

Bouncing over the choppy black water, we feel so small on the open loch. Hang an arm overboard and you can tickle the waves with your fingers. The sun shines brilliantly, but the depths seemed bottomless.

This is probably a good time to tell you how the loch was made. High upon the slopes of the great Ben Cruachan (ben is Scottish for mountain), there was a magical well of youth. According to ancient Celtic legend, the well was protected by Bheithir, a beautiful goddess. Part of her beauty regimen was to bathe in the well's enchanted waters every evening. But one time she forgot to place the capstone over the spring. All night the enchanted waters spilled down the mountain, flooding the valley and forming Loch Awe by sunrise. (Almost makes me want to take a goddess beauty-treatment swim!)

Bheithir was punished for this mistake. The gods cursed her and transformed her into the terrible Cailleach Bheithir, the Winter Hag of death and darkness. It is said you can hear her screams echoing around the snowy peaks and chasms of Ben Cruachan. There are those who say that on the night of the winter solstice her piteous and heartrending cries can clearly be heard all the way to Ardanaiseig. We're glad we visited at the summer solstice.

We can finally see the ancient castle



Entrance to Colonel Campbell's  
nineteenth-century Manor House ...  
now the remote Ardanaiseig Hotel



ruins of **Kilchurn** in the distance. All that's missing is a rainbow and it would match perfectly Joseph Mallord William Turner's Romantic painting "Rainbow Over Lock Awe" (c.1831). As we get close, we remember to turn off the motor and lift the propeller so that it doesn't burrow in the sandy bottom. The boat master warned that one couple got stuck in the shallows and need rescuing. This would be even worse than getting two flat tires at once. Paul sets up the oars and rows us to the end of the long pier, where we tie up our boat and disembark.

The stone castle ruins are surrounded by fluffy white sheep. Kilchurn was once on an island not much larger than the castle itself, although it is now connected to the mainland by a narrow stretch of land. The castle was originally built around 1450 by Sir Colin Campbell, first Lord of Glenorchy, as a five-story tower house with a courtyard surrounded by a defensive outer wall. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it underwent several additions and alterations. In 1681, Sir John Campbell, 1st Earl of Breadalbane, converted Kilchurn into a modern barracks, capable of housing two hundred troops. During the 1745 Jacobite uprising of Bonnie Prince Charlie, Kilchurn was used as a British garrison to aid in squashing his bid for the throne. In 1760, the castle was badly damaged by lightning and abandoned; the remains of a turret, still resting upside-down in the center of the courtyard, attest to the brutality of the storm.

After exploring, and a picnic of salmon sandwiches, it's time to return to Ardanaiseig lest the boat master think we got trapped in the shallows.

## DAY 8: JULY 19 – IN THE SHADOW OF REVEREND ROBERT KIRK (STIRLING)

Good-bye fancy cuisine, world-class restaurants, maid service, and concierges. Hello sleeping in and self-catering. We leave Ardanaiseig and drive to Dunmore

Park outside of Stirling to move into the Pineapple.

We have a lot of faerie exploring to do on this gorgeous day before we get there. Today is all about Robert Kirk. We have three stops scheduled: his parish church, or what's left of it in Balquhider, his grave in Aberfoyle, and the hill where he was abducted by faeries.

After breakfast we load up our Volvo and hit the road. Around noon, we fill up for petrol at one of the most entertaining tourist traps in Scotland—**The Green Welly Stop** in Tyndrum, Perthshire. The Green Welly Stop is a shopping/dining complex, a place for everything from ice cream and the cheapest Loch Ness monster souvenirs to single malts and yes, Wellingtons. After debating the need for purchasing a pair or two of wellies, we end up leaving with thistle and heather tea, chocolate faeries, postcards, thistle honey, and oatcakes, all much cheaper than in Oban. We take a moment for tea and lunch—roast beef and mashed potatoes for Paul, homemade veggie burger without bread for me—and then set off again.

About an hour later, we reach Balquhider. There are two churches here, really: the crumbling seventeenth-century stone ruin where the Reverend Robert Kirk was parish minister in 1664, and a new church built in 1855. Behind these churches is the faerie knowe where Reverend Kirk first communed with the sprites. Shady and mossy, the hill feels sacred and enchanted. Indeed, the ancient Celts called the area a "thin place," meaning the boundaries of earth and heaven were very close. If you're ever here you'll understand why. Someone has left a bouquet of flowers in the hollow of a tree. We walk the hill in dappled sunlight. All is quiet. No wonder faeries chose this area to reveal themselves to Reverend Kirk.

Behind the new church is Tom nan An-gae, the hill of fire. Well into the nineteenth century, hearth fires were renewed here during Beltane (the Gaelic May Day) and Samhain (the festival that marks the

