

FAERIE MAGAZINE

Celebrating the Extraordinary

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the **MERMAID**
issue

ROBERT SHORT

ICONIC MERMAID CREATIONS

Celebrating
**THE MERMAID
 HANDBOOK**
 BY CAROLYN TURGEON



SPLASH
 SABRINA DOWN UNDER
 DISNEY'S LITTLE MERMAID'S ISLE
 JIM CARREY/ROLLING STONE

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Illustrations © Guinevere von Sreeden

“There are people all over the world who carry the mermaid inside them, that otherworldly beauty and longing and desire that made her reach for heaven when she lived in the darkness of the sea.” —Carolyn Turgeon, Mermaid

It’s been nearly five years since *Faerie Magazine* published its special winter 2013 Mermaids issue—an issue that’s long been sold out but is available for free on our inimitable app—with professional mermaid Hannah Fraser on the cover and all kinds of oceanic, mermaidly delights inside. This is how I first came to *Faerie Magazine*, after meeting founder and publisher Kim Cross at the Maryland Faerie Festival in 2011 (where I was the “guest mermaid author”) and brainstorming with her about a special issue of the magazine dedicated to all things half-fish, half-maiden. I stayed on as editor in chief, in love with the fact that every few months we could conjure, as if by magic, a new compendium of beauty and enchantment—everything wonderful, really—all with buttery soft, color-drenched pages.

We’ve explored numerous other themes since, everything from Tolkien to witches to Victoriana, and we’ve revisited mermaids here and there over the years, but this is our first full-blown mermaid issue since that initial one in 2013. The issue is meant, in part, to serve as a companion to *The Mermaid Handbook*, which came out from HarperCollins in May 2018 and is our follow-up to last autumn’s *The Faerie Handbook*. Both handbooks are extensions of the magazine: guides to living as magically as possible in the world, whether you’re an aspiring mermaid or a landbound human who dreams, on occasion, of the sea.

It’s a delight to revisit my favorite topic, of course, and to see that mermaids are having yet another moment in the culture at large, though as far as I can tell they haven’t stopped having a moment and probably never will. Because who doesn’t love mermaids, in all their shimmer and dazzle, their deep symbolism, their melancholy and danger, their endless complications and contradictions and flexibility? They are everything at once: They’re superheroes, and they’re us—our best, most powerful selves. So I hope you’ll enjoy them in their various forms over the following pages, and that you’ll bookmark a page or two and make yourself some mermaid ears, or a mermaid crown, or a blingy mermaid bra, or just a batch of mermaid junk food (seaweed-chip style) to enjoy as you delve in.

Love,
Carolyn Turgeon



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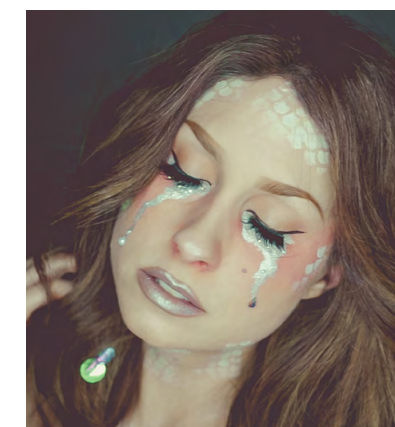
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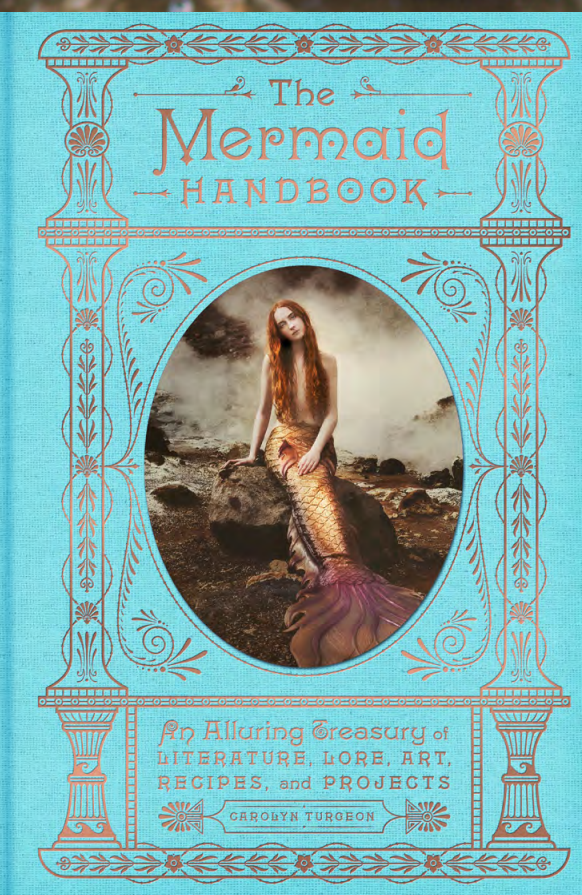
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CONTRIBUTORS

Faerie Magazine's Mermaid Issue



Jeanine Hall Gailey

Jeanine Hall Gailey served as the second poet laureate of Redmond, Washington. She's the author of five poetry books: *Becoming the Villainess*, *She Returns to the Floating World*, *Unexplained Fevers*, *The Robot Scientist's Daughter*, and *Field Guide to the End of the World*, as well as *PR for Poets*. "I've always been captivated by sea creatures, mermaids, and selkies," she says. "The idea of being a little out of your element—literally—always in the middle of transformation, between sea and earth, fascinates me. Since being diagnosed with MS, I've come to identify more closely with the Little Mermaid, whose legs caused her so much agony and who danced on them anyway."



Joanne Harris

Joanne Harris is the author of eighteen novels, including the best-selling *Chocolat* and *The Testament of Loki*, and several collections of short stories. She's also the co-author of a number of musical projects. Inspired by the folklore of her native Yorkshire and the Brittany of her mother's family, her work often contains elements of myth, fairy tale, and fantasy. Her story in this issue forms part of her stage show, *Storytime*, combining live storytelling, original music, pictures, and songs. "The show is based on the idea that dreams, like the best kinds of stories, are universal," she says. She lives in an English bluebell wood and works from a shed in her garden.



Tricia Saroya

Tricia Saroya has been creative all her life and enjoys working in a variety of mediums, particularly with vibrant color. Currently her creativity expresses itself in floral and event design, costumes, fantasy photo shoots, whimsical fairy houses and wings, as well as sacred visionary art. She lives in a restored caravan on an avocado ranch, and each Sunday sells her colorful animal paintings on the beach in Santa Barbara, California. "For me, mermaid living is about all the soft colors of the ocean mixed with a bit of sparkly magic," she says. "Billowing beautiful fabrics drenched in the colors of the sea ... shells and driftwood and, of course, glitter!"



Shveta Thakrar

Shveta Thakrar is a writer of South Asian-flavored fantasy and a part-time nagini. Her work has appeared in a number of magazines and anthologies, most recently *Beyond the Woods: Fairy Tales Retold*, *A Thousand Beginnings and Endings*, and *Toil & Trouble*. "One of my favorite stories in the *Mahabharata* stars goddess Ganga and human king Shantanu," she says, "a beastly bride tale involving secrecy, broken promises, and the startling revelation that what seems horrible (making children disappear) is actually a merciful way to fulfill a curse. But we're never told what happens to Ganga's vehicle, the makara, while she's off with Shantanu, so I wrote my own story to find out."



Vanessa Walton

Cover model Vanessa Walton is a fairy-tale gown designer and model based in sunny Los Angeles. Her work—inspired by nature, literature, art, and all things magical—has been showcased in galleries, museums, and film. She spends her time transforming clients into the magical creatures of their dreams or trekking through the woodlands and beaches with fellow models and photographers to create new fairy-tale imagery and stories to share. Having had a kinship with the ocean—mermaids in particular—since she was young, she is thrilled to have contributed to this issue with a tutorial for "Sea Nymph Ears" as well as a "Sea of Flowers" mermaid editorial.



The Wondersmith

Miss Wondersmith highlights the beauty of her Pacific Northwest home through her handcrafted glass and ceramic artwork, recipes featuring foraged foods, and carefully curated experiences for strangers, which she gifts through invites hidden in public places. She is constantly inspired by the natural beauty that surrounds her and shares some oceanic love in this issue. "The deep mystery of the crashing waves on the rocky coastlines speaks to me," she says, "and I wanted to bottle up that feeling of mermaid magic and share it with a group of guests through messages in a bottle washed up on the same shores that inspired Shipwreck, the event featured in this issue."

SIXTEEN SIGNS YOU MAY BE A MERMAID

by Grace Nuth

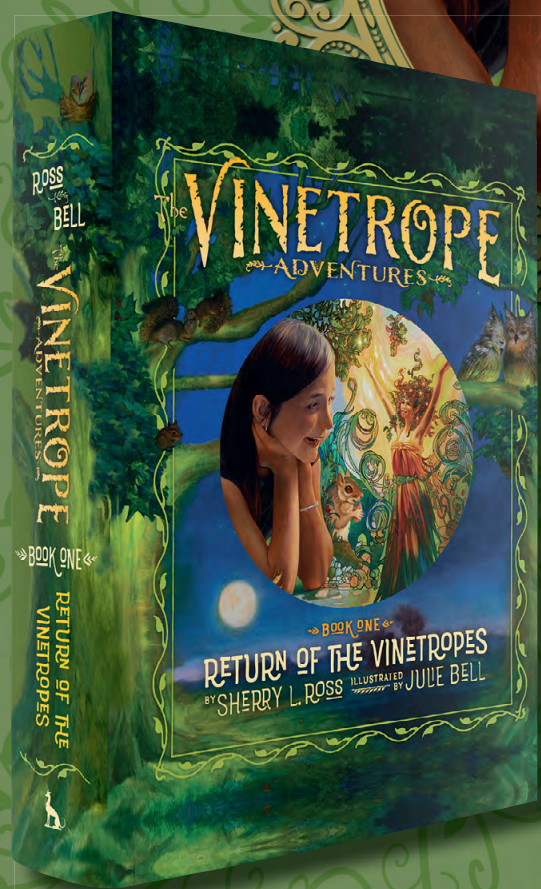
Illustration by Guinevere von Sneeden

- Your extra money goes to bath bombs, bath soaps, and perfumes.
- As a child, you practiced pressing your legs and feet together as hard as you could, hoping to fuse them into a tail.
- *The Shape of Water* felt like an autobiography when you saw it in the theater more than once.
- When you hold a conch shell to your ear, it sounds like home.
- Sometimes you cry for no apparent reason, and the salty taste of your tears makes you yearn even more.
- You wear sea shells every day: Abalone dangles from your ears; a nautilus necklace glimmers.
- You listen to ocean or whale songs to drift off to sleep each night.
- Your skin shimmers in the light, and even when it doesn't, you wear glitter and sparkles to make it perfectly so.
- When you read *The Little Mermaid*, you can feel the cut glass under her human feet and cry every time she turns to foam at the end.
- Dark, strange weather and times of day appeal to you more than the bright, clear light of midday. You love drizzling, dark afternoons, the times just after dusk, and just before dawn.
- When sipping a drink through a straw, you always blow bubbles.
- Friends tease you that walking into your house is like going underwater—walls painted blue, teal, and green.
- "Song to the Siren" is your anthem.
- You have a bubbly exterior but hidden depths to your personality as well.
- The feeling of sand between your toes is more soothing than any foot massage.
- The call of the ocean is always inside you.

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BY SHERRY L. ROSS ILLUSTRATED BY JULIE BELL

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A Q&A with *The Mermaid Handbook* author (and *Faerie Magazine* editor)

CAROLYN TURGEON by Rona Berg

Rona Berg: Several years ago, you wrote a beautiful novel called *Mermaid*. Can you share a tantalizing bit about what inspired it?

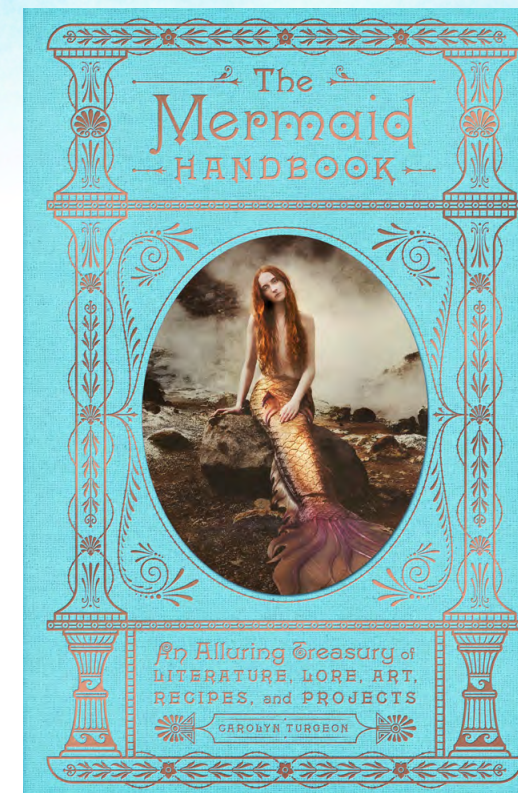
Carolyn Turgeon: I actually kind of sold that book by accident, after a UK publisher bought the rights to my second novel, *Godmother*, and asked what else I was working on. I made a list of ideas, and they bought one at the bottom—a kids book about a mermaid—but as an adult novel! So I needed a story, and my agent pushed me toward Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Little Mermaid,” which is much different from the Disney film and felt to me much too strange and sad to do much with ... until I focused in on the character of the human princess, the one who ends up with the prince. In the story we know almost nothing about her other than that it’s the prince’s marriage to her that causes the mermaid’s heart

to break. I thought about this princess and her role in the story, and I imagined her witnessing the moment when the mermaid saves the drowning prince and pulls him to shore. How magical and life-changing that moment would have been. The whole book unfolded from there.

RB: What do you find so inspiring about mermaids? Why are you drawn to them? What is their allure?

CT: Like many mermaid lovers, I grew up loving *Splash* and *The Little Mermaid*, but it wasn’t until I started my own novel that I saw how enchanted people really are by these gorgeous creatures. People, strangers even, started sending me pictures of mermaids, stories about mermaids ... and I started seeing them everywhere and having all kinds of synchronicities around them. I was traveling a lot then, and everywhere I looked there seemed to be some mermaid winking back at me. I was staying in Berlin at one point and traveled to Warsaw to see a concert—and was shocked to see mermaids all over that city. The mermaid has been the symbol of Warsaw since the Middle Ages. I had no idea!

As for their allure, mermaids are so rich and complicated. They’re indescribably beautiful yet come from the deep sea and can pull you under in a moment. They’re sexy but sexless, in a way. They’re an incredible symbol of female freedom and power. I’ve been particularly drawn to the many real-life mermaids out



there, those ladies who put on tails and swim in the open ocean with manta rays and whales. If you can swim powerfully through the water with these dazzling creatures and hold your breath for minutes at a time and feel a powerful connection with the sea, who’s to say you’re not, in fact, a mermaid? I’m not sure how many other fantasy creatures are as accessible yet still so mysterious and otherworldly.

I was so inspired by all the sea-loving women I spoke with—many for a blog called *I Am a Mermaid* that I started just before my novel was published—that I myself was inspired to attend mermaid camp at Weeki Wachee in Florida and even become scuba certified a few months later, after forty years of avoiding the ocean at all costs!

RB: *The Mermaid Handbook* is loaded with gorgeous images, art, recipes, love, and lore. Can you share some of the highlights of putting it together?

CT: Mermaids have such a long, varied history, I wanted to make sure that the art in the book reflected that—and was stunning! I looked through reams of classic, swoony mermaid art, as well as kitschier images of midcentury mermaids from porthole lounges, Weeki Wachee (which opened in 1947), Aquarama (1962), and films like *Mr. Peabody and the Mermaid*. And I worked with *Faerie* photo editor Steve Parke on a number of images for the book—for tutorials like a mermaid crown, a mermaid comb, mermaid eye makeup, mermaid cocktails, shell mirrors and party favors ... all kinds of wonderful things! I really wanted the handbook to be a compendium of all things mermaid and all the best things. I’ve spent a lot of time with these fishtailed ladies, though less in the past few years, so this book gave me the chance to go back in and pluck up everything I thought was most beautiful. Plus mermaid is a lifestyle: There are ways to add oceanic glamour to every aspect of your life, and that’s what the handbook (and this special issue of *Faerie*) is all about!

The Mermaid Handbook, the follow-up to 2017’s *The Faerie Handbook*, was published by HarperCollins in May 2018 and is available at faeriemag.com and wherever books are sold.



ON OUR COVER

BENEATH THE WAVES

BY GRACE NUTH

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHERYL KELLEHER WALSH

Beneath the Waves

Grace Nuth

The fairies we see in today's pop-culture representations are only a small shadow of the rich world of Faerie lore. It shouldn't surprise anyone, therefore, that mermaids also have a rich mythic history that extends far beyond the superficial, albeit charming, iridescent scale pillows and coffee-selling sirens so often seen in daily life. Artist and photographer Cheryl Kelleher Walsh took a rather circuitous route to the murky realms of mer-maidens and men, first falling in love with the enigmatic challenge of underwater photography and, through that medium, discovering her own way of representing the world of mer beyond what is typically seen.

"Honestly I wasn't too sure about the mermaid movement at first," she admits. "It was too predictable to have a mermaid in an underwater image. I want my images to have an air of mystery, an uncertainty if they really are underwater or not." Her opinion was changed when she started working with the tails created by Finfolk Productions. "The first time I worked with a mermaid tail by Finfolk, I fell in love with the magical quality of mermaids. There really is an otherworldly quality to their tails that brings me and my models to a different place. By now I've done a ton of research on the origins of mermaid stories from around the world, and I'm completely enthralled."

Kelleher Walsh's photography is stunning in part because of its entirely unique and painterly style. "I always wanted to create images that look like old paintings but are 100 percent photographic," she says. To achieve this look successfully, she tries to control as much of the shoot as possible, from lighting, color harmony, and composition to design, posing, and expression. And all this in a very challenging and unforgiving underwater environment. Despite making a strong effort to control the elements and repeating poses many times, there is no guarantee. "There is no possible way to get the same outcome no matter what we do," she says. "Sometimes the stars line up and everything is perfect but more often than not there is one thing that is off." This is where the post-processing work comes in—an art in and of itself, and one she has spent years perfecting. "I do a fair amount of practicing, just like a musician still practices even after they've performed a piece hundreds of times."