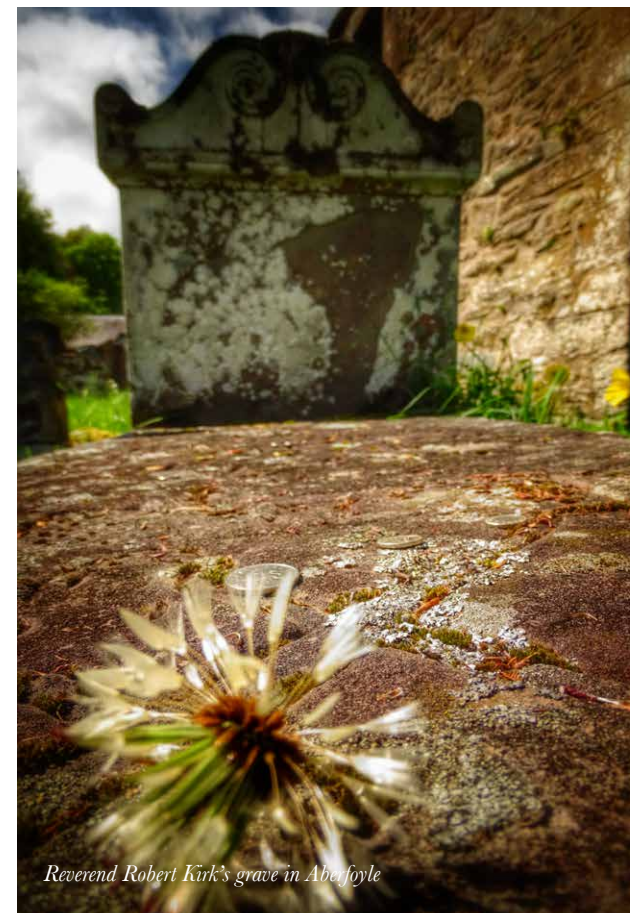
end of the harvest and coincides with Halloween) to encourage ancient gods to bring warmth to the land. In *The Secret Commonwealth*, Kirk writes:

"There be many places called fairy-hills, which the mountain people think impious and dangerous to peel or discover by taking earth or wood from them, superstitiously believing the souls of their predecessors to dwell there. And for that end (say they) a Mote or Mount was dedicated beside every Churchyard to receive the souls, till their adjacent bodies arise, and so become as a fairy-hill. They using bodies of air when called abroad."

Also of interest is that Rob Roy, the eighteenth-century Scottish outlaw, was buried here. Coins have collected on the top of his grave as if it were a wishing well.

Graves seem to be a theme. Our next stop is the **Aberfoyle cemetery**, where Reverend Robert Kirk was laid to rest. After Balquhider, Kirk became the minister of this parish. Here he took daily walks up Doon Hill, where he communicated with the faerie world. He also began writing *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies*, a tell-all book about what he learned from the wee folk. His cemetery lies on the edge of the charming village of Aberfoyle. The quiet cemetery has no signs directing visitors to Kirk's grave. You must find it on your own, walking amongst the headstones and slabs, taking time to read the chiseled inscriptions. Patience will reward you.

According to local lore, Kirk's coffin is full of stones because there was no body to bury. It's said the faeries became angry that he revealed their secrets in his book and spirited him away to faerie land in 1692. Legend has it that Kirk visited a cousin, the laird of Duchray, after his funeral, telling him that he was not, in fact, dead but had been carried off into the world of faeries. He explained that it was possible to return to the mortal world and be restored to his family if a certain ritual was performed. The reverend left behind a pregnant wife. At the baptism of this



Reverend Robert Kirk's grave in Aberfoyle



A pearly wish waiting to be granted on Doon Hill



Faerie offerings on Doon Hill

## A Scottish Faerie Trail

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child he said he would reappear in the church and that if Duchray threw a knife over Kirk's head he would be released from the faeries. On the day of the baptism when the reverend appeared, the laird was too much in shock and failed to throw the knife. Kirk faded from sight and was never seen again.

It's now time to see where Kirk was abducted. We drive down to where the road ends. There was nowhere to park so we knock on the door of **The Corrie Glen B & B**, Manse Road, Aberfoyle, hoping we could park in the driveway for an hour or so. A tall, charming man, Steve, answers. He lets us park and I naturally ask him about the faerie trail. He knows all about Robert Kirk and the disappearance. He tells us a faerie scholar stayed at his cozy B & B for several weeks researching. His wife, Pauline, steps outside and saddles up a horse for a ride.

Paul and I head down the road and in a few minutes we see tiny faerie toads ... scores of them, smaller than a penny, hopping across the dirt path; obviously they're heading to a faerie party in the woods. We take great care not to step on them and then we see the hand-painted sign with spotted mushrooms pointing to the **Doon Hill** path. Up the hill we walk, careful not to step on toads or beetles. As we continue the gradual incline under the shimmering branches, we start to see occasional baubles and trinkets, shreds of ribbons. It adds mystery to the shadowy, ferny woods. The trail wraps around the hill and as we get to the summit, the path opens into a clearing and we are met with a most magical sight. Colorful ribbons hang from every tree. They dangle from branches, they decorate the trunks, they're strung up like garlands along with unicorns, pink ponies, tiny teddy bears, a scarab frozen in Lucite. The breeze blows through the trees and we hear the tinkling of crystal chimes. Offerings of fruit and gifts are scattered almost everywhere. There is not a soul about, we have the hill to ourselves. Little faerie dolls, ethereal figurines with translucent wings, gleaming pink Tinker

Bells, and toys populate the base of trees and stones. Coins are sprinkled all over, in some areas they nearly carpet the forest floor. We make sure not to disturb anything. We learned that these ribbons represent wishes made for the faeries to grant. Some handwritten wishes are tied to the trees as well; wishes for a puppy, a wish to make a crippled girl walk.

S shafts of honeyed light spill through the leaves. We make wishes of our own and film the strange, unexpected sights. Apparently, where we saw the wee plastic effigies of faeries, Robert Kirk saw the real thing. The experience was so surreal that it just about made up for the fact that we hadn't met any real faeries ourselves.

In the center of the clearing is an old tall pine known as the Minister's Pine. It's said to be home to Kirk's spirit. When you run around the pine as fast as you can seven times faeries will appear.

The sun began sinking and we still had more driving before we reached the Pineapple.

### DAY 9 THROUGH 12: JULY 19 – 22 LIVING IN A PINEAPPLE (STIRLING)

If you licked a toxic toad or nibbled magical mushrooms, you might expect to see an inhabitable pineapple. Paul had shown me a photo of the Pineapple built by John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore in 1761 in the Landmark Trust catalogue, and we'd dreamed of staying there. Driving through mesmerizing, melodic fields of grain, into a small wood, up a narrow dirt road we finally arrive. I feel as though a dream has materialized: an imposing, glorious stone fruit with a crown of serrated leaves prickling the sky and windows all around like wide, curious eyes, and a wing on either side: kitchen, dining room, living room to the right; bedrooms and bath on the left. It overlooks an immense walled garden that's open to visitors, but our side of the Pineapple is private.

We set up our writing studio (Paul has his laptop, I write by hand) in the Pineapple pavilion, bring in a tray with tea,

oatcakes, and clementines. It's here that I spend three days writing faerie meditations, reading Scottish faerie tales (from the Pineapple's library), meditating with a mala of labradorite, and writing pen-and-ink postcards in the green-scented air, often until the sky darkens, which in Scotland in July can be as late as 3 a.m. We feel little impulse to explore anything in town, though we do venture out to Airth to buy candles and matches for nocturnal Pineapple teas and twice to Tescos to shop for lentils, watercress, herbs, local salmon, and a pineapple. How could we not buy a pineapple! We celebrate Paul's birthday in the Pineapple with Champagne and cheesecake, and I present him with green octopus cufflinks.

I leave blackberries and oatcakes in a gnarly beech tree for the faeries. In the morning, the blackberries are gone. Although not an official faerie site, I can feel the faeries present and twinkling here. I made a wish ... and yes, the faeries granted it.

### DAY 12: JULY 22 – PRESTONFIELD HOTEL: A GRAND FAREWELL

Our trip is winding up. We drive back to Edinburgh to return our trusty Volvo. Thanks to the extra insurance we don't owe a penny for the tires and banged up rims. A taxi pulls up and carries us to the extravagant **Prestonfield Hotel**.

Ooh! Attractive men in black kilts greet us at the entrance and whisk away our luggage. We have tea upstairs in one of the opulent rooms while they get our room ready. We hear peacocks. Originally built as the Edinburgh home of the Lord Provost in 1687, this luxury hotel is a glamorous indulgence.

Champagne and petit fours await us in our room ... and Mr. Thomson has left us a lovely note in black fountain pen on creamy stationery welcoming us back to Edinburgh.

Sure, the Prestonfield is opulent and lush, but my favorite room is small with hot pink/gold baroque wallpaper, gilded mirrors galore, and a fainting couch: the

powder room. The gent's room (I just had to see it after swooning in the powder room) has a wall of hats.

Dinner at **Rhubarb** restaurant is a must.

### DAY 13: JULY 23 – FLY HOME

As we're about to get into our cab the next morning, it starts to rain. The concierge gives us an umbrella that says Prestonfield Hotel. It's our last souvenir.

*Laren Stover is the author of three books: Bohemian Manifesto, A Field Guide to Living on the Edge, and The Bombshell Manual of Style. She currently writes for The New York Times. Learn more at Larenstover.com.*



*An eighteenth-century folly. Who doesn't want to live in a Pineapple?*



*the* Sinking  
World *of*  
Andreas  
Franke

*by Grace Nuth*

## The Sinking World

Grace Nuth

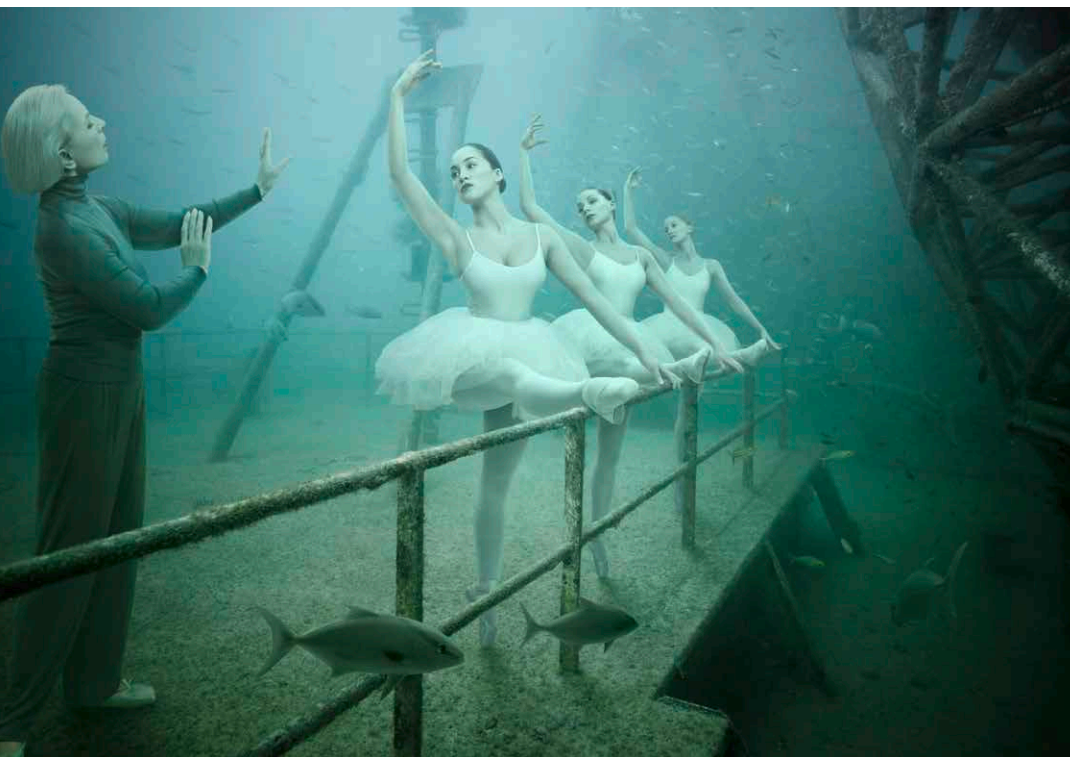
Austria native Andreas Franke is not only an avid diver and long-time professional photographer, but a magician who conjures his own worlds. After photographing the Austrian shipwreck Baron Gautsch several years ago, he loved how the resulting images captured a mystical underwater world filled with mystery and stillness. “I love to shoot underwater,” he says. “The visibility underwater creates this lyrical and mystical atmosphere ... I feel far too many people don’t know what they are missing, how beautiful it is down there.” Still, he felt like something was missing from the images he was taking. “Was it the very peculiar emptiness?” he asks. “The tragic stillness?” He started to think of these underwater scenes as wonderful backdrops for vignettes he could produce in his own studio. His new goal? “To create a world that had never existed before. My world. My own little sinking world.”