Practice is also key for the models. Underwater shoots are some of the most difficult and stressful challenges for a model, and Kelleher Walsh has a few tips for someone trying to get started. "Underwater photography is a science and an art. Once you understand the science, then you can dial in the variables and focus on the art. Models should study the poses in images

they like and copy those poses in the water. Practice until you can do it while making it look effortless. Hard work and determination are what make dreams come true." She also adds an important reminder for would-be underwater photographers as well. "Always, always, always use extreme caution! This can be far more dangerous than people think. Electronics and water are not friends. Don't use flashes near a pool unless you fully understand the consequences and really know what you are doing. Always have a safety person whose sole responsibility it is to keep an eye on your model."

Kelleher Walsh's work is inarguably beautiful, but she still encounters dissent from those who cannot see past the subject matter or appreciate its magic. "My work is not for everyone and I find that people either get it or they don't," she says. "I have no room in my life for people who look down their noses at mermaids and fairies. If they have no place in their heart for some magic and fantasy, then I wouldn't want them to have my work. People need art and magic and fantasy and the beauty that they want to see. It improves the quality of life and we all deserve that."

Although Kelleher Walsh has come to admire the world of mermaid lore, she still strives for a unique perspective in her photographic narratives. "I love old paintings of mermaids but really look for inspiration in non-mermaid paintings for my work," she says. "I'm not looking for traditional images but something else. I have a fairly new piece that is a retelling of the Syrian story of Atargatis, the first mermaid. Most tales and legends, like those of the Roman and Greek gods and goddesses, were passed down by men, like Homer. My perspective is that there might be another side to the story, perhaps the women's version of the story, that is quite different from the version we've heard. For every broken heart there are usually two versions of the story. I'm looking to tell that other version of the story. That's far more interesting to me."

Kelleher Walsh's art carries forward the rich history of mermaid legends, and she has many more stories to tell and retell in her own unique style and voice.

"I've developed an understanding and respect for the spirit of a mermaid's heart," she says. "It's not a fad to me but a way of life, something that lives in your soul."



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

Photography: Cheryl Walsh Fine Art Photography

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Wardrobe: Creature of Habit, Deborah Lindquist, Epic Cosplay Wigs, Fiori Couture, Jessica Dru Johnson,

Los tesoros de la Ayalga, Miss G Designs, Pendragon Costumes Reilena, Sew Trendy Accessories

Tails: Finfolk Productions









Photo 12 / Alamy Stock Photo

Mr. Mastroianni and the Mermaid

In a 2012 article for *Vanity Fair*, Charlotte Chandler recounts a story that Italian director Federico Fellini told her about the casting of the 1960 film *La Dolce Vita*. Fellini, who “visualized his characters in cartoons before casting actors,” wanted Marcello Mastroianni for the main role. To entice the actor, Fellini gave him a thick manuscript with every page blank except the first, where he’d drawn Mastroianni on a little boat in the middle of the ocean. His male appendage extended all the way to the seafloor, where it was surrounded by swimming mermaids.

Fellini then recounted, “Marcello looked at the picture and said, ‘It’s an interesting part. I’ll do it.’”

**SEAWEED SALAD WITH
AVOCADO AND EDAMAME**

This seaweed salad is easy, light, and makes a delicate, mermaid-friendly lunch or starter. Serve with white wine if you're feeling especially fancy.

Seaside Feasts

Not only is seaweed ultra-healthy, it's beloved by landlocked mermaids who want that hint of sea in everything they do—and eat. Sea-dwelling sirens can't get enough of the stuff—how do you think they maintain those lustrous locks and that luminous skin?—but a dash of seaweed in a lovely risotto or a fresh salad might be all a would-be mermaid needs to keep herself focused on her earthly life ... even when all she dreams about is the world underwater.

RECIPES AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY SARA GHEDINA
[A.K.A. ONE GIRL IN THE KITCHEN]





SEAWEED CHIPS

These delicious chips are like junk food for mermaids! If you want more spice, mix some wasabi in with the liquid aminos or add some red pepper flakes.

MUSHROOM SEAWEED RISOTTO

This is a traditional Italian risotto with a seamaidenly, seaweedy twist. Add as much crumbled nori as you like to get that hint of oceanic flavor.





SEAWEED SALAD WITH AVOCADO AND EDAMAME

serves four

For the salad:

2 oz. dried wakame
2 English cucumbers
2 small carrots
2 or 3 radishes
1 avocado, sliced
1 cup cooked edamame
2 tbsp. sesame seeds

For the dressing:

¼ cup rice vinegar
3 tbsp. soy sauce
2 tbsp. toasted sesame oil
1 tbsp. honey
1 tbsp. grated ginger
juice of 1 lime
1 tsp. chili pepper flakes
black pepper to taste

Soak seaweed in warm water for about five minutes. Drain and squeeze out excess water with your hands. Cut seaweed into half-inch-wide strips and place them in a large bowl.

Cut both carrots and cucumbers julienne style, slice radishes very thin, and add them to the bowl.

For the dressing, stir together vinegar, soy sauce, sesame oil, honey, ginger, lime juice, chili flakes, and black pepper until everything is combined. Pour it into the bowl with the seaweed-and-vegetable mix, and toss to combine. Add sliced avocado and edamame and sprinkle with sesame seeds.



SEAWEED CHIPS

serves four

10 nori sheets
3 tbsp. toasted sesame oil
1½ tbsp. liquid aminos
¼ cup sesame seeds

Place them on two baking trays, as close as possible but without overlapping.

Lightly brush them with the oil mix and generously sprinkle with sesame seeds.

Bake for seven minutes, turn them on the other side with a tong, and bake for another four to five minutes. Let them cool and then store in an airtight container.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Mix liquid aminos and sesame oil together in a small bowl.

Cut all sheets of nori in half, then in half again, and again until you have eight pieces per sheet.



MUSHROOM SEAWEED RISOTTO

serves four

6 cups vegetable stock
2 nori sheets
¼ cup dried porcini
4 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
2 garlic cloves
1 small shallot
¾ lb. cremini mushrooms
1½ cups arborio rice
½ cup dried white wine
1 tbsp. butter
1½ tbsp. sesame seeds
salt and pepper to taste

Soak dried porcini in one cup of warm water for about 20 minutes. Drain, reserving the liquid and squeezing off excess water. Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil and a garlic clove, sliced, in a large pan, add porcini, and cook over medium heat for two to three minutes, adding a little of their water if needed. Add cremini mushrooms, sliced, season with salt and pepper, and cook for a few minutes until they are tender. Turn off heat and cover pan with lid to keep mushrooms warm.

Add one nori sheet and the remaining porcini water to the vegetable stock, bring to simmer, and keep the mixture on a very low heat while making risotto.

In a large pot, heat 2 tablespoons olive oil over medium-low heat. Add a garlic clove and minced shallot and cook, stirring occasionally until translucent, for about five minutes. Add the rice and stir it for two minutes until it turns opaque. Add wine and cook, stirring until all the liquid has absorbed. Add about ½ cup of the simmering broth and cook, stirring frequently until absorbed. The rice and broth should bubble gently; keep cooking the rice, adding ½ cup of broth at a time and allowing the rice to absorb it before adding more.

Cook the rice this way until tender, about 20 minutes total, or follow the cooking time on the package. You may not need to use all the stock, or you may need more stock or some hot water.

Three to four minutes before rice is ready, add the reserved mushrooms to the pan and keep cooking the same way.

When rice is cooked, turn off heat, add butter, and stir until melted. Let the risotto rest for two minutes, then serve with crumbled nori sheets and sesame seeds on top.

When she's not at farmers markets, or stirring yet another jam, or photographing an artichoke, Sara Ghedina, a.k.a. One Girl in the Kitchen, might be running in Golden Gate Park or in warrior pose. Find out more at saraghedina.com.

MERMAID DÉCOR



by Tricia Saroya



Here are some fun projects and ideas for turning your home into a beautiful seaside shanty or dreamy grotto fit for the mermaid queen herself!

- ★ Consider using gauzy sheer curtains in cool ocean shades either as window treatments or wall hangings for a lovely watery feeling.
- ★ Hang a group of glass fishing floats in different sizes for a beautiful accent of color. This works especially well where the floats can catch the sunlight. You can also hang white twinkle lights in the center of a cluster of float balls for a beautiful lighting accent. If some are covered in fishing net, all the better!
- ★ Make a fun photo collage by using clothespins to attach favorite photographs to fish netting for a pretty photo wall. Include some ocean touches like shells or vintage postcards of the ocean.
- ★ Create a planter in an old weathered box of succulents and beach grasses. It can live outside, but when you need a pretty centerpiece, set it on your dining-room table and add in some shells for a beachy feel.
- ★ A wall decoration of framed shells is always lovely. Take empty picture frames in ocean colors and hang shells in the centers using beautiful satin ribbons. Staple the ribbons to the backs of the frames and glue shells to the ends of the ribbons. Let the shells fall at different heights to really fill the frame. You can also use burlap as a backing.
- ★ Create a table centerpiece of candles in blue, old-fashioned mason jars. Use different heights and mix in some shells for added ocean accents. You can also take a large platter, fill it with sand, and then arrange the jars and shells on it.
- ★ For a bigger impact, consider painting your walls soft ocean

hues like sea foam green, light sky blue, and a soft pinkish sand. Add creams and whites and even a sunny yellow for a lovely seaside pallet.

- ★ Frame a large photograph of the sea to really set the mood.
- ★ Hang a cluster of tin mariner-style lanterns from sisal rope for a fun lighting accent. You can use real candles or battery-operated ones and mix in strands of twinkle lights.
- ★ Put together a whimsical collection of ocean-colored glass bottles and set on a window sill where the light can shine through. Add a couple of pretty shells for a nice touch.
- ★ For a beautiful wall hanging or even curtains, hot-glue lightweight shells or beach glass onto tulle in a random polka dot pattern. You can also add white strands of twinkle lights behind it.
- ★ Consider making a driftwood wall hanging or chandelier. First find an assortment of different size pieces of driftwood. Make sure they're nice and dry and thus lightweight. Drill a hole through each piece with a drill bit and then you can easily insert screws through the holes and join the pieces together. For a wall hanging, lay out your pieces on the ground in a rough pattern, then drill and screw them all together. Consider hanging them like wind chimes from sisal rope. You can also further embellish your creation by hot-gluing shells on some of the wood. For a chandelier, lay the pieces out on the ground in a rough circle, overlapping the ends, then mark where you need to drill your holes and drill all the wood and screw the pieces together. You can suspend your chandelier from the ceiling with sisal rope or make a tripod of driftwood

bound together at the top with more sisal rope. Hang little votive cups with battery-operated candles in them from the chandelier. (I would not recommend using real candles.) Drape in twinkle lights for another pretty variation.

- ★ You can turn a glass-topped coffee table into a beautiful seascape by gluing shells, sand, and colored glass underneath. Follow the instructions below for making a shell mural to create this statement piece.
- ★ Use thick sisal rope as an accent around your home (to hang plants, etc.) to evoke a pier and harbor atmosphere.
- ★ Create a mural of shells and colored glass—your mural can range in size from something small to the entire wall!



HOW TO MAKE A SHELL MOSAIC

If you're a renter and your landlord wouldn't appreciate permanent ocean touches on the wall, you can create your mosaic on a piece of plywood!

Start with a beautiful assortment of shells—large, medium, and tiny ones like the kind you find on tropical necklaces. These are good to use for filling in holes and covering unsightly spots. Also have some colored glass, whether beach glass or the clear-colored half marbles used in floral arrangements. You can usually find these at crafts stores.

Next you need a piece of plywood—thin, veneer type and not too thick or heavy. Roughly lay out your shells in a pattern you like. I'm partial to spirals or circles like mandalas. Play around until you find a look you like. Larger shells in the middle tapering down to smaller in the outer rings tend to look best. You'll find gaps between shells because of their irregular shape. This is where using the tiny shells can help. Once you find a pattern you like, take a picture of it to remind you.

After clearing off all the shells, lay down a thick layer of Liquid Nails, maybe one-eighth of an inch. Make sure you use the kind that dries transparently and not opaque. You can find Liquid Nails at home building supply stores in small tubes or larger canisters that require a caulking gun. The tubes should suffice unless you're doing an entire wall. Now you can place the shells back on. You can also use a bit of sand to fill in gaps also, then dry your mosaic for twenty-four hours before you move it. Attach picture hooks and wire to the back and you're ready to hang.

If you want to create a mosaic directly on the wall without the plywood, then create your layout on the floor, again taking a picture to remind you of what you created. Use a hot-glue gun to attach the shells to the wall. The glue dries quickly, and then you can come in with the Liquid Nails around the edges of the shell. The glue gun does not provide a strong enough bond for long-time usage, but it will hold the shells in place while you apply the glue. Continue on with each shell or cluster. Your finished look

can be totally abstract or a geometric mandala pattern. Either way it will be a perfect addition to your mermaid cave!

Follow Tricia Saroya on Instagram @triciasaroya.



The Scarlet Slippers

BY JOANNE HARRIS

In the land of the Sand Riders, where women go veiled from top to toe, there lived a young man who dreamed of love. But he was too young to think of marriage, and according to the customs of his land, he was forbidden even to speak to any of the unmarried women he saw. Instead, he would picture their faces, try to overhear their words as they spoke to each other in their lowered voices. And he dreamed of one day having a woman of his own to love, to cook for him and sing to him, a woman whose face would be veiled to the world and that only he would ever know.

And then one day, in a strange town, in a crowded marketplace, the young man finally fell in love. She was veiled, like all the rest, and yet she seemed very different to him. Slender as a reed beneath her robes, she held her head high, and on her feet she wore slippers of scarlet silk. It was those slippers that moved him. And the slippers were how he followed her through the market-day crowds until he came to her neat little house, set in a tiny walled garden of mango trees and jasmine.

In the land of the Sand Riders, women do not live alone. The woman in the scarlet shoes lived with her mother and father. She cooked for them and cleaned for them and ran their errands and washed their clothes, and the only moments she had to herself were in that tiny garden, with its sleepy jasmine scent and the fountain that sang a three-note song that echoed the song of the nightingale. And yet, she too had dreams. But they were never dreams of love. Instead the woman longed to see beyond her father's walls, to ride a camel through the desert and to hear the sound of the ocean waves. In her dreams, she sometimes walked barefoot on the sandy shore or swam naked in the water, far away from the gaze of men. But these things were forbidden, and so the woman never spoke of them.

That night, the young man waited for his love to come into the garden. And through the iron bars of the gate, he told her of his great love. She listened in modest silence as the young man spoke of his plans for them, of her life with the Sand Riders, of their future children, of the care he would take to shield her from the eyes of other men.

"Come with me," he told her. "Be mine, and I will protect you. I will love you and cherish you. No man or woman will trouble you, or speak to you with disrespect. You will live at the heart of my tribe, surrounded by camels and warriors. Your body will be mine alone; no other man will see your face. You will drink only the finest wines and taste the most delicate spices. You will be my Queen, my all, the mother of my children, if only you will come with me today and be mine forever."

Finally, the woman spoke. "I will come with you," she said, "but only on one condition. I have never seen the sea, or walked on a beach, or heard the waves. Take me to the sea," she said, "and I will be yours forever."

And so the young man opened the gate and led the girl to the place where his people had their camp. He stole a pair of camels, and by the time their absence was known, he and his love were far away, riding hard toward the coast. They rode for three nights, resting by day, and every day the young man asked his lady love to show him her face.

But she always said, "Not yet, my love. Only when we are married may you see what no man has ever seen." And so the young man waited, congratulating himself on having chosen such a virtuous bride.

Finally, they arrived at the sea, a wild and lonely stretch of coast where only the sound of the waves could be heard. No one lived here, but there were stories of mermaids that lived in the sea, luring unwary men to their deaths—proud, and beautiful, and free.

The woman in the red slippers stood for a long time by the shore, looking out to sea. The wind tugged at her robes and veil, showing the young man the gentle curves of her body. Finally, she said, "This is the place," indicating a tiny beach at the base of the rocky cliff. "This is where I shall take off my veil, stand barefoot on the sand, and be yours. But you must be patient, and wait for me."

The young man waited on the cliff as the girl climbed down to the beach. "Are you ready yet?" he called. But there was no answer.

He waited for a long time, and then, when his love still did not call him, he too climbed down to the little beach. But his lady was not there. Instead, all he found was her slippers, laid neatly on the seashore, the last in a long line of women's shoes that stretched right across the little beach and disappeared around the base of the cliffs.

And opposite the line of shoes was a line of bare footprints—dozens, maybe *hundreds* of them, leading to the water's edge—but none of the footprints ever led back. Because, of course, mermaids have no need of embroidered slippers—or of silken veils, or even men. Mermaids recognize their own—even when they are in disguise.

The young man sat by the water's edge and wondered what he might have done wrong. "I would have kept you safe," he wept. "I would have watched over you day and night. I would have made sure no other man ever came anywhere near you."

But there came no answer from the sea, except, maybe, far in the distance, the sound of the mermaids laughing.



Joanne Harris is the bestselling author of *Chocolat* and *The Testament of Loki*. Find more at joanne-harris.co.uk.