After creating his first enhanced underwater images, Franke took the experience even further. Since the images he created were about juxtaposing the world on land with the mystery of the ocean, why not make the shipwreck itself his actual exhibition space, too? The logistics of the idea were challenging. With the assistance of Joe Weatherby from Reefmakers, he created a test image and attached it to the actual wreck of the Vandenberg with strong magnets. The team received a green light from the authorities, and debuted the first underwater exhibition in August of 2011.

And the ocean left her mark. Submerged for four months in the underwater exhibition, the images became covered in a patina of salt and

“I love to shoot underwater. The visibility underwater creates this lyrical and mystical atmosphere ...”





algae, which made each finished piece a true cooperative work between the world above and the world below. Franke loved the effect. “I knew that months in salt water would leave some traces on the pictures,” he says. “But the fact that the result would be so expressive and—in my opinion—of such artistically precious value, that really surprised me.”

The subject matter of some of the scenes from Franke’s work appeared to him instantly as he was diving at the wrecks, while others were inspired by the images once he came back to land and looked at what “backgrounds” he

had photographed for his staged scenes. While one wreck might inspire him with its majestic silence, another (specifically the SS Stavronikita) inspired him as a symbol of life’s “irrepressible avidity” and “submarine ado.” He decided to pay homage to this vitality by pairing images of this ship with Rococo scenes—“this age of decadence with all its intoxicating extravagance, its vanity and disdain ... The wreck full of lavish life demanded a match as overflowing and abundant as Rococo.”

While some of Andreas Franke’s exhibitions are inspired by bygone eras, others could be scenes ripped from daily

“I took hundreds of pictures. And gradually, my concept of making photographic montages by matching staged photography with shots of submarine wrecks was taking shape.”



life. Ballerinas practice on a barre coated in coral, a little girl catches fish with a butterfly net, and a group of young adults mingle outside a “cinema” that’s rusted and silent as small fish dart around their legs and faces. No matter how mundane the inspiring image from above the ocean, each scene becomes delightfully surreal transmuted into its ocean home.

In his latest exhibition, *Phantasy Fairytale*, Franke draws inspiration from the Snow Queen, Little Red Riding Hood, Snow White, and other fairy tale characters—all superimposed against the backdrop of the Caribbean Sea. “I was

looking for a new theme,” he says, “and it was easily found as to me [the underwater world] looked like an enchanted forest, a fairy tale wood.” He displayed these works among the coral reefs and underwater animals in the Per AQUUM Resorts underwater music club and spa in the Maldives. By now, Franke has visited wrecks, and oceans, all over the world, and has no plans to stop. “I want to create some imaginative visuals one hasn’t seen before,” Franke says. “Images [that appeal to] the observer ... and hopefully stimulate and inspire one’s imagination and fantasy.”

“With me around,” he adds, “no wreck is safe anymore.”



“Something about the photos of the wreck captivated me so much that I could not stop thinking about them. I was completely fascinated by that mystical underwater world.”

# THE LAST LAGOON

Brenda Peterson

**ERIC CHENG** is an award-winning underwater photographer whose work has been seen in over a hundred magazines and books worldwide. He shot this baby gray whale over a recent weekend in San Ignacio Lagoon. "I've spent a lot of time in the water with whales of various species, but in many ways, my time floating in a boat next to these gray whales was the most intimate. They really do seem to crave interaction; in fact, if one approaches and you don't splash the water around and give it a vigorous rub down, it will lose interest and leave! It's one of the most special wildlife experiences you can find." *Echengphoto.com.*

All night camped on this desert lagoon, we hear them breathing—sonorous sighs of the mothers accompany the short responses of their newborn calves. It is an otherworldly but intimate lullaby of new life in a remote Baja, Mexico, nursery for gray whales. Where else in the world can we listen to wild animals sleeping so close, trusting a human camp? It is as if we all belong together here under the brilliant burden of stars.

In the morning, our wooden skiff skims across San Ignacio Lagoon as we scan warm turquoise waters set in bright salt flats. Eight of us in the boat raise our binoculars; a grandmother sings lullabies to attract the mother-calf pairs.

I am following the whales from their winter lagoons to their summer arctic feeding grounds on assignment for National Geographic Books, along with my Native co-author, Linda Hogan. But for others on this journey, this is their first time claiming the connection to nature that is everyone's birthright.