ILLUSTRATION BY GUINEVERE VON SNEEDEN



THE CATCH

*Once upon a time there was a Siren fair
She had sorrowful eyes and dried seaweed hair
She loved to bask on the shore and explore the depths
Not once did it occur to her to beware of nets*

*One auspicious night under the bright, full moon
A lone fisherman waded out into the blue
His eyes beheld silver: an unearthly glow
What lay beneath? He needed to know.*

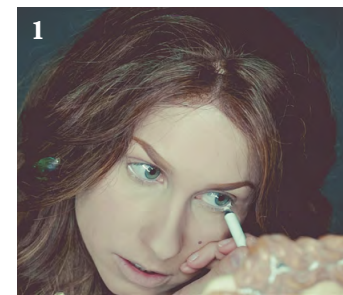
*He cast his net far, and let it fall deep
It found its purchase in melancholy sleep.
The Siren awoke in an alien world
Gasping and frightened, she cried drops of pearls*

*The fisherman was transfixed, and his desire consumed
Naïve though he was, he had sentenced her doom.
For no aid from our world can a Mermaid derive,
And once she has come here; she cannot survive.*

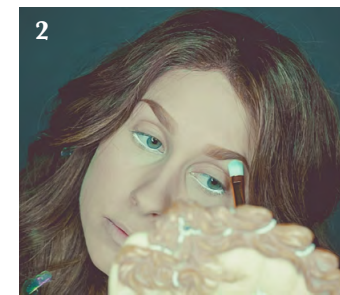
—Traci Hines

A warm hello to all my creative mermaids, sirens, and fairy friends—and any other creature who may happen upon this tutorial! I was inspired by the beautiful imagery, poetry, and lore within the pages of past issues of *Faerie Magazine* to dream up this tragic siren and her tale (pun intended)! I spend a lot of time exploring a very familiar little mermaid’s bubbly world, but outside of her story, most of the mermaid fairy tales I’ve come across have some element of sorrow. Since this new siren came to me during the month of Mer-May, which also happens to be Mental Health Awareness month, I also took inspiration from the struggles many of us face while battling the emotional difficulties we encounter on our journey toward health in both body and mind. Sorrow is an unavoidable part of our experience, so I leaned into it for this project in an attempt to demonstrate that there can be beauty in the midst of our tragedies, especially if we make the effort to find it. There is something cathartic about dark fairy tales for me, and I think that’s because they allow me to examine my own heartaches through the lens of someone else’s story. Which brings me to the story of this particular unfortunate siren—and her tears.

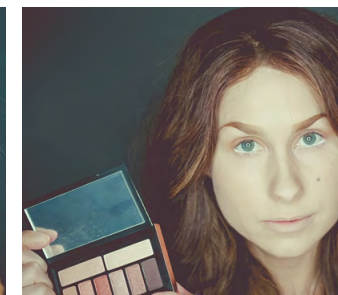
I’ve always been fascinated by the concept of a mermaid’s tears. I imagine that mermaids cry more than just drops of saltwater. This look portrays the mermaid with liquid silver tears that have the luminescence of pearls and sparkle like crystals. If you’d like to re-create her look, read on!



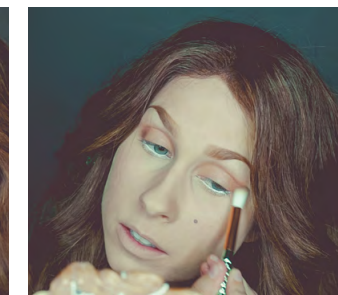
Step 1. I’ve started off with my face already prepped with my base of foundation and setting powder, and shaped and filled in my brows. Begin by lining your waterline with a white eyeliner pencil. This will open up your eyes and give you that innocent, wide-eyed effect.



Step 2. Now give yourself a simple neutral eye using soft shadows. I didn’t want the lids to compete with the focal point of the look—those shimmering mermaid tears—so feel free to keep it simple and clean. Start with a subtle cream or pale shade to highlight your brow bone, then cover your lid with a



nude or taupe color. Blend it out in the crease with a fluffy blending brush. Perk it up with a little shimmer by sweeping some pearl-colored eye shadow back over your brow bone and then in the center of your lid. Blend with a brush or your finger. Finish it off by darkening the outer edge of your eye just a little by adding

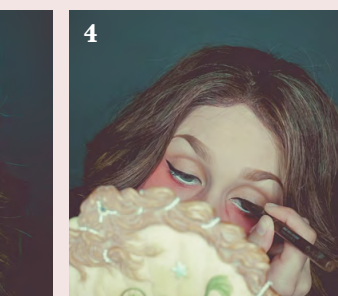
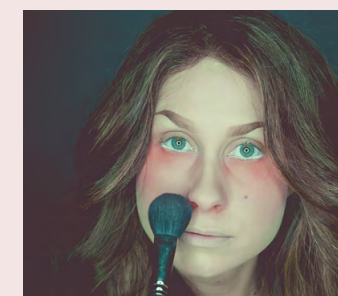
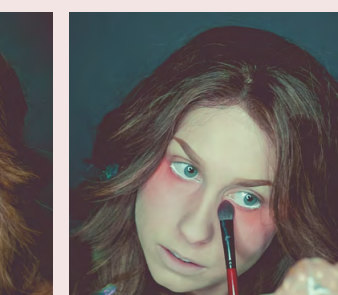
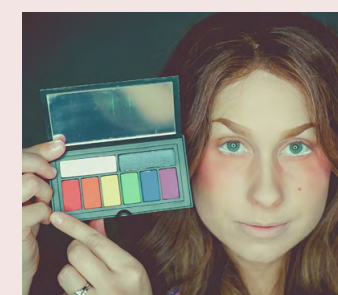
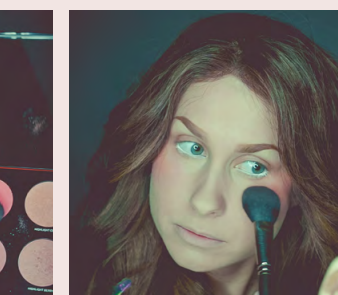
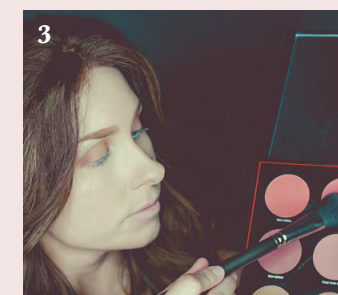


some brown shadow. Choose a shade that’s just a few shades deeper than what you previously used. This will add dimension. Use a fluffy brush and blend it out to get rid of any severe lines. Drag what’s left on your brush into the crease and the inner corners of your eyes to complete the effect.

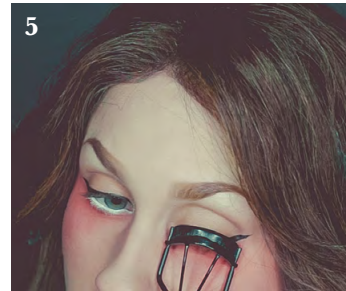
Step 3. Now it’s time to give your cheeks and face some serious flush. Pack a matte pink or coral blush onto a large, fluffy brush and generously dust underneath your eyes and up your cheekbones. Continue about halfway down your cheeks. I like to mix shades so I’m blending a few blush shades from my palette to intensify the color and coverage. Introduce some pink irritation underneath and around the sides and tip of your nose. You can dust a small amount on your chin and forehead too. Blend with your finger if need be.

After you have a nice layer of color on your face, go in with a smaller shadow brush to get in close underneath your eyes and blend down from there. If you don’t get a perfect blend, that’s okay, but try to smooth it out so it’s a soft fade if you can. We are mimicking the red, blotchy effect our faces get when we cry, but in a slightly more glamorous, definitely more exaggerated way. This pink ombre face we’re creating is going to serve as a great contrast for our silver tears once we add them later and really make them pop, so the more color you can layer on now, the more payoff you’ll get in the end.

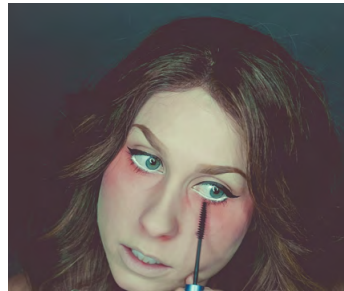
Up the ante with some matte red eye shadow and concentrate right under your eyes. This shadow is going to make your eyes really stand out, and a denser, smaller brush gives you a lot more control and color payoff. I switched back and forth between my blush brush and the smaller brush as I built up the color to the level I wanted. Make sure to blend up into the outer edge of your eye and brow bone too so the fade looks like a more natural flush. You can amp up the color around your nose with that same small brush and red shade to really sell that skin irritation. A final blend with the blush brush to smooth it all out and you’re done with this step!



Step 4. Line your eyes with brown liquid eyeliner and wing it out.



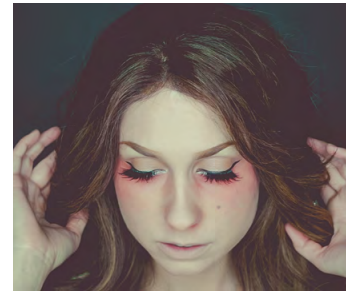
Step 5. Curl your lashes and add mascara on top and bottom.



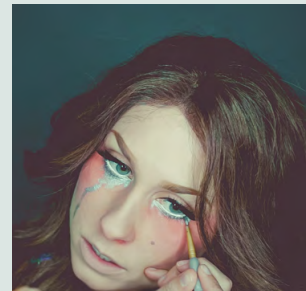
Step 6. Now add your falsies. Choose a pair that's long, dense, and dramatic so they really make your eyes stand out. The lashes I've chosen are made of synthetic (faux) mink



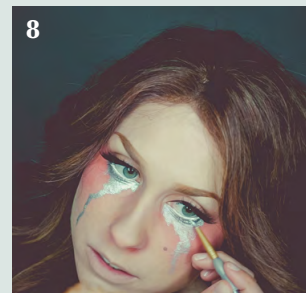
fiber. I love how realistic and fluffy they are. Cut the strip to fit, add lash glue, and carefully place so that the longest part of the lashes frames the outer edge of your eye. Get them



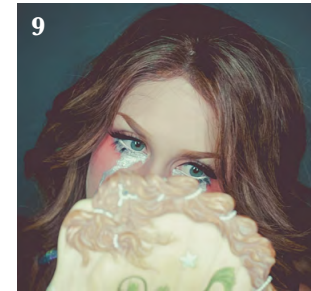
as close to your lash line as possible, pinch to blend with your own lashes and wait until they're fully dry to move on to the next step.



Step 7. Now for the part we've been waiting for! It's time to paint on your tears. I started out with a metallic face paint to create the first layer, but if you don't have a face paint palette on hand, any metallic eye shadow or mineral shimmer dust that is well pigmented should work, especially when activated with water. Mix white and silver shades with the water to make a thick paste, and use a fine-tipped paintbrush with medium to long soft bristles to give you the perfect amount of control. Begin painting on the shape of the tears pooling under your eyes, and then create the tear tracks to extend down your cheeks. Don't worry about being too perfect with this part. There is beauty in imperfection. In fact, I purposely made each side different since I prefer asymmetry in avant-garde makeup looks like this. Create a little teardrop shape at the end of each tear track, and smear and drag your way around with your paintbrush. Add more paint and water to your brush as needed, since the designs come out much easier with a wet consistency. Try for rounder shapes to mimic a watery look.



Step 8. Add another layer and a more blinding shine to your tears by mixing water with some loose mineral shadows in the same shades and adding a second coat. I've combined two loose mica shimmer powders in silver and pearl shades to create a really metallic liquid shine. Go a bit heavier with the silver color when mixing to get that liquid silver look. Paint this on as smooth as possible and keep your brush really wet to get the best application. (If you do find that your eye shadow creates any uneven texture, don't worry. There's an easy fix for this later.) This second layer you're painting on will make your tears pop even more and start to look 3-D. If you have a foiled eye shadow in a silver, sea-foam blue, or white shade, you could also mix that into your water-pigment mixture for extra highlight and depth.



Step 9. One of my favorite tricks to make my eyes appear bigger and more doll-like, especially for sympathetic or fantasy characters, is using tiny, piece-y lashes underneath my eyes at the outer corners. I don't buy these from a lash company; I just save the extra bits I cut off my regular false lashes for occasions such as these! For this look I used three tiny lash clumps on each eye, placing them so there's a little space in between each to keep them looking natural. Place any longer pieces toward the outer edge of your eye, where your own lashes grow. Use a tiny dot of lash glue for each and take your time. Move on from this step once they are fully dry.



Step 10. Now it's time to add your bling! But first, I have a confession: Like mermaids and dragons, I collect (and hoard) treasures—jewels! But mine are miniature. I love perusing the aisles of my local craft stores for tiny pearls and Swarovski crystals that I can use in my costumes and makeup looks, and I've got a small collection of uniquely shaped crystals and pearls of every size!

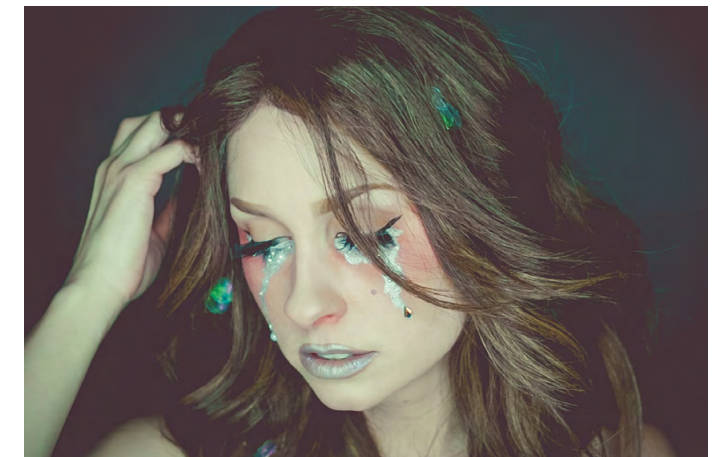
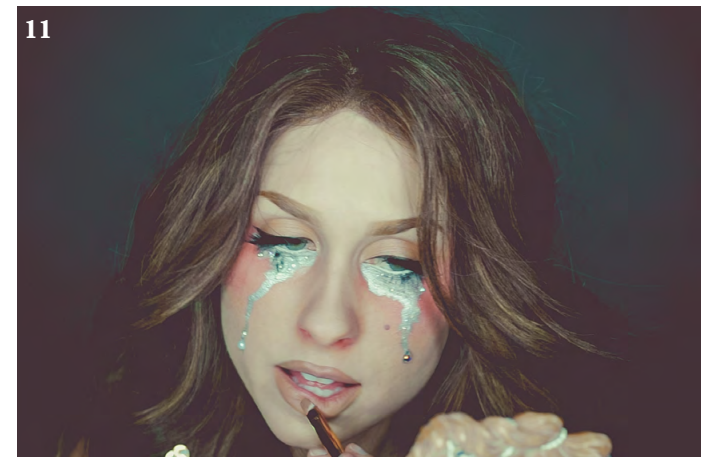
I set aside a couple of the larger nail-decal-sized pearls for this look, as well as two Swarovski crystals in a fancy and teardrop shape. You can use whatever small crystals and pearls you want, just make sure the colors stay within the pearl and clear or clear aurora borealis families to keep the tears looking cohesive and watery. First, place and glue on the larger-sized pearls and crystals. I'm using eyelash glue to adhere my stones. I placed the teardrop Swarovski crystal at the end of one of my tear streams, and a larger pearl on the other. I also placed my other larger



Swarovski fancy-shaped crystal under one of my eyes so that it picked up the light and looked like a fresh, wet tear rolling out of my eye.

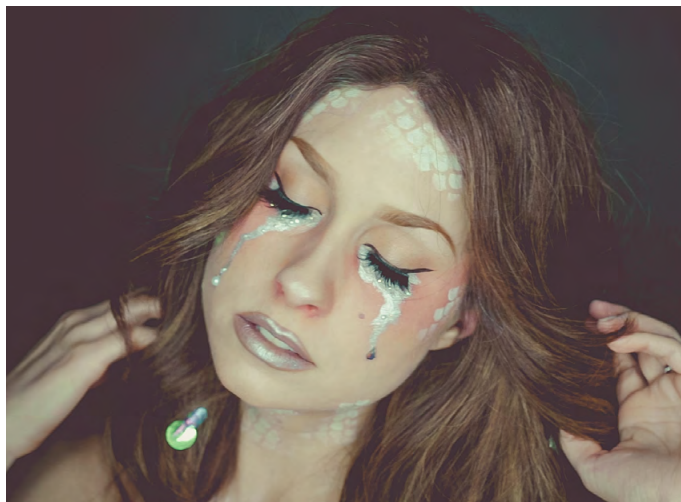
After you have your larger stones adhered, begin to layer on some smaller pearls and crystals. Place them randomly, putting some in close proximity to others and some on their own. This is what's going to make your tears 3-D and look convincingly like you are a mermaid crying liquid pearl and crystal tears! Also, if you happen to have any texture or small lumps from your eye shadow mixture before, you can cover those areas with stones now to mask it. Finally, using a fluffy brush, I picked up some of my tiniest clear crystals and very gently patted them onto any empty spots or areas where I wanted extra sparkle. Be very careful when using small elements like crystals, pearls, or glitter near your eyes, and close them when applying. You can also ask a friend to help you place them while your eyes are closed to be extra safe. You can't be too careful—you never want to scratch or damage your eyes.

Step 11. You're almost done! Line your lips with a nude lip liner and fill in with a nude lip color of your choice. Once you have a clean nude lip, go over it with some sheer blue or sea-foam shimmer or gloss, or use a bit of your shimmery silver pigment from the tears to make your pout a more watery, mysterious shade. Another easy lip trick is dusting a pearl highlighter over your lips, focusing on your Cupid's bow and the middle center of your bottom lip to make them shine and change the color from natural to ethereal!



Mermaid Makeup

Traci Hines



Step 12. You already look like a siren, but you can take it one step further by adding some scales. First, dust a little highlight or shimmer onto the tip of your nose, then grab some cream makeup in a very light aqua or sea-foam color. Dip a flat brush into the makeup and determine where you want to place your scales. Using a mermaid scale stencil, begin to paint them on around the edges of your face. Lay the stencil flat to your skin, and brush softly over top. Don't worry about being too perfect, the stencil will take care of that for you. Continue the scales down your neck and onto your arms and torso if you'd like to complete the effect!

Finish everything off with some long, beachy mermaid hair and you have transformed into a tragic but stunning siren! I've clipped some sequins into my waves to look like bubbles, and of course I couldn't resist donning my favorite starfish top and transforming my legs into a mermaid tail!

I hope you enjoy re-creating this look—I know you'll be sparkling from the inside out! All the best on your mermaid metamorphosis. Just beware of nets ... and humans! Xo



See more at TraciHines.com or follow her on Instagram and Twitter @TraciHines.