"Kids are whale magnets," Renaldo, our boatman, says. "The whales, they always choose boats with children. Maybe we are their toys?"

Perhaps that helps explain what scientists call The Friendly Whale Syndrome—the unique contact between grays and humans that was first documented in the 1970s, three decades after the United States banned the commercial hunting of gray whales in 1946.

That a young mother in our boat is calling out the old whaler's alert—"Thar she bloooows!"—that we reach out our hands instead of harpoons, is a small redemption of human history. In the mid-nineteenth century, Yankee whalers relentlessly pursued the grays into their nurseries; they were hunted to the edge of extinction. Today these most watched of all whales have rebounded to an estimated twenty-six thousand. It is a success story of restoration, but like all happy endings the future is full of doubt and danger; Japan and Norway are fiercely lobbying to resume commercial hunting worldwide.

A barnacled body the length of a semi-truck glides straight toward us, as the mother surfaces. Her blow is a prismatic rainbow, her huge snout rising, baleen-striped mouth dazzling.

Eager hands scratch and stroke the supple gray skin, which feels as smooth and cool as melon. Her eye is dark, unblinking; that eye holds ours, gazing at us as if from the bottom of the ocean. These grays are among the oldest of all whales; their fossil record dates at more than fifty million years old. To touch such a living ancestor is like being called backward in time to a sea teeming with marine life—mammals like us, who nurse their young and breathe air.

Now the calf surfaces, curious but shy. He is brand new—no more than a few days old, with baby whiskers and no barnacles. Only fifteen feet long, he is nursing on milk so rich he will gain a hundred pounds a day. When the calves are two to three months old, they will embark on the perilous twelve-thousand-mile round-trip journey between Baja and the Arctic, an obstacle course of orca attacks, supertanker boat propellers, Russian and subsistence hunters, and other hazards. Thirty percent of the calves will not survive.

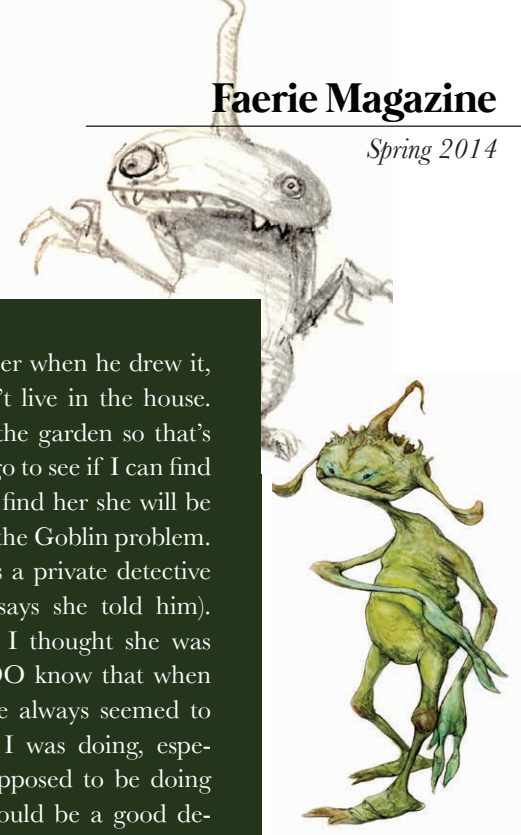
The calf lifts a long snout out of the waves and twirls in a slow pirouette called a spyhop. Breath from his double blowhole is strangely sweet and his pectoral fins reach out like awkward wings. Inside each pectoral are the skeletal remains of a hand, a reminder that these grays once walked on land. Rolling on his back, the newborn calf offers a gleaming white-pink belly to scratch. Someone gasps, noting his navel cord is still attached. The mother lolls nearby, revealing a raised white slash of a harpoon scar along her long belly.

Time stops. Only the cries of cormorants and pelicans, the lapping of mild waves against our boat. Sixteen hands rest tenderly on the mother whale and her calf.

As the whales take a deep breath and at last dive, a woman whispers to the calf, "Safe journey, Little One."

This story is adapted from *O, The Oprah Magazine*, July 2002, with the permission of the author.

Brenda Peterson is a novelist and nature writer, the author of eighteen books, including *Sightings: The Gray Whale's Mysterious Journey* and her mermaid novel *The Drowning World*. Learn more at [Brendapetersonbooks.com](http://Brendapetersonbooks.com).



# The Return of Catbell

Recorded by Wendy Froud

Hello again. It's Cat Bell. It seems like ages to me since I had Wendy write down my thoughts for you. She's been away—she said she flew to the States (I just knew she could although B. says she can't) and now she's back. I haven't seen her wings but I believe she has them even though she's a human. How else could she fly? And I don't know where the States are but they must be too far away to walk to since she didn't. There. That's all I know about it.

Brian stayed here and did some painting and sketching and ate sandwiches. This seemed to make him happy, although since Wendy returned he only eats sandwiches at lunchtime again. Last night Wendy made a dinner that would be fit for a faery. It was lots of tiny new leaves and flowers together on a plate. We all love to eat flowers. They don't seem to mind in the least. I believe it is because we tell them how much we love them before we eat them. I think humans should eat more flowers.