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photo by Citrus Photography

Gathering TEARS

by MONICA CROSSON



PHOTOGRAPHY BY
SARAH CHISHOLM PHOTOGRAPHY

Gathering Tears

Monica Crosson

I am a forest dweller. A child of dark, shadowy trees dripping in moss, and at home along the creek side, where elves mingle with the deer among the sword fern. It is within this protective bower of forest, in Pacific Northwest Washington, that my husband and I raised our three children. As small children, they rambled and played among spidery vine maples, romped about in stony river beds, and read books under dappled skies. And though none of us would trade away our home in its enchanted forest setting, there are times when spring clouds boil and churn around the mountains that guard our tight valley, and we feel the tug of ocean's tide—a siren's cry mingled with mountain song that leads us on an hour-and-a-half journey to the Salish Sea. As we drive out of the forest and into the open wide farmlands of the Skagit Valley, I always look back. The branches of the maples and large conifers sway as if waving goodbye. "We understand," they seem to say, "and we'll be here when you return."

My husband, more than any of us, is drawn to the Salish Sea because he was raised near its rocky shores by fishermen who worked with and against the sea's fickle moods to scratch out a living. When my children were small, they liked the change of scenery. For them it was an adventure. For only in such a place could they sift the sand for lost treasure and scout the surf for sea serpents. My reasons to walk the stony beaches among the driftwood and bull kelp are far more romantic: I go to collect mermaid tears, more commonly known as sea glass.

I first started my meager collection of sea glass as a young teen when, on a family outing to West Beach, I inadvertently came upon a green gem. I picked it up and admired it in the sunlight.

"Looks like you found yourself a mermaid's tear," a beautiful old woman said to me. She had long gray hair that lashed at the air.

I smiled. "It's so pretty," I said. "Why are they called that?"

"Well," she said, "did you know that if a mermaid happens to fall in love with a sailor, she swims alongside his ship in order to protect him? Mermaids become very attached to the men they love." She looked out at the rolling surf. I remember seeing a longing in her eyes that made me suspect that she herself was enchanted. "But you see, my dear," she continued, "the mermaid's love of another made Neptune very angry. He was a jealous god."

"So what'd he do?" I asked.

"He banished the poor mermaids to the bottom of the sea." She reached for my treasure. "May I?"

"Sure," I said. I handed her the sea glass.

She rolled it around in her palm and then said, "The poor mermaid, banished and with a broken heart, would cry. Her tears would crystallize and wash ashore as these." She handed my treasure back to me. "Enjoy your sea glass," she said and winked before walking away.

Of course, in actuality, sea glass is a product of human

pollution—mostly glass containers and tableware that have accumulated in our oceans as part of refuse dumps or shipwrecks. The broken pieces are washed and tumbled by the churning seas, a process that takes decades, before washing up onto the shore, transformed into beautiful rounded, frosted gems.

Serious collectors grade sea glass according to its size and shape, color, pitting, frosted appearance, and flaws such as chips. Jewelry-grade sea glass will be thick with rounded edges and have more pitting and a more frosted appearance than craft-grade sea glass, which is typically thinner, less frosted, and may have sharper edges. Craft-grade sea glass can be used to create mosaics, stained glass, and other decorative pieces. But most beachcombers collect them for the sheer enjoyment, displaying them in glass jars or bowls. They are mementos.

For me, it's all about the color—not for the aesthetics (well, maybe a little) but for the story it tells me about the piece. How did the gem start out in life? Who loved the object and why did it end up in the sea? Here is a list of sea glass colors and what they might mean, from the most common to some of the rarest:

White (from clear glass): Most sea glass found today will come from broken or discarded clear glass: anything from a soda bottle tossed overboard to the old, warbled glass windows of a lighthouse keeper's cottage, long taken by the sea.

Brown: If you find a piece of brown sea glass, it may have been the remnants of a beer bottle left behind from a beach party, or maybe an early 20th century Lysol bottle or Clorox bleach jug.

Kelly Green: This is a common color for wine bottles and some beer bottles. If you're lucky, though, you may find a piece with bubbles or an embossed texture that could indicate it came from a pharmacy bottle dating from the 19th or early 20th century.

Seafoam Green: If you find a piece in this beautiful shade of light green, it more likely than not started out as a mid-20th century Coca-Cola bottle. But it may have also started out as a wine bottle set adrift accidentally by lovers on a romantic midnight sail. If bubbles are present, it might be something much older.

Cobalt Blue: Approximately one in every 250 pieces are this rich shade of blue. This jewel-like colored stone may have started as a holder for medicine, poison, Vicks VapoRub, milk of magnesia, or even perfume.

Lime Green: Lime green pieces may have started out as beer or lemon-lime soda bottles, or perhaps as decorative glass pieces that ended up on a garbage barge.

Lavender: Lavender glass is easy to date because it was produced with manganese, which was used in the U.S. to neutralize the natural green tint of raw glass until just after World War I. The lovely color is the result of sun exposure. Most common lavender glass began life as a canning jar.





Pink: These pretty finds were most likely a part of Depression-era glass collection. The affordable glassware was often given away as gifts with purchases at gas stations and movie theaters or as incentive pieces by cereal and laundry companies in the 1930s.

Yellow: Another rare and lovely find that may have originated from Depression-era glass or old glass insulators made with selenium.

Gray: If you find a piece of gray sea glass, you most likely have found a treasure whose previous life was as a television screen or a piece of leaded glass tableware or Depression glass.

Black: At first glance, you might mistake a piece of black sea glass for just another beach pebble. But hold it up to the sun: See that deep green translucent glow? Black sea glass originated as very dark olive-green bottles or jugs that were widely used in the mid-19th century for ale or beer.

Red: This lovely rarity (about one in every 10,000 pieces) could have started its life as a 1950s Schlitz Beer bottle or maybe as a decorative ruby glass piece collected lovingly by a lighthouse keeper.

Teal: These rare beauties are usually from older sources. If you're lucky enough to find a teal (or turquoise) piece of sea glass, it may have come from a canning jar that once lined the pantry of a cottage near the shore. Or it could have been an insulator from an early 20th century electric pole or an old seltzer bottle.

Orange: If you find one of these elusive treasures, it could

have originated from a modern automobile's warning light or a vintage decorative glassware or art glass piece. Orange is believed to be one of the hardest and rarest to acquire because it wasn't a very popular color for mass production.

I have yet to find a black or orange piece of sea glass, but I know that with time, if I continue to explore the beaches along the Salish Sea, I will find those tears and gather them up. My family and I will all climb back into the car and drive along roads through the wide-open farmland back toward the cloud-covered peaks that frame our forest home. As we get closer, I will see the swaying branches of giant maples and ancient conifers that seem to wave, "Welcome back. We missed you." I will place the tears in pretty jars, along with the rest of my collection, on the window sill where they will gleam in the morning sunlight, forever a reminder to me of the power of Mother Earth and the beauty of transformation.



Discover Sarah Chisholm's work at sarahchisholmphotography.zenfolio.com.

Monica Crosson is a contributing writer for *Llewellyn Worldwide*, having written many articles for *The Magickal Almanac*, *The Witches Companion*, *The Herbal Almanac*, *Spell-a-Day Almanac*, and both *The Witches Datebook* and *The Witches Calendar*. Her first book, *The Magickal Family: Pagan Living in Harmony with Nature*, was released by *Llewellyn Worldwide* in October of 2017.



THE DOLPHINS OF ATLANTIS

Learning to Communicate in Bimini

BY LAURA MARJORIE MILLER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ATMOJI

Flying in an eight-seat hopper plane from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, to Bimini, in the Bahamas, I peered eagerly down at the water. I was on my way to meet dolphins. And also—coincidentally—to be close to Atlantis. Scanning the aquamarine expanse with my eyes, I hoped to catch an advance glimpse of either.

My main objective was the dolphins. I was traveling to WildQuest, a retreat center that's been on Bimini since the 1990s, to further my personal research: to experience the communication of free dolphins in the water through my own senses. I was eager to make the acquaintance of the Atlantic spotted dolphins and bottlenose dolphins who live near the island.

By magical coincidence, a fragment of Atlantis is believed to lie in this place that so many dolphins frequent. At least that's what is said about the Bimini Road, a mysterious, geometrically regular stone structure just off the coast, many meters long.

Hurricane Irma had blown through the region two weeks earlier, stirring the water and making the ocean bottom hard to see. But during my week among the dolphins, I sure could *feel* Atlantis and had it on my mind.

The road to the retreat center showed the wake of Irma's passage. In Porgy Bay, Bailey Town, and Alice Town, many of the gaily colored concrete buildings and wooden conch shacks still had their windows boarded. Boats were lodged in the sand because nobody had resources yet to pull them back to the water. Some graffiti we passed cried in big black letters, LORD PROTECT BIMINI.

Yet for all the disturbance, Bimini remained *soft*. The Atlantic surrounding it was a blazing world of milky aquamarine, the beaches were white, the insides of the conches that tumble around the shore like the litter of Aphrodite were pink. The air carried scents from the conch shacks, the smoke fires from people burning their wood rubble, and a sweetness that is like curry.

During our orientation meeting, Amlas, co-director of WildQuest, announced the customs that would prevail for the week. Wi-fi would be available in small pools of connectivity around the main building. "But I don't want the kitchen turning into a Starbucks," she admonished. "Please keep your screen where others can't see it."

Amlas and her partner, Atmo—they are partners in business and in life—have a presence that conveys an authority they have earned through many years on and in the water. When they speak, you listen. She continued, "This computer world people live in, this virtual world, it is madness."

Amlas discouraged us from bringing cameras or phones on the boat. I didn't mind this; I've found that it's best with dolphins not to have some contraption in your hands mediating your experience. On land, I did have to make some use of my computer: I was committed to doing a daily post for my expedition funders, so every night I'd go to the vacant and dark meditation room to write. I felt like I was sneaking off to have a smoke—I was extremely self-conscious of the light cast by my

screen—but I was firm in honoring the spirit of the rule. I didn't allow myself to scroll.

Later I realized how much of what Amlas was saying would end up having to do with dolphins and with Atlantis. Often the theme of a journey comes unexpectedly.

Day One Diary: "As idle as a painted ship / Upon a painted ocean"

WildQuest's boat is a big white catamaran with an interlaced grid work of white straps between its hulls, so if you lie on it and look down, you can watch the ocean race past underneath you. We do a practice drop in the water to make sure everyone in the group has their snorkel skills ready. I practice freediving down, looking at fish over the stone reefs. Because the water is turgid from the hurricane, if there is a reef beneath you, you have to dive to see it. Coming up, I lick my lips, which taste like salty potato chips from the seawater.

It feels like it takes us forever to see dolphins. The day is hot and bright, and we scan the water with a fathomless yearning. *Will we have any luck today? See dolphins at all?* The crew is on the lookout, so I lay myself down on the hammock, close my eyes, and listen to the pulse of the boat motor and the waves rushing by.

I start dreaming, and in my dream I see the ocean rippling and broken with the dark shapes of dolphins. And then I *know* they are there; I sit upright and lo! Dolphins have just arrived or we've arrived upon them: a small pod of spotted—handsome elders with black and brown freckles and dark capes, pale babies wriggling and cavorting around.

We wait on the boat to see whether they are interested in us. WildQuest allows you in the water only if the dolphins keep returning, and these do, angling away from the catamaran and then back toward it. Amlas says, "Well, this is interesting," and orders us to go in.

Beneath the surface, I hear the dolphins sonaring. I feel their clicks filling the water and in my body with delight. It is different from the way you hear in air. I peer down to see a mother and a calf swim right underneath me.

Later, as I sit at the front of the catamaran, legs dangling down, the dolphins are bow-riding us, slowly cruising to keep us company. I see them caress each other: one dolphin will extend his pectoral fin toward a friend to touch her, reaching it out from his body like a little wing. It is even more awkward-looking and endearing than it sounds.

The refulgent late-afternoon light suffuses everything until you cannot see where the sea ends or the sky begins. White sunlight flows over the surface of the water like molten glass.

Day Two Diary: No Admittance Except on Party Business

A storm cell moves through, a brief weather tantrum that roars thunder and hammers rain but then ends resolutely. However, it leaves behind an ocean full of swells that requires





increased energy to swim in. Mirroring the weather, the dolphins are also on the move, heading off on business known only to them, probably to a dolphin party to which humans are not invited.

The water today is dark like a blue glass bottle. We boat along with a large pod of forty or more spotted dolphins, with plenty of time to observe them from above. My favorite move that I see is for a dolphin to swim upside down, belly toward the sky, then give their tail a *smack* on the surface. It is a frustrating day, though, for whenever Atmo tells us it is okay to get in the water, the dolphins skedaddle: *Ha-ha BYE!* The drops feel rushed and urgent, the energy quite different from yesterday. It's one of those days where I have too many thoughts and know it. I feel like I can't get grounded in the water, as strange as that sounds.

On the way back to the marina, I lie on my belly on the hammock to watch the water moving past. Suddenly in the distance there is some frolicking—although the dorsal fins look different—then those shapes turn and head toward the boat. They are silver, and there are three of them. They swim right under us doing DNA helixes with one another. *Man, you guys are big*, I think. *Oh my GOSH, you are BOTTLENOSES!* It makes the end of the day happy, like a surprise treasure we have received. It is too late for swimming with them, but I am happy to see them.

Day Three Diary: At Play in the Fields of the Lord

Today the ocean is blue silver, and you cannot see the horizon line. It is just sky condensing to fluid. Whenever we see dolphins in the distance emerging from and slipping below the surface of water, it looks like dark shapes and silver glass.

The first dolphins we see are bottlenoses. It makes me so happy to see these dolphins, a joy that goes clear to my heart so that I'm already laughing and smiling just from watching them. They are a small pod with a tiny calf so fresh from the womb that she still has fetal folds creasing her skin. It is said that bottlenoses are antisocial, but these aren't. They approach the boat, so we get to put in the water with them, although with little hope that they will engage us.

I am at the edge of our human "pod" when the dolphins emerge, a cluster of them, and beckon me to follow. They are silver gray and swim close. I start swimming alongside them, in their relentless, joyful rhythm.

If asked how I knew to go with them, whether it is a gesture or a sideways glance that caused it, I would not be able to tell you. It is not even a word that says, *Come*. When it happens, you simply know you are supposed to go. If you resist it, you know your heart will break. Is that enough?

I find myself belly-laughing with happiness at the sounds

the dolphins make. Bottlenose sounds are different from spotted dolphin sounds. Bottlenoses sound just like R2-D2, electronic squawks and bleeps and whirrs. I am swimming and laughing *so hard* at the same time, into my snorkel and inside my mask. They hear me laughing and several times break formation to swim right at me and hang in the water to look at me with this quizzical, beautiful dolphin frontal view, which just makes me laugh *more*. They dive below and swirl around one another in constellations and then rise back up. At one point, one of them blows a bubble trail that looks like sand dollars; I follow along to my left: *one, two, three ...* I am tripping so hard on *dolphin*. I feel like they are going to lead us off to Faerie. I could follow them forever, and my strength would never ebb.

Suddenly, a high whistle is sounding. *What is that?* It breaks the spell. I stop swimming and raise my head up. Nala, one of the crew members, is signaling vigorously for me to come back. Even though we are supposed to stay with our pod, after that experience, I don't mind getting reprimanded for leaving the group.

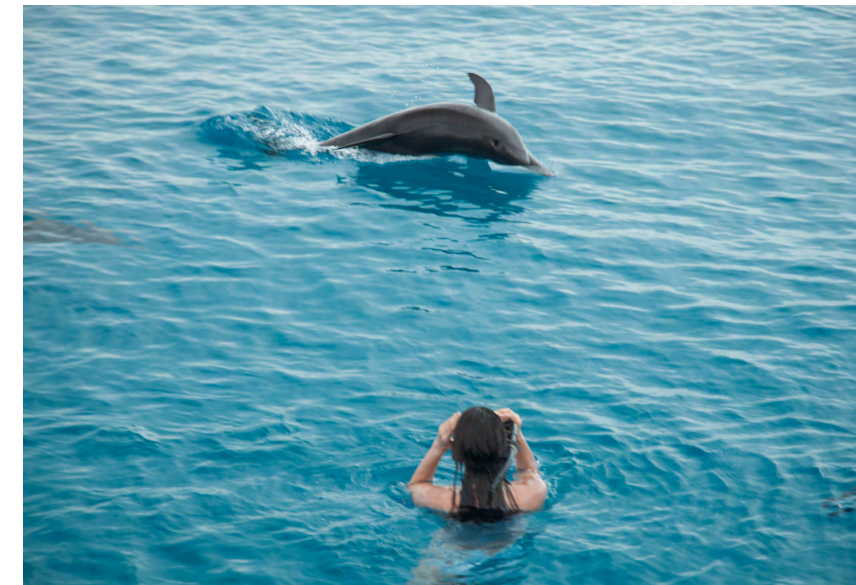
Later in the afternoon, we come upon spotted dolphins who also let us be among them, spiraling around us in their choirs. I see pink bellies and play-fighting, teenagers jousting underwater with their jaws, much like horses do when they are hungry.

Day Four Diary: "Come away, O human child! To the waters and the wild!"

A squall blows through on our way out and another on our way back. Between storms it is overcast, the state of the ocean rich blue-gray and darker. It is all spotted we see today, and they are usually traveling, swimming along with the catamaran. This goes on for a long time.

I start to recognize individual dolphins and realize we are encountering the same pod over and over. One has a tattered left fluke, and his name pops into my mind as *Fray*. Some dolphins have white rake marks on their backs that look exactly like tribal chieftain tattoos. I begin to recognize dolphins by these tattoos. From looking down upon the dolphins so much from the catamaran hulls, I've also noticed that spotted dolphins have a parabolic marking that arcs up from the edges of their rostrum and goes over their blowhole, like an upside-down *tilak*. Dolphins scud alongside one another, flapping their angel-wing pectoral fins over each other's pectoral fins, like a fast flurry of patty-cake. The refrain from Yeats's "The Stolen Child" swells up into my heart, and I start to cry. *Where are you leading us?* We do several drops, yet the dolphins never stay.

Eventually we arrive on the dolphins frolicking in a sea of sargassum, an area with lots of patches of seaweed like small hillocks in the water. This time the dolphins do stay.



The Dolphins of Atlantis

Laura Marjorie Miller

I think, *I am just going to chill and see what happens*. I practice my underwater spins that I learned from the spinner dolphins in Hawaii, far away in the Pacific.

I perform the first spin from a backward surface dive, right into the face of a trinity of dolphins! I come up laughing. It starts to go faster: I'm diving again, and *again*, and the dolphins stop their progress to swirl around me. I feel their curiosity, as though they're saying, *You are doing something dolphin*. Something I learned from their cousins. I come up so fast and dive again so fast that I can barely empty and fill my lungs. Atmo appears near me, gripping his great underwater camera and commands, "Dive!" I do another back surface dive, with a backflip underwater. My heart is beating, and it is intense and exhilarating. Everything with dolphins moves so fast that you can only assimilate it afterward. There are so *many* of them around. When this blur of time passes, I surface, pull off my mask, look out into the distance over the garden of seaweed, and weep.

On the way home, one of my podmates, Michael, tells me that at one point there were five pairs of dolphins constellating around me. "Each pair was so close together that the outline of each looked like one dolphin," he says.

It's Not Down in Any Map; True Places Never Are

Over the week I gained the skill to tell apart the different species of dolphins from a distance—from the shapes of their dorsal fins, their size, and often the number in their pods, but something *else* as well, about how their activity in the water is different, how the spotted and bottlenoses move and relate somehow differently to the space around them in a way I wouldn't be able to explain.

There were also many times when I knew something without knowing how I knew it: awarenesses, passages from songs or poems arriving my head, premonitions of things before they occurred. One day on the boat Amlas told us "dolphin stories": dolphins have sensors in their conical teeth that refer to organs in their "melon," and it is postulated that the clicks of their echolocation and communication resonate with these organs to produce dimensional images that they can transmit to one another. Dolphins also can *perceive*, down to the cells of your bloodstream, when they are sonaring you. A scientist once did an experiment in which he isolated two captive dolphins from each other. He would teach one a task and then teach the same task to the other, who would learn it in half the time the first dolphin took. Then he would switch with the next task, with the same results. So how were the dolphins communicating through barriers of concrete?

There are other modes of communication, other ways of knowing, that humans may once have had and forgot, and are only beginning to relearn. Minimizing my electronic activity for

a week made this idea real to me as I felt other senses, ancient, deep, and hardly used, surging to the fore.

One of the myths of Atlantis is that its people lived in harmony with Earth until they became addicted to technology. This addiction brought about Atlantis's downfall: the implosion of a majestic culture and the collapse of the great landmass that supported it. Although there are many variations on specifics, this is the essence of the myth. The hurricane, its ferocity perhaps a harbinger of climate change, also put me in mind of it.

When Amlas discouraged us from going online, initially I felt the anxiety of resistance. Yet I realize how appropriate the limitation was to where WildQuest is, which is in the real world, as opposed to the virtual one. Over the week, I became aware of how often I use media as a pressure valve, to escape from whatever I am doing. Yet when I am somewhere that I truly want to be, why would I go into that virtual world?

Even after I came back to the mainland, I felt a reluctance to engage with social media. It was an aversion that bordered on distaste. I noticed how often we get involved in battles that we believe are action and expend intense emotional energy on something entirely mental. I began to notice people posting more about what they hated than about the things they profess to love. I re-evaluated the content I shared according to what I am trying to bring about in the world.

I am still figuring out what the balance is. Social media could be a transitional stage to a pod-like communication that is much more like what dolphins have with one another. Yet it is also important to ground what we are expressing in the mental sphere in physical action—to immerse our body in an environment and submit ourselves to its laws, to learn those laws with respect and implement them in practice in the way we move through space. Part of this current time of learning to appreciate other creatures in their native environment is identifying with them by reconnecting to ours.

I ended up being glad of what I had surrendered, even for a time. I found myself opening up, reopening, expanding to the space I was in, cleansed by this hurricane, vibrated and danced by these dolphins.



Follow Atmoji at atmoji.com or on Instagram @atmoji

Laura Marjorie Miller is an inner-and-outer explorer. She has been kissed by a wild manatee calf, turned into a vine in Peru, and danced with dolphins off Hawai'i and Bimini. Her work has been published in Utne Reader, Outpost, Parabola, Misadventures, Yankee Magazine, and The Boston Globe, and she is currently at work on her first book. Find her on twitter and Instagram @bluecowboyyoga and at lauramarjoriemiller.com.

THE NATURALIST'S DREAM OF MERMAIDS COLLECTING IN THE DEEP

(after a 19th century illustration)

BY KEELY SARR



Image courtesy of NOAA Photo Library.

I. An expedition

More scientists than sirens, the mermaids gather specimens with the stalking skill of anglerfish. They catalogue all evidence in an abyssopelagic lab, sterile in the steam from deep sea vents. Tube-worms witness their collections grow and inquiries unfold: how cloth and air might feel when dry, why tails *up there* have split in two.

II. An inventory

A lost bronze god with broad arms poised to throw a spear—or swim. Drowned plants and treasures, preserved in currents: cochineal vials, silver, spice. Drifting toys for landlocked children, beasts that might as well be myth. A galaxy of plastics, newly layered in the spiraling taxonomy of the seafloor.

III. An educated guess

Their current research addresses dangers: those cautionary tales of the captured. Rumors ripple through the ocean, talk of tails radiant in nets, scales dried and pinned to cards, mermaids gliding through formaldehyde. A comprehensive study of surface life proves elusive. Over centuries they'll craft a hypothesis in layers like a pearl's iridescence to explain why men dissect their fellow seaward scientists.



Keely Sarr is a master's candidate in art history who investigates the curious dreamlands of Victorian fairy paintings and the evolution of early modern mermaid hoaxes. Born in Hawai'i and entranced by the ever-shifting Pacific, she blogs at mailboxmermaid.com to cope with her currently landlocked life.

SEA OF
Flowers

BY GRACE NUTH



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ELIZABETH ELDER



*M*ermaids are creatures of the ocean who would die on land. Delicate flowers can only survive on land and would break apart and fade into nothingness in the salty ocean. These would seem to make for quite a paradoxical combination, but when the visual of mermaids “swirling in a sea of petals, fragrance, and color” occurred to model and designer Vanessa Walton, she couldn’t get the idea out of her head. She called on the help of two other creative friends, Jessica Dru and Rachel Day, to be her fellow mermaids and asked another friend, Elizabeth Elder, to photograph the collaboration. Dru, Day, and Walton had recently received beautiful new mermaid tails from Ffolk Productions, so the timing was perfect. Each woman was tasked with creating her own mermaid top to match her unique tail. “I was so excited to find the perfect beaded lace for my top,” Walton says. “I pieced it together to look like the fluke of a mermaid’s tail at the center, with a jellyfish swimming just below at each side.”

On the day of the shoot, the skies were as murky and dark as a sailor’s warning, but the sirens plunged ahead with their plans. JoEllen Elam of Firefly Path offered to help with the shoot and

brought armfuls of flowers with her from the flower market. Roses in a rainbow of colors were paired with ranunculus to create an almost fish-scale iridescence, the fragrance of which was heady enough to turn any mermaid’s head. When the time came to shoot the images, the overcast skies had not lightened, and the rain still fell as heavy as mermaid tears. However, the damp environment worked out in their favor: “It kept the blossoms happy, and added a beautifully dreamy glow to the light,” Walton says.

For one final shot, all three mermaids were photographed together, heads resting close together, with tails extending out like an oceanic triskelion. The tent the team had assembled to help protect them from the elements couldn’t be used for such a wide shot. This wound up being the best moment of the entire shoot. “As Jessica, Rachel, and I reclined,” Walton recalls, “faint raindrops began to fall. This special moment was so peaceful and still, as if the sky were giving us the perfect adornment—sparkling droplets of water.”

Sometimes, despite diametrically opposed elements, a story is meant to be told.

Photography: Elizabeth Elder Photography

Art Direction/Modeling: Vanessa Walton of Creature of Habit *Models:* Jessica Dru and Rachel Day

Assistance: JoEllen Elam of Firefly Path *Tails:* Ffolk Productions





*The
Makara
and
His Meal*

BY SHVETA THAKRAR



ILLUSTRATION BY
GUINEVERE VON SNEEDEN

The makara peered out of the river, letting the sunshine, as warm and yellow as melted ghee, dribble down over his elephantine snout. He'd been here ever since his mistress, the river goddess Ganga, had left with human king Shantanu, who'd begged for her hand in marriage after glimpsing her by the water. She'd whispered to the makara to stay put, that she would return soon.

But without any work to do, he'd grown bored—and hungry. He'd waited in this exact spot for eight years, not even batting at the colorful fish and snapping turtles that passed him by. From their mutterings, he'd put together a tale of a naga dwelling downstream. Nagas, he'd heard, loved a good feast.

Splashing river water like scattered pearls, the makara launched himself forward and swam. Ganga would know how to find him. He was her divine vehicle, after all, transporting her from realm to realm.

How delightful it felt to move at last! The makara's piscine body propelled him through the sweet waters, his powerful jaw snapping at dragonflies, until he came to a palace on the riverbank. Made of gold and gems, it gleamed and glittered as the inhabitants tussled for morsels from a large silver tray. The makara sniffed a biryani stuffed with sultanas, cashews, and savory bits of chicken.

"Hello," he said to the tray of food, his voice rusted over with disuse. He cleared his throat and tried again, only then noticing the five nagas and naginis staring at him. They sported hair ornaments, earrings, necklaces, bangles, and armbands that sparkled so brightly the makara blinked, dazzled. Their serpentine tails, which ended at their waists, shone with iridescent scales so lovely the makara worried his own peacock tail feathers paled beside them.

Even so, he emerged from the water and opened his tail. It fanned out, indigo eyes winking and green barbs claiming their share of the sunshine. "Mind if I join you? I'm famished."

"Welcome, makara. Perhaps you could help us settle a debate," the tallest of the three naginis said, grinning slyly. "My siblings and I can't decide who would be the best guardian for

our family jewel. Help us decide, and we'll share our food with you."

"All right," he agreed, eager to get to the food portion of the bargain. Plus he'd heard of this jewel. It granted wishes. "But I'll need to see the jewel."

The younger brother produced the gem, a multifaceted marvel that glowed in all colors, but refused to let anyone close enough to touch it.

Politely pretending not to notice, the makara addressed the tallest nagini. "Tell me, what would you wish for if you had this?"

"Me? I wouldn't wish for anything. The honor of caring for it would be enough."

"Aha," said the makara, bland as unspiced khichdi. He turned to the next in line. "And you?"

"I would wish for peace for all beings." The naga smiled, sweet enough that it could have flavored any dessert.

"No, you wouldn't!" cried a second nagini, cobra coils rippling. "You'd wish for pretty maidens to flirt with all day long."

The makara sighed. With each wasted minute, his poor,

empty stomach ached more. "Next?"

"I would wish for flowers," the third nagini said, her tone fluffy as a cloud. "For the whole world to be a garden."

"That's a stupid wish!" said the younger brother. "I'd wish to be king of Nagalok! Then I'd get all the gold I could ever want, and pretty handmaidens besides."

His sister gasped. "Stupid? We'll see who's stupid!"

The siblings turned on one another, slapping and scratching. As the younger brother twisted away, the jewel arced from his grasp to land before the watching makara. The makara's trunk curled delicately around it, and he beamed.

He held all the power of the gods in his hands. He could have anything, anything at all. And so he made a wish.

A table of delectable treats appeared, which he tucked right into. Only when his belly was full to near bursting did he sit back, satisfied.

By then, the nagas had realized they'd lost their precious jewel. "What if he doesn't give it back?" one fretted. "No one was supposed to use it except in case of emergency!"



shouted, then shot down toward the riverbed.

One of them would succeed in finding the jewel, the makara thought. And if not, at least the search would give him enough time to get away.

Upon his return, he found Ganga waiting, an infant cradled against her pink sari-clad chest, but no Shantanu in sight. She tilted her head, the curve of her plump lips and the waves of her long hair as beguiling as the river at her back. "My work here is done—for now, anyway. I will explain on the way. Come, we must be off."

The makara, sated and pleased his second wish had come true, knelt so Ganga could take her place atop his saddle. He hadn't expected her to appear bearing a child, but traveling with the goddess always had its surprises. "The more, the merrier. Where to, devi?"



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


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Shipwrecked

BY THE WONDERSMITH



Greetings all my fellow Curiosity Explorers and Magic-Makers! Allow me to introduce myself: I am the Wondersmith. I work with wonder in the same way a goldsmith works with gold to create beautiful, meaningful, and magical art about connection. Of course, I work with other media as well, such as hand-blown glass and sculpted ceramics, but they are in support of my main goal in life: to create and share wonder with strangers. The main way I do this is by creating surprise immersive experiences that I then gift to strangers in a variety of unusual means. Sometimes I hide invitations tucked into books for guests to find; sometimes I plant them in the woods for hikers to stumble upon. Other times I leave a seemingly ordinary object in a very public place, waiting for the person that is curious enough to investigate further.

The curious souls who accept my invitations are then treated to a delight for the senses in honor of the natural beauty of my region, the Pacific Northwest. They dine out of handmade glass and ceramic tableware, enjoying feasts of foraged foods and creative offerings as they gaze out over some of Mother Nature's beautiful handiwork. My events are more than just meals, though. I design a specific ceremony for each one that is open to all religious beliefs in order to make the experience that much more meaningful. Some events are somber and gentle, some are wild and playful, but always my hope is to give my guests an experience they will remember for a lifetime.

I take great joy in designing these sensual and magical events. I always begin by asking myself what kind of magic *I* would want to stumble upon or what is tempting my own curiosity. The idea for "Shipwreck" was born as I was sitting alone on the rocks by the ocean on a stormy winter's day, watching the waves crash below me with such force as to shake the ground. I thought about fierce seas and shipwrecks, how the ocean can be such a life giver but also such a life taker. A thought popped into my head as if from nowhere: The ocean remembers all. She gives and she takes.

I thought about those shipwrecks falling to the bottom of the sea, about the treasures they might have contained, about the mysteries they still hold. Deep, spine-chilling mysteries. Then another odd thought popped in my mind: What would a shipwreck taste like? With that, I began my research, learning what foods had been transported by ship over the centuries and which ones could hypothetically still be edible years later if the conditions undersea were right. I imagined mermaids in those murky depths, looking through those sunken larders and stumbling upon all sorts of exotic treasures and flavors they'd never before tasted, much in the same way as we have probably never tasted the same deep-sea delicacies that are common fare for them. I thought about a collaboration, a feast in honor of the mysteries of shipwrecks with a menu of preserved sunken treasures, fresh seafood, and delicate foraged ingredients from the land above. I met with my mermaid sisters to compare flavors and trade foods. (You can make a mermaid give you just about anything for a huckleberry, by the way.) Together, we came up with a menu to share with my earth brethren to give them a

magical glimpse into the mysteries of the undersea world.

As I was brainstorming how to invite my guests, the answer presented itself almost immediately: I had to hide my invitations in bottles washed up on the beach, of course! What child has not wandered the lengths of a rocky shoreline searching for a message in a bottle from mysterious lands? And what adult does not still carry the secret wish of stumbling upon such a treasure? So I set to work hand-crafting illustrated and detailed letters in barnacle-encrusted bottles and left them above the high-tide line on the pebbly beaches of Camano Island in Northern Washington. My heart fluttered every time a new response came in. My guests were overjoyed to have found such a unique opportunity. "Should I dress up?" they would ask in anticipation. I told them of course they should—this was a mermaid picnic, after all.

The day of the event was a gorgeous spring day with sunlight sparkling on the waves and the smell of cherry blossoms in the air. We held our event in a cozy beachside shack overlooking these waters. Guests arrived one by one, dressed appropriately for the occasion in blue dresses, fish-print ties, and even some scales on cheeks and necks. Siren songs played in the background as I took my eager guests through a tasting menu full of poetic and detailed descriptions such as this:

From the cask I extracted a thick darkened liquid. Unsure of the contents, I sampled it. Rich, deep, with something familiar ... the brightness of mountain huckleberries, the sun-soaked flavor of wild blackberries, the refreshing tartness of coastal thimbleberries all tampered and tamed in vanilla and rum. The sailors made this concoction to preserve fresh fruits on their travels, a wild berry boozy syrup, part libation and part dessert. Here it is served over whipped dolphin cream, a rare delicacy given to us by our undersea friends. A slice of petrified sea-foam accompanies it, as does a pile of North Pacific spotted amberjack eggs, which taste faintly of raspberries and rose.

(This delicacy was made of wild berry *Rumtoff* with vanilla whipped cream pudding, isomalt crisp, and spherified rose and raspberry tea.)

Each treat was served in a handmade porcelain dish encrusted with barnacles and shimmering with a nacre finish. These dishes were nestled into small boats, in honor of the larger versions that lie to this day on the bottom of the sea. The guests tasted and laughed and shared with me their stories of discovering their own beachside treasures and inspirations.

As the sun hung lower in the sky, turning the ocean to liquid chrome, we gathered on the beach and released our hopes and wishes into the waves. Then everyone was free to go their separate ways, taking with them the magic of the experience. I wandered into the ocean then, feeling the cold Pacific numb my legs as the sun warmed my face and chest. In that moment, I was so filled with gratitude I could have burst!

Though we all began as strangers, we came together through a shared experience so magical, few would believe you if you tried





to explain it to them. Together we explored the various undersea mysteries, foraged delights, and ocean treasures that I had collected for our experience. We admired the beauty of barnacles and the dazzling melancholic beauty of knowing that we would never know all the secrets below those golden waves. The rest of the day felt like a dream to me, and even I found myself asking, Did that really just happen? I felt the wonder of that day seeping into my bones. I was overwhelmed by the response of the guests who had felt that wonder too: Numerous emotion-filled responses landed in my inbox, thanking me for giving them a sense of magic they hadn't experienced since they were a child.