B. and I have still been worried about the "worrying things" in the house. We've both seen more of them. We finally just asked Brian what he thought they were and he said that he believed that they were Goblins. Well, now we know. Goblins. I don't like the sound of that. AND they left something on the table. Wendy said that it's a "Sock Crow" and the Goblins made it out of old human socks. She says that sometimes they make Sock Crows to upset humans but also they make them for Goblin children to play with. So it seems to me that if there's a Sock Crow here, then there must be at least one Goblin child here as well because Wendy and Brian don't seem to be the sort of humans who are easily upset by a Sock Crow. I haven't seen one but Brian did a sketch of one so I'll know it if I see it—a Goblin child, that is. I've seen a Sock Crow.

I'm going to go on a bit of an adventure. Brian showed me a drawing he did. It was a drawing of my mother. He had no idea

that it was my mother when he drew it, but it is. She doesn't live in the house. He saw her out in the garden so that's where I'm going to go to see if I can find her. I think if I can find her she will be able to help us with the Goblin problem. That's because she's a private detective (that's what Brian says she told him). I didn't know that. I thought she was just my mother. I DO know that when I was very little, she always seemed to know exactly what I was doing, especially if I wasn't supposed to be doing it, so I think she would be a good detective. I'll show her Brian's drawing of the Goblin child and the Sock Crow and maybe she'll know what to do.

I'm going to go out through the cat flap. I've done it before. For some reason B. was very upset when I told him I was going out into the garden. He's funny sometimes. I think he mostly doesn't like me and I know for certain that he doesn't like me peaking at his sketchbook, but then he's upset when he doesn't know where I am or if he thinks I might get into trouble. He also still doesn't believe he can fly (which is just SO silly) but until he does, I'm afraid I'll have to leave him behind when I go adventuring. I think he misses me really. I'll bring him back some flowers and we can eat them together. I hope it doesn't shock you that I like to eat flowers. I know that many outdoor faeries tend the flowers and make sure they are growing well and are happy, but we DO eat them. You'll just have to understand. Anyway, I think B. will be very happy if I bring him some flowers and he'll also be happy if I can find my mother and see if she knows more about the Goblins. I'm quite sure she will. I'm off now. I'll have to sneak out without the cat seeing me since I don't think he would like me using his cat flap.

I'll tell you more when I get back.



a man who moved like that, and some other ten-year-old would sit in the bar of The Top of the Mark and fall in love the way I fell in love with my aunt and the stranger.

All grown up, I reveled in tide pools, spent whole summers at the ocean. Redwoods are my favorite trees. I planted one in my California home, and the thing grew enormous, and was where hummingbirds made a yearly nest. Many times I saw the redwoods in Big Sur, the lone cypress on Point Lobos, and the Pacific Ocean, up and down the coast. During the aftermath of one particularly intense winter storm, I stood on a pier in Huntington Beach as pod gray whales swam past, causing the pilings to vibrate. They were followed by scores of dolphins. In Alaska, where I lived for eight wonderful years, I had in my back yard spruce trees eighty feet tall. Bald eagles and ravens regularly visited my trees. Black bears and moose traveled through my front yard, and many times I stood outdoors watching the Northern Lights dance across the sky.

But none of those magical places ever affected me the way that afternoon at the Top of the Mark hotel did, and still does. The sight of two people that I would later learn were lovers over many decades, meeting in cities they'd travel to, as both were married to other people, ruined me for landscape in any other form. At ten, what did I know of love? My parents yelled at each other and we ate a lot of spaghetti. Aside for the occasional dance my mother broke into, love between them seemed distant and ordinary. I learned to dance, and to this day I can cha-cha, tango, and adapt to whatever a partner asks of me. That to me is the most magical of landscapes, two people so familiar with each other's bodies that they follow and dip while between them fog travels, sometimes filled with sorrow, other times, in joy, each move telegraphing frustration and desire, but above all, that moment of connection. Once I saw it, I would settle for nothing less in my own life, and I remain as faithful to that as my mother does to Catholicism.

When my great aunt died, I inherited her personal papers, consisting of this man's love letters to her, spanning thirty years, each signed with a pseudonym. I never learned his name.

*Jo-Ann Mapson is the bestselling author of eleven novels and one book of short stories. Her latest book, Owen's Daughter, will be published this summer. Learn more at [Joannmapson.com](http://Joannmapson.com).*

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 55

When I ran out of money, I ran back to the bench where my aunt sat waiting. But she wasn't alone. She was talking with a gentleman in a gray suit. He wore a black fedora hat, an overcoat, and they were laughing. She waved goodbye, gathered me up, and hailed a cab. Back at the hotel, she wanted me to take a nap, but how could I sleep, so high on chocolate. I jittered around the hotel room until she said, "Let's take the elevator to the roof."

If the dining cars on the train, or hotel room service had impressed me, this restaurant and lounge left all that behind in the dust. Windows all around showed the bird's-eye view of the city. As the fog moved in, I felt like I was on an airplane, passing through clouds. The host showed us to our table. More starched linen, and a personal favorite of mine, cocktail napkins and plastic swizzle sticks. My aunt ordered me a Shirley Temple, and for herself, a gin and tonic.

There was a trio, three men dressed in black suits, holding musical instruments, and they began playing Big Band era music, which I recognized from my parents' album collections. Whenever my father cranked them up at home, my mom, usually busy with cooking or ironing or changing a baby, would stop whatever she was doing and dance. I was stunned to learn that this person existed inside my generally cranky mom. But here in the lounge, we were the only few people in the room, and everyone was listening, including me. We drank our drinks and my aunt had a refill.

Then a man came into the room, checked his overcoat and hat, and sat down at the bar. After a few songs, he came to our table, and I could see he was the man from Chinatown. "Care to dance?" he asked my aunt, and she pretended to think it over. "Just one dance," she said. "More than I hoped for," he replied, and they moved to the dance floor in the center of the room.