Through tears of gratitude, I read this response from one of my guests, Patti:

Being part of your gathering on Camano Island was a rare privilege. In the midst of a crushing political climate and a record-breaking rainy winter, you created a glimpse of beauty that pushes against darkness and insists on the power of grace. Though our presence was a product of chance, the otherworldly celebration was created by your deliberate, committed action, and by your dedication and lovely talent. Like lots of people, I tend to think of art as a visual medium—color and form frozen in time. To smell the faint brine of your creations, to cup your textured vessels in my hand, study their intricate details, hear your poetry, use your beautifully crafted spoons, and to take into myself your foods with all their wonderful flavors and textures—it was almost transcendent, a rare communion with strangers.

This, right here, is why I do what I do. I am a Wondersmith because the world needs more wonder, more love, more connection, and more magic. I do this not just because I enjoy it but because I feel called to do it with every fiber of my being.

I feel very blessed that I am supported by a community of fellow wonder lovers who believe in what I do. My patrons support me through Patreon (patreon.com/thewondersmith), a website that allows them to make a monthly pledge in whatever amount they choose in exchange for a variety of special rewards. My patrons know that the work I do is an act of generosity; therefore, it is only appropriate that they be funded by more of that same generosity. Together, we have created a system of love, spreading out from the events they fund and I create. I like to think that those ripples keep spreading to touch countless other strangers, like waves on the ocean. Perhaps they've even spread to you.

If you'd like to see more of my work, please visit my website, thewondersmith.com. There you'll find pictures of past events as well as my blog, which is full of everyday magic, from foraged recipes to meaningful personal rituals to nature-inspired art projects. I would love to have you join me there for a cup of nettle tea, a slice of moss cake, and some deep discussions about where you find your magic.

*With love,
Miss Wondersmith*



Find photographer Makenzy Smith-Bradow at thenorthwestfocus.com.



Yarrow and Kelp LABRADORITE SOAP

by The Wondersmith



This soap is an ode to the dancing of underwater light, the shimmering of sunlight filtering through kelp forests and the gray depths that stretch far beyond our reach. It is also an ode to labradorite, the stone that perfectly captures the ephemeral luminescence of such a magical realm.

Kelp is a large brown seaweed that grows in underwater forests in shallow ocean. It's very rich in vitamins and minerals to nourish the skin as you use this soap—plus it gives it a nice opaque green color. It is also known to help regulate glands and hormones as well as cleansing the body of iodine. There's not enough in this soap to make a noticeable difference, but it does give it a beautiful color and subtle ocean scent!

Yarrow is one of the most well-known healing herbs and can be found all over the world. I often find it growing above the high-tide mark on the seashore, but it is also found in forests, meadows, and even coming up through city sidewalks. It is thought to be helpful in addressing allergies and rashes, and in promoting healing in slow-healing wounds. Its spicy scent is the perfect counterbalance to the kelp. It also has the added benefit of adding a slight blue tint to this soap naturally, as yarrow essential oil is bright blue.

Yarrow Kelp Labradorite Soap

Makes about eight bars.

Recipe can easily be halved if desired.

Before you make this recipe, you'll need to make yarrow-infused oil. This takes some time, so if you're in a hurry you can just use regular jojoba oil or purchase yarrow oil from Mountain Rose Herbs. A note: Yarrow oil and yarrow essential oil are not the same and shouldn't be used interchangeably. Yarrow oil is just a carrier oil (like olive or jojoba) infused with the essence of yarrow. Yarrow essential oil consists of the volatile oils in the plant itself distilled into a highly concentrated solution.

To make the infused oil, harvest some fresh yarrow leaves. Wash, then dry well and leave out for a couple of hours to partially dry. Fill a small jar about three-quarters full with the wilted yarrow leaves, then top with an oil of your choice. Jojoba or grapeseed is particularly nice in soaps, but olive oil works great too with the added benefit of being edible. Yarrow oil is fantastic in salad dressings and drizzled over bread or roasted vegetables. Let the oil sit in a warm, dark place for four to six weeks, then strain.

Ingredients:

Mix One:

1 lb. glycerin
1 tsp. yarrow oil
4 drops yarrow essential oil
15 drops grapefruit essential oil

Mix Two:

1 lb. glycerin
¼ tsp. kelp
1 tsp. yarrow oil
15 drops yarrow essential oil
10 drops grapefruit essential oil
10 drops lavender essential oil

Other:

A little extra glycerin
¼ tsp. gold mica powder
¼ tsp. silver mica powder
¼ tsp. blue mica powder
Half-sphere soap molds
Spray bottle full of rubbing alcohol

Using a large knife, cut the soap into cubes, then melt the first batch in a couple boiler, covering the double boiler with the lid. You can also melt your soap in the microwave by placing it in a microwave-safe glass measuring cup and covering it with plastic wrap (to keep the moisture from escaping). Use the 50 percent setting and stir every couple of minutes until nearly all the soap has melted. Remove from the microwave and let sit until the rest of the soap melts, keeping it covered. Stir gently and be careful not to introduce bubbles.

Once the soap is melted, remove the bowl from heat. Let cool slightly, until it is under 140°F, then transfer it to a heat-proof pouring container, like a Pyrex measuring cup. Add the rest of the ingredients from Mix One and stir gently until well combined. Then pour into the soap molds, filling them halfway or so. Spritz the tops with rubbing alcohol to prevent bubbles and allow the soaps to set up. Reserve a little bit of the soap mixture for the next step.

Melt the small amount of reserved soap and allow to cool slightly. Divide it into three heat-safe pourable

containers. In each container, mix in one of the luster dusts. Spray the surface of the already-set soap with rubbing alcohol, then pour a very small amount of the gold-infused soap on top. Then add some silver and blue next to it. With a clean paintbrush, mix them with each other just a little bit with a swirling motion—you want them to remain separate but overlap a little bit. Try to keep your total amount of soap on each bar down to about an eighth of an inch thick or even thinner. Mist with rubbing alcohol, and allow to set up.

Once the luster layer has set up, cut some lines into the top using a sharp knife to give the finished product an authentic labradorite look. You'll want to cut all the way through the luster in some areas if possible.

Repeat the soap-melting process with the remaining soap and any leftover soap from the previous step. Allow it to cool slightly so that it thickens but does not form a skin. While it's cooling, mix the kelp and the yarrow oil in a small separate bowl. Blend until lump-free and creamy. Add to the melted soap, along with the other ingredients listed for Mix Two. Stir gently, so as not to introduce bubbles, until the soap is a consistent dark teal color and all the oils have been absorbed into the solution.

Spritz the top of the set soaps with rubbing alcohol, then fill the molds the rest of the way with the melted soap. Spritz the top again and let it set up completely. Repeat the process with the rest of the soap. Allow the soap to cool and fully harden, then remove from the molds onto a wax-paper-covered surface. Cover it with more wax paper and a kitchen towel and let sit for twenty-four hours.

If you'd like, you can carve facets into your "stones" using a sharp kitchen knife. Polish with a soft cloth afterward. Your soap is now ready to use! To store or give as gifts, wrap your soap in plastic cling wrap to keep moisture in and store in a dark place, like a closet.



Sea Nymph Ears

Tutorial by Vanessa Walton of Creature of Habit

Photography by Sarah Scott

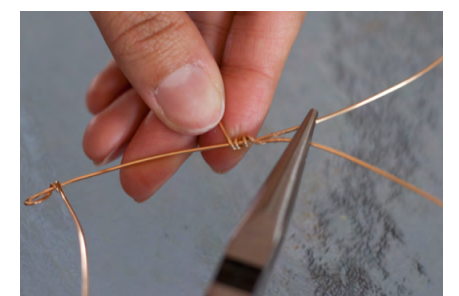
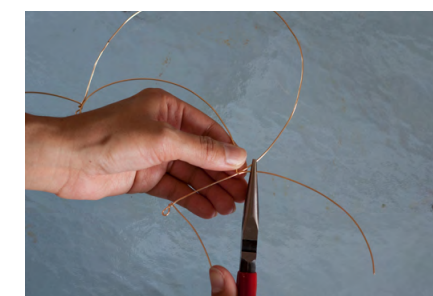
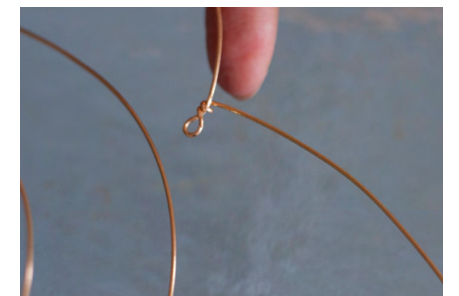
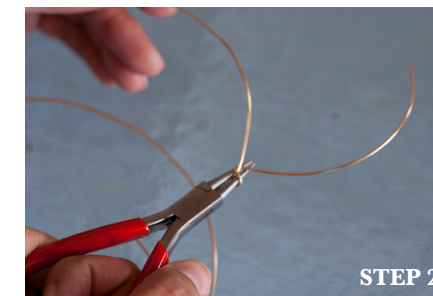
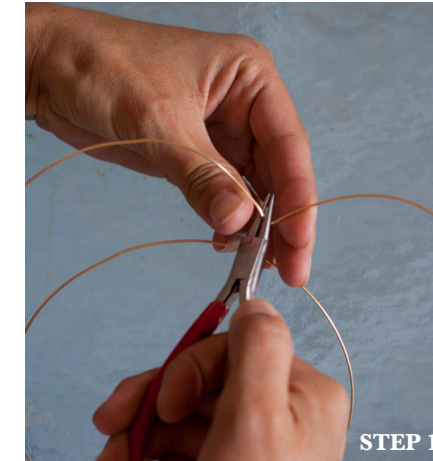
Materials:

22-gauge wire in whatever color you wish (gold, silver, copper)
 26-gauge wire in a matching color
 1 roll of Angelina film in color of your choice (can be purchased on Amazon or at Walmart)
 Thin elastic in color of your choice

Tools:

Wire cutters
 Round-nose pliers
 Needle-nose pliers
 Heat gun
 Iron and ironing board
 Safety pin or sewing pin
 Matches and candle or lighter
 Heat-safe surface (I used a foam-core board covered in Nashua heat-safe tape)

Playful, iridescent, shimmering fin ears! I've always loved illustrations of mermaids with fin ears and find them so whimsical. They're such a lovely and lightweight accessory that can be customized in so many fun ways—try adding little crystals, pearls, or even glitter!



STEP 1

Cut a length of 22-gauge wire, approximately 25 to 30 inches in length (adjust as necessary). Center the wire over your head and bend the wire down past your human ears like a headband. Decide how far down you would like your sea nymph ears to end. Leave some extra length to create loops for the elastic.

STEP 2

Bend the excess wire outward in an arch and wrap around round-nose pliers to create a loop for elastic. Wrap wire around several times to secure and bend excess outward in an arc. Trim excess and shape how you would like the bottom of your ears to look. Repeat on other side.

STEP 3

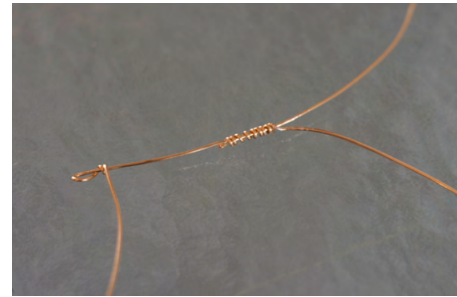
Measure where you would like the top of your ears to begin and mark on both sides. Cut another length of 22-gauge wire the length you would like your ears to stick out. Add several extra inches so that you have length to wrap around the headband base.

Sea Nymph Ears

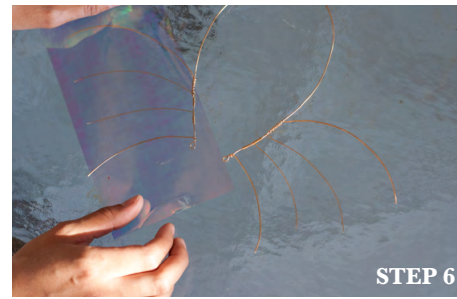
Vanessa Walton of Creature of Habit



STEP 4



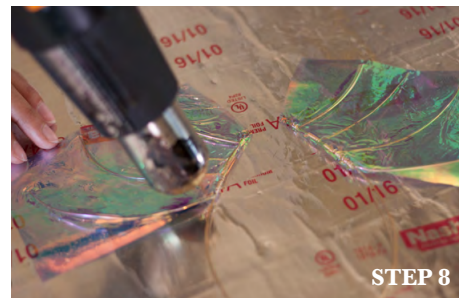
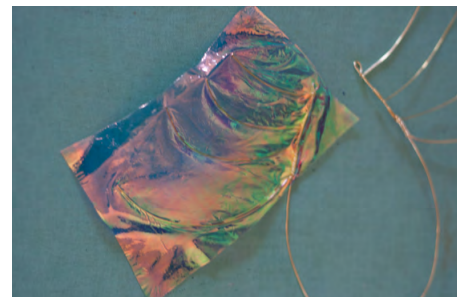
STEP 5



STEP 6



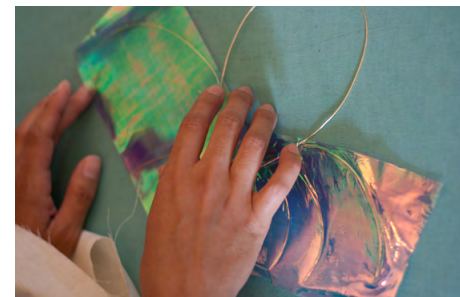
STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 4
Use needle-nose pliers to wrap wire around headband base and trim off excess on both sides. Be sure to securely wrap the wire end around the base so that there are no sharp edges that might poke you while you are wearing your ears. Repeat on the other side.

STEP 5
Cut multiple lengths of 26-gauge wire and wrap around base. This will create the fin look of your ears! Bend all wires to the shape you want and cut off any excess.

STEP 6
Cut a length of Angelina film long enough to cover your ears. Cut three more the same length; you want two lengths per ear.

STEP 7
Lay wire base on your ironing board and sandwich between two pieces of Angelina film. Make sure that both sheets completely encase the wire. Lay some scrap fabric or heat-safe paper over the Angelina film and iron film pieces together. The heat will bond Angelina film to itself. Repeat on other side.

STEP 8
If necessary, lightly use a heat gun to solidify the bond. But be careful, because too much heat will melt the film! Always use a heat-protected surface when using a heat gun.

STEP 9
Once the film has been bonded, trim away excess. Cut inward arcs between the wires to create a fin effect. If any edges come loose, lightly use heat gun again to bond.

STEP 10
Take a small sewing pin or safety pin and hold the point in a candle or lighter flame. Once heated, poke a few small holes through the Angelina film.

STEP 11
Hold the ear over the flame (but not too close!) and watch as the holes expand. Add more holes to further texture the ears. Be sure to also hold the ears over the flame around all the edges to make sure they are completely sealed.

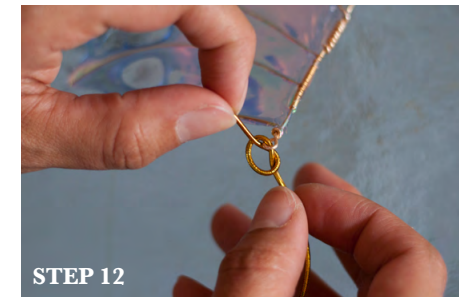
STEP 12
Once you're satisfied with the look of your ears, thread some elastic through the loops at the bottom (make sure to test on your head so it's the perfect fit) and your sea nymph ears are complete! You can now hear the secrets of the ocean!



STEP 10



STEP 11



STEP 12



Sarah Scott can be found on Instagram @adellacosplay.
Follow Vanessa Walton on Instagram @creaturehabits.



SIREN

BEAUTY SECRETS

by Alise Marie

As the setting sun prepares to rest, the moon is stirring. The air is filled with salt and spray, as the tide slowly rushes in to greet the dusk. In these enchanted moments between light and dark, not a soul can be seen nor heard, only the lull of the sea and the whisper of the wind. But there is a rustling beneath the waves.

A lovely creature appears at the water's edge, gracefully ascending onto the rocks. Her limbs glisten with twilight. Her eyes behold the jewels of the ocean. And she radiates the beauty of the stars above. She is the Siren, and if you are very still, she will reveal to you her beauty secrets, woven with tales of lush gardens deep beneath the waves, emerald green sea-fairy dust, and salty moonlight magic.

The element of water is entirely feminine, representing our ability to create on every level and to nurture those creations throughout their lifetimes. Water heals and purifies, and it is vital to all life force. It is our emotional body, our intuition, and our dreams.

Siren Beauty Secrets

Alise Marie

Beneath the full moon, we begin by creating our beauty ritual space. First, gather your sacred objects: White, blue, and green candles are most effective for water magic, as they embody healing, beauty, peace, and the higher self. Flowers and herbs are most welcome, as are your favorite crystals. Perhaps ask your favorite water deity to join you. Now start concocting your potions, and as you do so, visualize and really *feel* your desires. It is summer, nature's most abundant season, where the earth (and you) are at the peak of fullness, rich and ripe with light. So revel in it! Feel the voluptuous joy of life, basking in the glow of appreciation for the vivid beauty that lives *in you*, and radiate that love out into the world. Keep these feelings bold as you prepare a warm bath. Light your candles, and become one with your inner Siren.

The triple goddess of magic ingredients here are all bestowed upon us by water and combine beautifully with the delights of summer.

Celtic sea salt is a potent detoxifier and rich in all precious trace minerals. It is harvested by ancient methods and left in its natural state, bringing pure sea magic straight into your bath.

Kelp is another sacred gift of the oceans, a variety of reddish-brown seaweed that grows in lush forests beneath the sea, revered as a protective energy and believed to bring happiness. Ruled by the moon, kelp is highly nutritious but also possesses detoxifying properties. It contains potassium, iron, and niacin, which keep you glowing by increasing blood circulation, brightening the skin, and providing hydration. An ample dose of vitamin C stimulates collagen from the inside out, making kelp an amazing anti-aging treatment.

Spirulina and chlorella hail from freshwater gardens, perhaps brought in by a visit from the woodland fairies? They are a superfood team that cannot be beat as stellar sources of clean plant protein and vital nutrients that boost the immune system, lower blood sugar and cholesterol, and fight degenerative disease. Though they can be purchased separately, buying a combination makes it simple. And the color! A rich blend of deep jade and peacock blue, they are indeed beauty foods.

UNDERWATER GARDEN FACIAL MASQUE

Fields two or three treatments

1 tbsp. kelp powder
1 tbsp. chlorella-spirulina powder blend
¼ cup spring water
13 drops ylang ylang essential oil

In a small bowl, mix together the kelp and algae powders. Slowly add in the spring water, a little at a time, to achieve a medium consistency—one that is rich, yet thin enough to spread on the face evenly. If you make a mistake, you can always add more water or powders. Drop in the ylang ylang oil, and

blend well. Apply to a clean face, and leave it on for 15 minutes. The steam of the bath will open the pores, letting the nutrients penetrate more deeply. This may leave you slightly pink immediately after you remove the masque, but that will calm down in a matter of minutes. Remove with a warm wet cloth, rinse well, then pat dry. Apply a small amount of your favorite moisture cream afterward to add a protective outer layer.

This potion delivers impressive results, from visibly lifting the skin to softening fine lines. Incredibly hydrated skin is revealed, plumped and gorgeous, with a celestial glow that's irresistible! Use it during new to full moon cycles and any time you need a little extra star power. Store extra masque in the refrigerator, sealed tightly, for one week.

MERMAID'S ELIXIR

Per serving

1 cup unsweetened almond milk
½ tsp. chlorella-spirulina powder blend
½ tsp. kelp powder
1 cup frozen organic strawberries
½ banana
2 tsp. stevia

Blend all ingredients together on high speed until smooth. The high vibration of this magic brew is positively otherworldly! Sip it as you bathe.

I know what you're thinking: *This is going to taste horrid!* I promise you, my darlings, it won't hurt a bit. I have the toughest time getting my private clients to consume kelp and algae, but once they try it, there's no going back. Though the taste is decidedly sharp, it is brilliantly masked by both the strawberries and the sweetener. The elevated energy of this potion and the beauty benefits will far outweigh any initial hesitation. It's cold and crisp, slightly sweet, and has a levitating effect. Your body, inside and out, will thank you profusely for adding sea plants to your wellness rituals. Start out with these measurements, then gradually increase the amount of sea plants you add to your elixirs as you get used to them.

Aiding and abetting the sea-garden delights, we have strawberries center stage. These simply gorgeous fruits are bright red seductresses ruled by Aphrodite herself. Water-powered, they bring love and beauty in both esoteric and practical forms. Sacred also to the Norse goddess Freya, they are offered and consumed in love rituals and contain beauty nutrients to keep premature aging far away from your heavenly body. Full of vitamin C, folic acid, and antioxidants, they stimulate cell turnover, fight wrinkles, and help keep skin clear. Bananas are a fabulous source of vitamin A, which acts as a natural retinol. Together with almond milk, they provide plenty of vitamin E and beauty fats, both of which further delay the signs of aging.

BEAUTY WITCH TIP

Moonstones are a legendary stone of mystery and magic. Gray and white moonstones, used here, activate the third eye, allowing access into psychic perception, dreams, and hidden realms. Having them present at the new to full moon is particularly effective, especially when you bathe, as your lunar-water connection is especially powerful. They can also activate and heighten emotions, so use them with care and wisdom.



Sand and Sea Body Exfoliant



Mermaid's Elixir

Siren Beauty Secrets

Alise Marie

SAND AND SEA BODY EXFOLIANT

For two or three treatments

1 cup Celtic sea salt
1 tbsp. kelp powder
¼ cup meadow foam seed oil
13 drops ylang ylang essential oil
6 drops jasmine essential oil
8 drops cedar wood essential oil

Mix together the salt, kelp powder, and meadow foam seed oil until well blended. Add in the essential oils, one at a time, slowly stirring in a clockwise motion. As the scent of kelp can be quite strong, feel free to add more essential oils as you wish, though these amounts should keep your body and your nose quite happy! Store in an airtight jar, preferably glass, in a cool, dry spot.

The truth is, it's not easy keeping mermaid skin supple. Though seawater is rich in beautifying minerals, it can be a bit drying at times. Add to that a sometimes harsh sun and blustery winds, and you have a recipe for flaky, dull skin—exactly what a water nymph should *never* tolerate!

In addition to the seaweed and algae, this potion is bursting with nutritive oils. Meadow foam is composed of 98 percent

fatty acids, creating a superior moisturizer that stays with you. Sweet, tropical ylang ylang adds a joyous scent and the power to soften fine lines while preventing wrinkles. (It's also a heady aphrodisiac, perfect for musky summer evenings!) Sensual jasmine is governed by the moon, softening even the most weather-worn skin. An abundant accomplice for all your love and money magic, jasmine also acts as a potent mood booster, able to lift waning spirits. Delicious cedarwood joins the cast here as a balancer, providing solar energy and a bit of firepower. It carries healing and protective energy, as well as skin-soothing and purification properties.

Use this powerful body treatment to slough away tired scales and adventures past, as you awaken new cells, nourish, and revitalize. It is most effective when left on for a bit before rinsing, to allow the body to absorb its nutrients via the skin. You can also use it as a bath soak if you like.

Wishing you a most blissful summer, my loves!



Alise Marie is an actress, writer, and certified holistic nutritionist. Potions and rituals like these can be found in her forthcoming book, *The Beauty Witch Guide to The Moon, The Stars, and Your Heavenly Body*. She can be found at thebeautywitch.com.

"I must be a mermaid. I have no fear of depth and a great fear of shallow living" —Anais Nin

In ancient times in China, mermaids were thought to be the wives of sea dragons, tasked with communicating messages to the imperial emperor on land. In Australia, they were called *yawkyawks* for their beautiful siren songs. And in Greek mythology, a variety of mermaids known as sirens lured sailors to shipwreck with their beautiful songs.

Irresistible and incredibly seductive, here is a glimpse into what mermaids may have chosen for their beauty regimen!

Seaweed Bath Co. Hydrating Seaweed Powder Bath

Enjoy a lovely soak in bladderwrack seaweed, with over sixty-five vitamins, minerals, and amino acids, to nourish and remineralize the body. seaweedbathco.com

SW Basics Exfoliant A mineral-rich sea-salt soak with skin-soothing organic oat and almond flour to calm sensitive skin. swbasicsfbk.com

Mangiacotti Ocean Whipped Body Care Duo An incredibly luxurious body wash and a lightweight whipped body lotion pair up to leave skin hydrated, healthy, and glowing. mangiacotti.com

Kani Botanical Beauty A potent facial mask with nourishing sea greens to soften, firm, and remineralize the skin. bikini.com

—Rosie Shannon

HANDCRAFTED APOTHECARY BEAUTY



Raw Skin Care
Organic

www.rawskincareorganic.com www.rawskincareshop.com
1-847 823 1727

IN WHICH I DECIDE TO GROW WINGS

by Jeannine Hall Gailey

Painting by Anne Bachelier

because I can no longer feel my feet.
Was it a trick of genetics or a magic potion

that made my fingers into feathers or fins
ready for a different kind of escape?

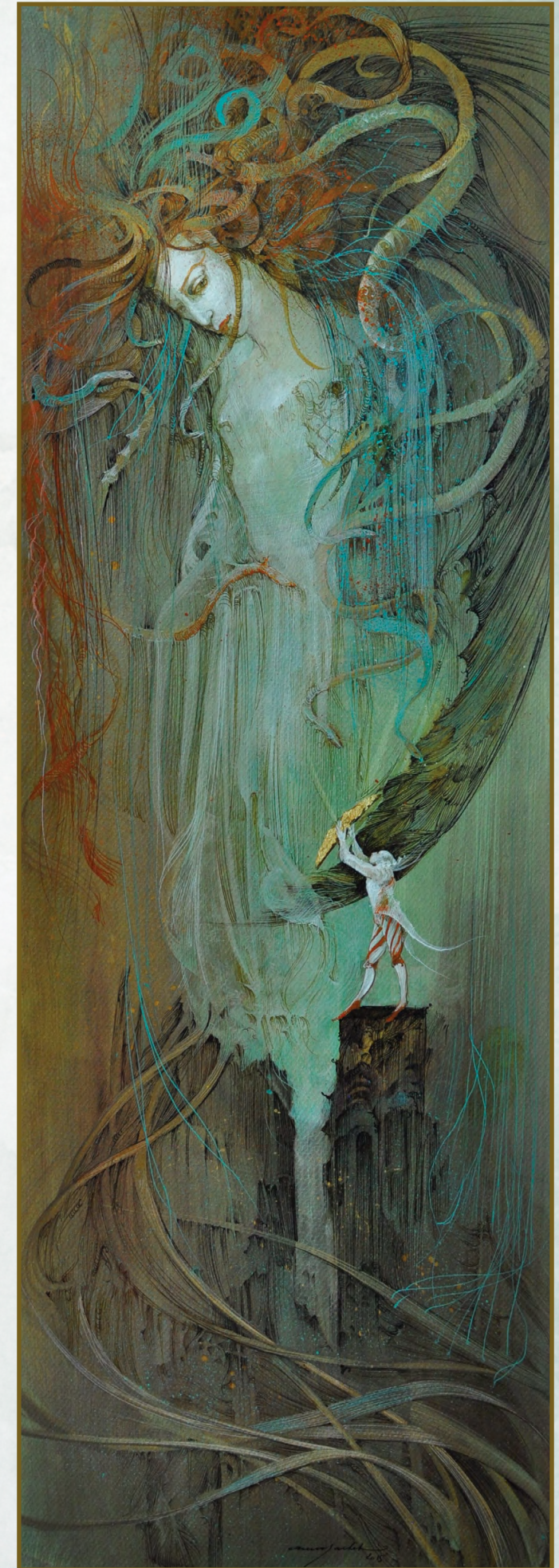
My body is slowly giving itself away
from this universe. It sparkles, sometimes sparks,

in this alien air. And I can have the hair I always wanted,
long and blue, the kind that thrashes behind me

with its own anima. Maybe shiny scales.
If I've become unrecognizable, I'm okay with that.

I'm happy to leave behind my misadventures,
live inside someone else's warm-lined skin.

I'll arrive with a suitcase of snakes and silks,
a map to a new evolution, a sky full of discovery.



SELF-PORTRAIT AS MYTHOLOGICAL CREATURE

by Jeannine Hall Gailey

Painting by Anne Bachelier

I tore off my skin in the moonlight and became a seal, sleek
and noisy. One day a man put his arms around me, and

my arms and legs became tree limbs. It turned out I was
the enchanted princess all along, high atop a glass mountain,

holding a golden apple, but the rest of the story was forgotten,
and alone for so many years, I became a witch instead.

I was a woman who loved science, so naturally, I couldn't be human;
in some stories, I am a dragon, in others a mermaid, but always

depicted as magical below the waist. Dragons have the advantage
of being more dangerous, with sparkling teeth, but mermaids

too have their lures, their languorous hair and voices.
I was born from an egg, I was born from sea foam,

born inside a plum blossom, raised by wolves. Never the usual mess.
I've spent a lot of time in suspicious sleep, surrounded by briars,

kept in coffins. I've eaten poisons, lost my appetite for apples, danced
through a lot of shoe soles, turned into a thousand birds.

After all these years I've become comfortable with disguises,
with transformations. I've become what happens at the end of the story,

after the queen who is also a dragon is driven away, after the long
and uninteresting marriage is over, after the spell is broken.

A woman alone is a mystical creature; if you listen, you'll hear
the remnants of bells and smashed glass, the fragments of mirrors

kicked to ruin. The air here shimmers with my remains.





THE LITTLE MERMAID
WARNS YOU,
YOU MAY HAVE
ALREADY BECOME
FORGOTTEN

*by Jeannine Hall Gailey
Painting by Anne Bachelier*

Your once-silken voice will desert you, your legs
will make every step on land a torture.
There will come a time when you miss
the seaweed and seals, your old ways,
your old body. Now fit for neither land
nor sea, your sacrifice long in the past now.
Comb your hair, which keeps growing,
though you've lost your prince.
You know the time is coming
where you'll pay the price
for your short time in the sun.
You sit outside the doors of the castle,
and no one recognizes you as cursed,
or as former mermaid or magical creature at all.
You are just another broken human now.
If they looked closely, maybe they'd see
the sea foam in your eyes. But probably
they'll swish past you on sturdy strong feet without notice.

*Visit Jeannine Hall Gailey online at webbish6.com or on Twitter
@webbish6.*

Visit artist Anne Bachelier online at annebachelier.blogspot.fr.

IN THE STUDIO WITH
Sarah Sparkles

BY CAROLYN TURGEON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE PARKE



Sarah Sparkles is a crystal-loving mermaid in Brooklyn who's worked on window displays for Bergdorf Goodman for over a decade—and has blinged out everything from a motorcycle to a life-size Velociraptor dinosaur skeleton, not to mention more than a few mermaid bras in her Sparkledome Studio. Here she shows us how to make our own Mermaid Parade-worthy ensemble ... but not before answering a few glittering questions first.

Faerie Magazine: Do you identify as a mermaid? Why mermaids? Why do we love them so much?

Sarah Sparkles: I identify as a fairy mermaid witch and have for a long time.

I was born and raised in Rockaway Beach, a narrow peninsula surrounded by the bay and the ocean on the outskirts of New York City. My first memory was being a toddler with my mother holding both of my hands while standing waist deep in the ocean. The ocean has been a part of my conscious and subconscious mind for as long as I can remember. As a child and teenager I often dreamed of tidal waves. While swimming and meditating in the ocean, I ponder life's metaphors about going with the flow. When you ride a wave, you careen and float and make it smoothly back to shore. When you fight a wave or don't pay attention, you can get pummeled in a way that humbles you into submission, with the truth that nature and flow are more powerful than our human willfulness.

In 2000, I discovered the Coney Island Mermaid Parade. It became an annual high holiday—my Christmas, a place where my tribe of pagan art weirdos get to physically embody the mysticism and glamour we feel in our hearts and souls. Designing a new mermaid costume every summer became a hallowed ritual in preparation for the parade. Many of my dearest friends are also mermaids, and I'm grateful for decade-long friendships with Kai Altair and Ali Luminescent, who produce the *Mermaid Lagoon* (see page 83), an annual fundraiser for ocean-preservation causes; and Charlotte Lily Gaspard of Midnight Radio Show, who weaves tales of sirens and sea captains with elegant shadow puppetry for children in the parks and gardens of New York City. The mermaids in my life are the most inspiring sort. We dance together, play together, and, in our own ways, make the world a better place together. The mermaids I know combine a deep love of nature with artistry and intuition, and often seek to promote stewardship and give back to society through sharing their enchanted art forms. Most of all, they believe in magic and freedom. Embodying this gives other people permission to do so as well.

FM: How do mermaids figure into your work?

SS: One of my greatest passions as an artist is making adornment for magically inclined people by channeling mystical archetypes through costumes, jewelry, accessories, and embellishment. Doing custom designs allows me to create adornment that is most symbiotic with an individual. My Faerie and Mermaid Bling jewelry collection is sold at Enchantments, New York City's oldest occult store, in the East Village. All the jewelry is one of a kind or extremely limited edition. I have also

done a lot of mermaid- or ocean-themed props and event décor. Creating ethereal atmospheres and adornment is a part of how I help create a world I want to live in.

FM: Why do you love crystal, sparkle, and bling?

SS: From my earliest childhood memories, I have been drawn to things that sparkle, like a moth to a glittering flame. My grandmother would let me play with her sparkling Swarovski crystal figurines that she kept in a china closet. I broke the tail off her crystal mouse, but I loved the figurines so much she let me play with them anyway. As an artist, I have a passionate affinity for embellishment and take great pleasure in working with crystals, shells, antique findings, appliqué, studs, stones, spikes, sequins, beads, glitter. I do not enjoy design unless I literally have a hand in the craftsmanship. My love for sparkles is timeless, omnipresent. It is constant, flourishing, taking on new shades and variety of ways for application. This love has only solidified with time, along with the excitement for growth of new expressions and revelations.

FM: Do you have a mission you can describe?

SS: In my roaring twenties, using art for activism was my driving force while participating in avant-garde alternative subcultures. In 2013 my book *Parades Parties and Protests* was born: a visual documentary that chronicles a decade of creative resistance culture against the backdrop of post-9/11 New York City underground nightlife, artistic public processions, political demonstrations, and national festival culture. The book's visual focus is on costumes, installation art, and performances that raise awareness of the environment, eroding civil liberties, gentrification, and war, and in other instances embodying an alternative world we dreamed about living in. The intention of my book was to create a visual piece of media that raises awareness of underrepresented sociopolitical issues and for this inspirational creative resistance culture championing these causes to have a place in history.

In my thirties, my focus has shifted toward a more personal tone: a combination of growing my artistic business while cultivating enough space to focus on my own healing and inner peace. My passion is to create as much inspiring art as possible as an indie designer as well as being a team player within dynamic visual departments. My life mission is to be true to my unique thumbprint as much as possible, which gives others permission to do so as well; to surround myself with inspiring people and places, enjoy life, minimize my environmental impact, focus on peace and gratitude, and make the world a sparklier place!



Sarah Sparkles

Carolyn Turgeon

FM: Can you tell us about some of your most extravagant displays?

SS: My first assignment at Bergdorf's was spending days covering tree branches in black glitter for a sparkling 1920s-themed flapper holiday window in conjunction with the launch of Linda Fargo's book *Dreams Through the Glass*. The rest is history!

I'm deeply grateful for the unique life experience of working freelance for thirteen years in the Bergdorf Goodman visual department. As the years have gone by, my focus has been on doing more prop commissions. In 2015, Swarovski collaborated with Bergdorf on the holiday windows. My studio was commissioned to bedazzle two four-foot-tall gargoyles, an alligator head, a bear head, a three-foot-tall blue ribbon, two baby birds (and a partridge in a pear tree)! At that time, the moniker among my fabulous assistants at the Sparkledome Studio was the Sarah Sparkles Super Sparkly Swarovski Sweatshop, School, and Sleepover. In 2017, my studio received another epic Bergdorf sparkle project, embellishing multiple life-size Velociraptor skeletons for a Museum of Natural History-themed holiday window. The elaborate 360-degree crystal treatment for the dinos required my studio to spend six solid months in bling production. My ultimate dream Sparkledome studio commission was designing and fabricating a *Purple Rain* motorcycle—embellished with Swarovski crystals, leather, studs, and spikes for a Prince vs. Richard Prince-themed Halloween party curated by AHZ Concepts.