They danced together as if made for each other, to "Alice Blue Gown," and it wasn't any dance I recognized, like a waltz, or the Watusi my older sister danced with her high school friends. This was complicated, with moves that required perfect timing, familiarity, and something else I couldn't articulate, but felt in my belly, and lower, like electricity, or warm water. In that moment, everything changed. Someday I would master that dance and find

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# STORYBOOK PALACE

by Elyssa East

**B**efore her exile to France, Queen Amélie, Portugal's last monarch, spent her final night in her country at the Pena National Palace in Sintra. Two years before, when the Portuguese royal family was riding in a carriage through Lisbon, Amélie's husband King Carlos and their eldest son Prince Dom Luís were killed in an attempted regicide. Amélie, however, managed to save her youngest son Manuel with her bouquet of flowers. Manuel was crowned king and the monarchy limped on for two more years before a revolution put an end to it forever.

When I first heard this tale while traveling with my husband in Portugal last summer it struck me as sheer fantasy, one of those convenient twists of history to fit a storybook idea of a queen. I pondered the details. Did Amélie use the flowers like a shield? Did they trap the bullet? How was such a defense possible? What kind of flowers could stop a bullet? Roses, I hoped. I liked what the story suggested about Amélie, Portugal, and the power of nature, if not the grace of a bouquet, but it simply seemed like a great story, not something real. Then I went to Sintra.

It was a sweltering July day. Desperate to escape Lisbon's overwhelming heat, we traveled one hour west of Lisbon to Sintra,

a UNESCO World Heritage site. Our train pulled into a terracotta tile roofed station surrounded by mist-shrouded peaks dotted with an astounding seven palaces—including Amélie's Pena National Palace, the ruins of a castle, and an ancient convent.

Though the heat quickly caught up to us, it seemed as if time had not. I nearly expected a carriage to come down the road and ferry us off to Pena Palace, the confectionary abode perched atop a mountain where I imagined Queen Amélie spent a bitter and difficult last night. Instead, a run of the mill small town bus arrived. It was the only thing about the area that I would consider generic.

Lord Byron had called the village of Sintra "the most beautiful in the world." If he were to go there today he'd think much the same. The "palaces and gardens rising in the midst of rocks, cataracts and precipices; convents on stupendous heights . . ." that had so charmed Byron had not much changed. Our bus ferried us through a charming village, past the flag-topped Sintra National Palace with its twin conical towers, up hills through a dense forest shielding palaces from our view, past the medieval ramparts of the Castle of the Moors to the entrance to Pena

Palace, high atop a mountain peak. Byron had called the area "Edenic," but it seemed altogether of another era to me.

Standing at the gate to Pena Palace I couldn't help but think that for sheer outlandishness alone, Amélie chose well. The red, yellow, and grey castle is a frothy pastiche of colors and architectural styles—Gothic, Portugal's signature Manueline, Moorish, and Renaissance—known as the Romanticist style. The result appears as if Baron Ludwig von Eschwege, the architect, had drawn up plans to illustrate a children's storybook rather than to construct an actual building.

My husband and I walked up the steep drive to the palace's entrance and toured the various rooms, including the bedroom where Amélie had spent the night before her exile. The rooms were what I would call European Palace Light Mit Drapery. They felt cramped, both over and under decorated, and didn't do much for me, but Pena's bizarre exterior and sweeping vistas were something else altogether. We walked along the palace's parapets to a turret with a view of the surrounding mountains and the Atlantic. It was so quiet, peaceful, and outlandish, I couldn't help but feel as if I had entered a fairy tale and was

surveying my own realm of cloud and mist and ocean. Even as the sun bore down, burning off the last wisps of mist, and the sounds of a Chinese tour group brought me back to the present day, I felt as if we had wandered inside a story, Queen Amélie's perhaps, and parts of it had become my own. Pena had transported me so completely I found it hard to leave. I'm certain that parting was far more challenging for Queen Amélie.

Being tourists with not a lot of time to see all there was to be seen, we set out for Sintra's other palaces via Pena's lush gardens, which were as fantastical as the palace itself. As we strolled past exotic plants reminiscent of Dr. Seuss and a reflecting pool lined with squat palm trees and a short castle tower that appeared as if it were home to dwarves, Portugal came to seem like the kind of place where a woman could temporarily save the monarchy with a bouquet of flowers. Like Pena Palace itself, such possibilities were not simple fantasies; they were real.

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*Elyssa East teaches at Columbia University and is the author of the award-winning book, Dogtown: Death and Enchantment in a New England Ghost Town. Learn more at [ElyssaEast.com](http://ElyssaEast.com).*

We asked our readers to tell us about their favorite things about summertime—and what they were looking forward to most. Now that summer's here, how many of you are enjoying the blissful elements of the season? What's your perfect summer day?

## FROM OUR READERS

*"Country car rides with the windows down. I love the rumble of the road underneath me, the sigh of swaying tree leaves above me, and the nostalgic scent of dusty lanes and hay-ridden fields."*

– Tristan Normile

*"Plants growing, blooming, and flourishing. Little creatures coming out of hibernation, such as dragonflies, butterflies, frogs, and turtles. So much action and life!"*

– Tiffany Olson

*"Sitting in the garden among the flowers and painting in the sunshine."*

– Carole Lockhart Stuart

*"Catching fireflies with my children and then letting them go."*

– Stephanie Lynn Lane

*"The sunshine. Letting yourself be free and embracing the curves you're born with and having confidence in a swimsuit."*

– Melanie Nichols

*"No school, no stress, feeling free, staying up all night, traveling, taking photos, making art, making memories."*

– Laura Zsikai

*"The sound of the crickets just before dark and the birds just before the light."*

– Ruth Lapen

*"I love the smell of summer rain, the sound of it hitting my house while my windows are wide open. I also love the fact that my morning alarm is the birds chirping outside my window."*

–Carolynn Mirabile

*"...The taste of a home grown tomato. There's nothing tastes like a home grown tomato!"*

– Amy Franklin Smith

*"Sunlight that makes the tiny dew drops glimmer first thing in the morning!"*

– Pippa Fletcher

*"Walking barefoot in the dew-covered grass with my early morning coffee in hand. Looking at how things have changed in the garden only since yesterday. Bliss."*

– Ali Higgins

*"Watching plants grow and blossom and the surprises of little tiny fruits."*

– Michael Shane

*"The bees buzzing, the whir of a hummingbird's wings so close to my ear, the blazing colors of the flowers and the sun on my back while the ocean roars that lulls me to sleep!"*

– Veronica Wheeler

*"Sitting under the gazebo watching my granddaughter play in her pool!"*

– Val L. Carriere

*"I love walking into the woods in the early morning after a rain. The smell literally feeds me with life."*

– Libby Nyberg Baker

*"The relaxed, genteel, carefree spirit of the season; casual dress, picnics, water fun, warm days, blue skies."*

– Jan Lugenbuhl

*"Faerie festivals! Summer's our busiest season!"*

– Emily Crum

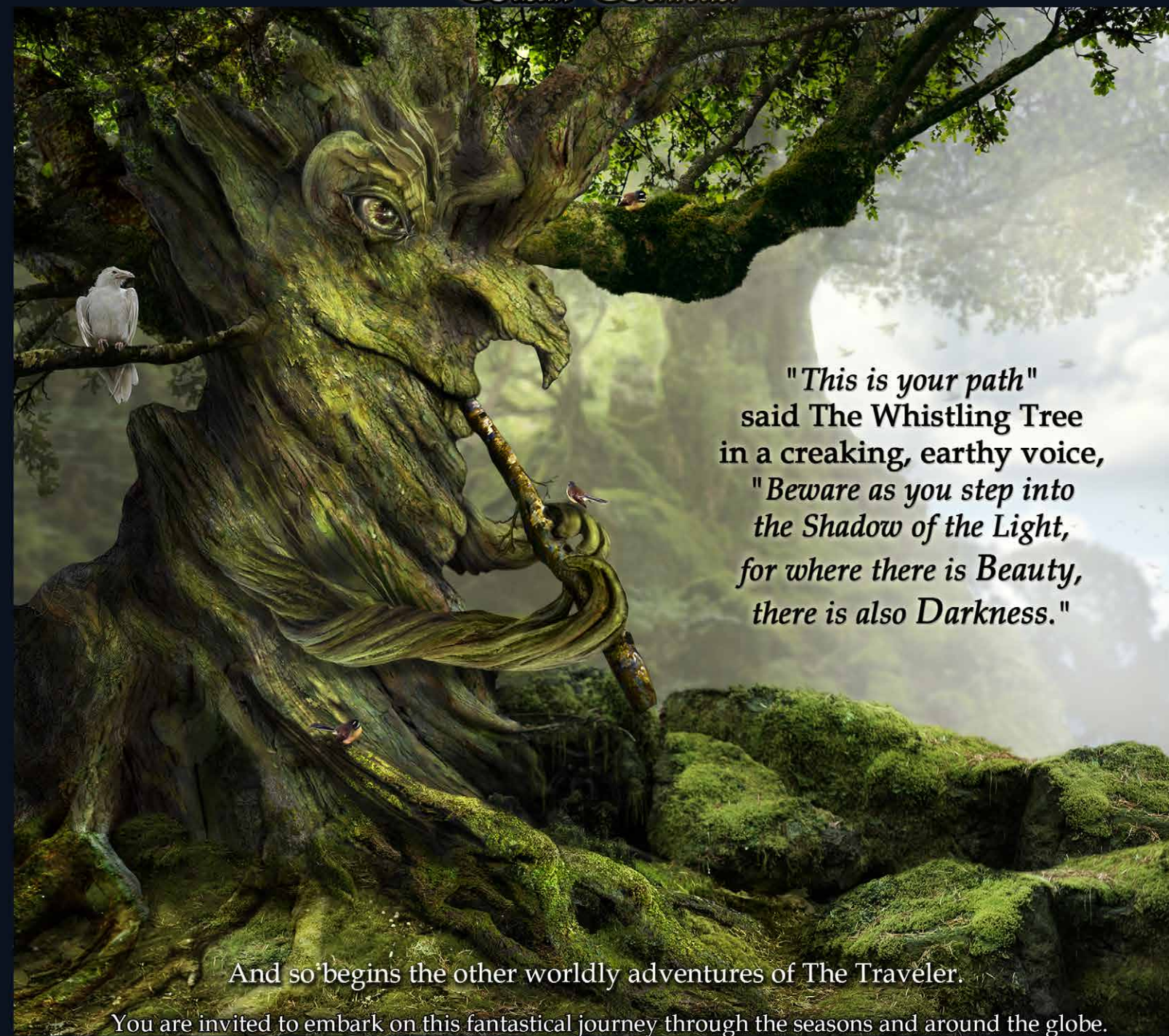
*"Fireflies that turn into Faeries in the blink of an eye. Silvery geese that fly over the moon. And koi fish that whisper to ducks floating above."*

– Wendy Willow

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