Outside of working for Bergdorf's visual department and commissions that come through Sparkledome Studio, my focus has been on aligning with other designers who have a compatible aesthetic, and I take great pleasure in helping execute their surreal, macabre, and glamorous visions. Dream-come-true jobs have been assisting costume designer Darrell Thorne with bedazzling headdresses for the Park Avenue Armory Gala and television shows *High Maintenance* and *RuPaul's Drag Race*, assisting set designer Douglas Little for seven years of Bette Midler's Halloween party "Hulaween" at the Waldorf Astoria, and project-managing the installation of the Swarovski crystal curtain—which was used at the Oscars!—that flanked the runway and judging room on the set of *Project Runway's* accessory show. The ultimate heaven-and-hell-on-earth dream job was building out the venue Diamond Horseshoe for the show *Queen of the Night*. Douglas asked me to do an eleven-day hot wax installation, which turned into six solid months of crafting opulent wall treatments made of 100,000 butterfly and beetle wings; secret rooms draped in shells, pearls, and hot wax; gold-leaf walls and floors; faux coral with sculpted oversize jewels; distressed chandeliers; and precariously tall, oddly placed towers of champagne flutes.

FM: Any advice for aspiring mermaids and/or bling lovers?

SS: Be empowered to do it yourself! The majority of what I wear are simple items that I embellish. Make good friends with the Gem-Tac and the glue gun. Get acquainted with your local craft and trim stores. Learn how to sew. Decorate your home by embellishing picture frames, mirrors, and flowerpots with shells and jewels. Take trips to the beach to scavenge for beautiful shells, coral, and sea glass. If you're not the crafty type, you can look up indie designers who make custom mermaid accessories and sell through occult shops, at special events, or on Etsy. If you can dream it, you can make it—or find a local artist to make it for you. If there's a wish, there's a way! When I was a teen, I fantasized about living in a house with different themed rooms. In my current abode, the Sparkledome, I have the Garden, the Palace, the Space Annex, and the Underwater Bathroom of Love, which is painted shades of turquoise blue with iridescent glitter and has sparkling coral and shells, fish, and mermaid accents adorning the room.

Mermaid is also a lifestyle! Join a local gym with a pool. Go to your nearest lake or ocean to relax and socialize. If you're slammed during the summer, bring your work with you. Last summer I went with three of my assistants and a bag full of faux dinosaur bones and crystals to bedazzle away at the beach. Have crafting dates with other mermaid-enthusiast friends. Make travel plans to explore beaches you've never seen before. Donate to ocean conservation. Minimize use of plastic and other nefarious disposable items that find their way into our precious waters.



For more info, visit sarahsparkles.com or @sarahsparkles218 on Instagram.



Mermaid Bra Tutorial

BY SARAH SPARKLES

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE PARKE



SUPPLIES

- Plain blue bra
- Gem-Tac or another nontoxic glue that dries clear
- Skewer for spreading glue
- Glue gun
- Glue sticks
- Needle and thread
- Fine blue glitter (matching the dominant color of bra)
- Jewels, crystals, appliqué, trim, sparkling faux plant life

As a devout attendee of the Coney Island Mermaid Parade since the year 2000, I have an annual ritual to craft a new ensemble for my high holiday.

At Sparkledome Studio, the first phase of design happens when I shop for embellishments or go through my craft supplies. I lean toward heavily monochromatic color palettes because I enjoy getting very deep into the essence of a color. Especially those in the beloved-by-mermaids-everywhere blue and purple family!

After acquiring and laying out all the supplies listed above, I get to work. The base of the bra must be completely embellished with crystals. First I apply glue directly to the fabric, followed by a line of crystals. I employ a technique I call "happy marriage," where the carefully staggered lines of crystals fit right together. You will occasionally need to use a smaller gem to fill in an odd space. Cover both cups with gems.

Next I place a layer of fine glitter that covers any visible glue in between the crystals. Just sprinkle it in. I call this "glitter grout."

Then I add more embellishment! I hot-glue on sparkling plant life and glittery trim onto the bra straps, reinforcing it by sewing a few stitches into the strap. I hot-glue on an appliqué centerpiece, then add more jewelry onto the appliqué to make it extra fancy. Because: *Extra. Fancy.*

Of course I glitter the sides of the bra, too, and then hot-glue on more jewels.

Let the glue dry for at least half a day before wearing. If you make a mistake, don't be afraid to backtrack and remove some jewels—or you can use my personal favorite technique for fixing nearly any problem: Cover it with glitter!

Happy crafting!!!

Mermaid Bra Tutorial

Sarah Sparkles



A quick chat with New York mermaids Kai Altair and Ali Luminescent

Faerie Magazine: What does it mean to be a mermaid in New York?

Kai Altair: We are so lucky that New York City is surrounded by water! Being a mermaid here means Coney Island summers, Rockaway Beach dreaming, organizing beach cleanups, and helping clean our local waterways to restore them to their natural health and beauty. It means vibrant communities of creative sea creatures that parade together and make art all year round.

Ali Luminescent: Being a New York mermaid means you have to hustle a little harder than just basking on the shore! It's a busy place and there is a lot of splashing to be done, children and adults alike to inspire, and events to shake your tail at! Also, you can't just be a fair-weather mer-friend here—you must also embrace the icy winters too. We have Ice Mermaid parties and encourage activism around Antarctica and glaciers too! Mermaiding is a year-round responsibility!

FM: How did you become interested in ocean causes?

KA: About ten years ago I took a trip back to the Caribbean island that I lived on as a little girl. I was so excited to be with the huge clouds of fish and rainbows of coral I remembered from my childhood. I was met with a heartbreaking view when I looked beneath the surface: All the fish were gone, and all the coral was dead. As I sat crying on the beach, I promised the ocean that I would be a champion for her and devote my creative and musical talents to helping her heal and flourish again. I was also one of the millions of people moved to action after watching *The Cove*, created by the Oceanic Preservation Society. The reality of the lives of whales and dolphins around the world being hunted and enslaved in circus shows drove me to create Mermaid Lagoon. It was the only way that I could deal with the pain in my heart for the ocean and her creatures.

AL: Growing up next to the ocean, it is hard to ignore the ever-changing landscape. Witnessing the tides wash up everything from beloved sea animals to surreal amounts of trash, to experiencing the change in flood plains resulting in storm surges to come up and over your house, it becomes impossible to turn a blind eye. I knew from a young age that there had to be a better way to care for our planet and have dedicated my art to it ever since.

FM: What is Mermaid Lagoon?

Mermaid Lagoon is an ocean benefit produced by the NYC Mermaids: Kai Altair, Ali Luminescent, and Debra Tillinger. We work with musicians, circus performers,



© Miranda Rovetto. Mermaid Tails by Prismatik

dancers, set designers, ocean educators, and dreamers to create an underwater wonderland that sends thousands of dollars annually to the local New York City waterways and to organizations supporting the release and rehabilitation of whales and dolphins in captivity. Debra Tillinger, a.k.a. Dr. Mermaid, is a doctor of oceanography and teaches at the Museum of Natural History here in New York. She helps us build entertaining educational content into the experience and keep our facts on point!

Mermaid Lagoon is a way to help people connect to the magic and mystery of the ocean through the beauty and power that mermaids bring to the world. Mermaids carry the siren song that calls people to them! Once you have people's attention, they are more likely to listen. Let's face it: Mermaids are more enticing than statistics or pie charts. That has always been the role of the mermaid, to lure people in, but now we can reclaim and transmute the purpose, leading to positive change rather than to the literary watery grave.

We have especially loved identifying smaller organizations making a big difference and doing a cycle of fundraising on their behalf. We feel they receive a bigger impact from our support than a larger, more-funded organization might. Some smaller organizations we have spotlighted in the past include Orca Network and the Billion Oyster Project. Ali also recently completed a fundraiser for the Seahorse Hawaii Organization.

This year, the money that we sent to Orca Network helped the organizers purchase plane tickets to Miami and California to attend important events to help free Lolita the orca to a natural sea pen where she can live out the rest of her days. Lolita is the most eligible orca for retirement in the world and has been a circus slave in an illegal swimming pool in Miami for over forty years.

HOW CAN OTHER PEOPLE HELP?

There are lots of ways you can help! Inspired friends, please get involved with our online community at mermaidlagoon.org



- ★ Organize beach, river, and pond cleanups in your local areas.
- ★ Eat only sustainable fish and seafood, which you can check at this resource: seafoodwatch.org
- ★ Support laws that support and protect our oceans and its creatures.
- ★ Don't purchase items that exploit marine life.
- ★ Use environmentally friendly cleaning products, as they all go down the drain.
- ★ Bring your own bags, straws, and reusable takeout containers. Also travel with metal, bamboo, or glass straws and bring extra to share.
 - Always ask for no straw when ordering a drink to spread the message that they are being used unnecessarily.
 - Ready to make a difference? You can get 10% off with my mermaid discount code "SPLASH" on your own handmade glass straw from SeaSaverStraws here: etsy.com/shop/seasaverstraws?coupon=SPLASH

Any advice for aspiring mermaids?

Dream big! The ocean and her creatures need us to be as creative and inspiring as we can for her cause. Witnessing everything at once can be overwhelming, but don't give up! Try and focus on one cause at a time. Together we can make the difference! Each one of us that becomes inspired will inspire another. This is how real change takes place.



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FLUID MOVEMENT POOLSIDE GLAMOUR IN BALTIMORE

by Carolyn Turgeon

Every summer in Baltimore—home of *Faerie Magazine*, as it happens—around public pools and in city parks, a variety of mermaid-style transformations take place as locals of all ages, ethnicities, shapes, sizes, and skill levels come together to put on an old-fashioned glitter-filled synchronized-swim water-ballet extravaganza. Back in the day, aqua shows were the height of glamour, and mermaid queens like Annette Kellerman (who was not only the first professional mermaid but the first water ballerina) and Esther Williams (who played Kellerman in 1952's *Million Dollar Mermaid*) starred in spectacular watery productions at the world's biggest venues. The arts collective Fluid Movement has carried on the tradition since 1999, though admittedly in a kitsch-laden, ultra-fabulous, and very Baltimore-type manner.

And it's wonderful. Past show titles and themes have included "Earth, Wind, and the Great Baltimore Fire," "Jason and the Aquanauts: 20,000 Legs Over the Sea," "Rebel Teen From Outer Space! An Extraterrestrial Water Ballet Adventure," the Tolstoy-inspired "War and Fleas," and ... Jeff Goldblum (as in "Goldblum: The Water Ballet"), which was the first show I saw after moving to Baltimore in 2015 and which blew my mind with its goofiness, brilliance, and unadulterated mix of joy and dazzle. During one number, a troop of glittering, wing-wearing performers leaped into the water and did a dreamy synchronized swim to the Cramps' "Human Fly" as the (packed, standing-room-only) audience surrounding the pool

cheered and clapped and the green of Baltimore's Druid Hill Park shimmered in the distance. Not every move was perfectly executed, but it didn't matter: Everyone was having a great time, whether performing in the show or watching and cheering from the sidelines. This summer's theme is Hitchcock movies, and this time I'll be in the show, too.

President and co-founder Valarie Perez-Schere describes Fluid Movement as being "very much about joy": "There are not a lot of ways for adults to come together and play," she says, "to be free and childlike and joyous. Fluid Movement is like a siren song, luring you into the water. We're having fun and you can too." Everyone is welcome (even those who can't swim!), and shows are cast on a first-come, first-served basis. Perez-Schere also emphasizes the value of connection. "It's why people want to see live shows, live events," she says, "to have an experience together, an ephemeral moment that we all share"—one that flares up in all its beauty and dazzle and then is gone. There might be 500 people together in a city park for a Fluid Movement show, watching a performance unfold in which anything could happen. Sharing that moment collectively, Perez-Schere says, "has meaning and power. We're all in it together, rooting for something. The audience wants everyone to win."



Read more about Fluid Movement, which puts on other events, including the occasional roller-skating revue, at fluidmovement.org

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SINGAPORE MERMAID SCHOOL

by Carolyn Turgeon

“My country straddles an interesting line,” says Syrena, Singapore’s first professional mermaid and founder of the Singapore Mermaid School. “We’ve been very much Westernized for years now, but we’re of course also an Asian country. So there’s this balance of liberalism and conservatism that plays out very interestingly in the ways that subcultures and interests grow and evolve.” When Syrena first started out as a professional mermaid five years ago, nobody in Singapore had ever heard of such a thing and she was greeted with a fair amount of incredulity. “People were naturally concerned that I wouldn’t be able to make anything of myself,” she says.

In the past few years, though, things have changed. Syrena founded the Singapore Mermaid School in 2015, and now there’s the Singapore Mermaid Pod: a community of like-minded mermaids who love all things fantastical and all things oceanic. The group is about fifty strong, not including the child Mermies (ages four to fifteen) and the Honorary Mermaids, who travel into Singapore for a day or two to take an express course with the pod. It’s a young movement but a burgeoning one. “I see a lot more people taking an interest in mermaiding now,” Syrena says. “I’m also happy to report that I’m no longer greeted with the same incredulity when people ask about my work. Now people’s eyes light up and they say, ‘I saw you performing at that party!’”

To Syrena, the essence of being a mermaid is having a mind open to whimsy, fantasy, and magic—“a feyness of spirit, a grace in carriage, an openness in the soul.” Her own initiation started from a very young age, when she immersed herself in tales of myth and legend. “I think we all become something greater, take on some sort of enchanted mantle, when we open our eyes to the magic that surrounds us in this amazing world,” she says.

While mermaids aren’t traditional mythic figures in Singapore, the country’s national symbol, the Merlion, is an iconic, chimera-type figure that spouts

water over the skyline and is half-lion, half-fish. The aspect of the lion was derived in part from a tale of Sang Nila Utama, a prince who discovered Singapore and encountered a lion on his adventure—compelling him to name the island Singapura, or Lion City. The aspect of the fish might stem from the country’s origins as a small seaport, bustling with kampongs and fishing communities.

In China, the homeland of Syrena’s ancestors, there is the *jiāorén*, or the Chinese take on mermaids. Legend has it that these sirens dwelled in the South Sea, and when they would weep, their tears would manifest as glimmering pearls. “I think there’s something beautifully tragic about them,” Syrena says, “a message about how even suffering and sadness can perhaps give way to something precious, rare, and lovely.”

At the Singapore Mermaid School, students learn about this mermaid lore—and its lessons—while becoming mermaids themselves. When the students learn about selkies, for example, they learn how the most important part of a selkie is her sealskin. As Syrena explains, “Unfortunately, the human men who fall in love with selkies very often end up stealing their sealskins so that they must remain on land as their wives. Without her sealskin, the selkie can no longer return to the ocean and becomes a passive, docile, submissive housewife. If and when a selkie does eventually find her sealskin, though, no matter how happy she is with her human family, she inevitably heeds the call of the wild ocean and returns to the sea. Similarly, I think all of us have vital parts of our personality that are often stolen away from us or that we are told to repress.”

Unique in its combination of fantasy and fitness, the school is open to both kids and adults. And of course, its bread and butter is teaching humans to be mermaids.

There are currently three levels: Bronze, Silver, and Gold. The level system ensures a safe, steady, progressive standard of learning: Students build

*“I identified as a mermaid when I was four, I identify as one now,
and I’ll identify as one when I’m a ninety-year-old woman with silver
hair and fantastic tales to tell!”*





strong foundations at the Bronze level and then, as they advance, learn mermaid techniques, strokes, and combinations of increasing intensity and challenge. Each level has its own theoretical and physical focus.

The school is also launching a new mermaid class, Platinum: Aquarium, which will be the first of its kind anywhere in the world. Mermaids who have graduated the Gold level will get the chance to swim and learn in an aquarium-like setting: a beautiful four-meter pool with a glass wall that overlooks the Fish Pool oyster bar (where a signature Syrena’s Song cocktail is now available—if you’re in Singapore, go try it!).

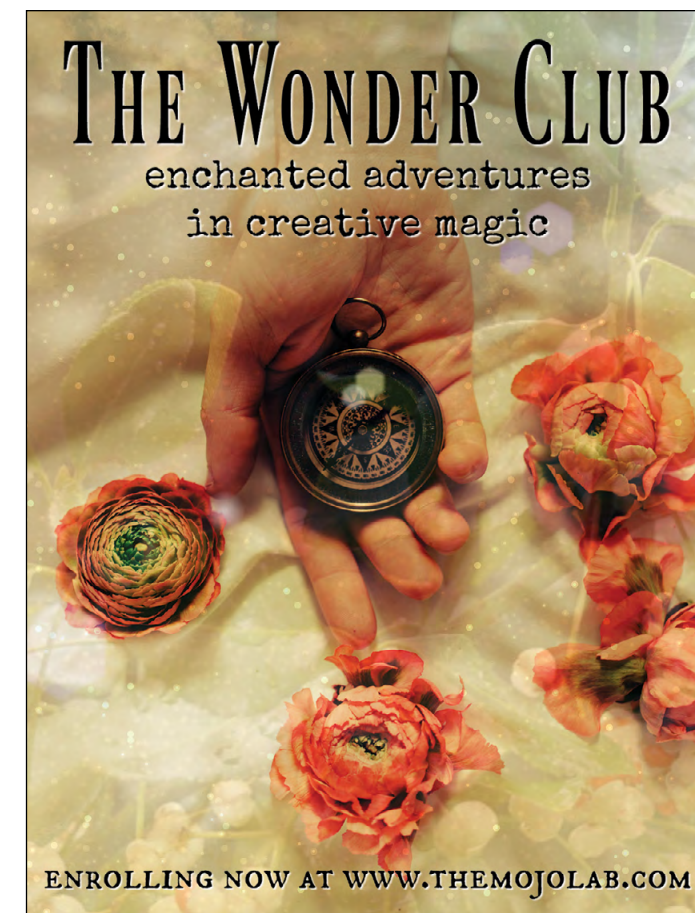
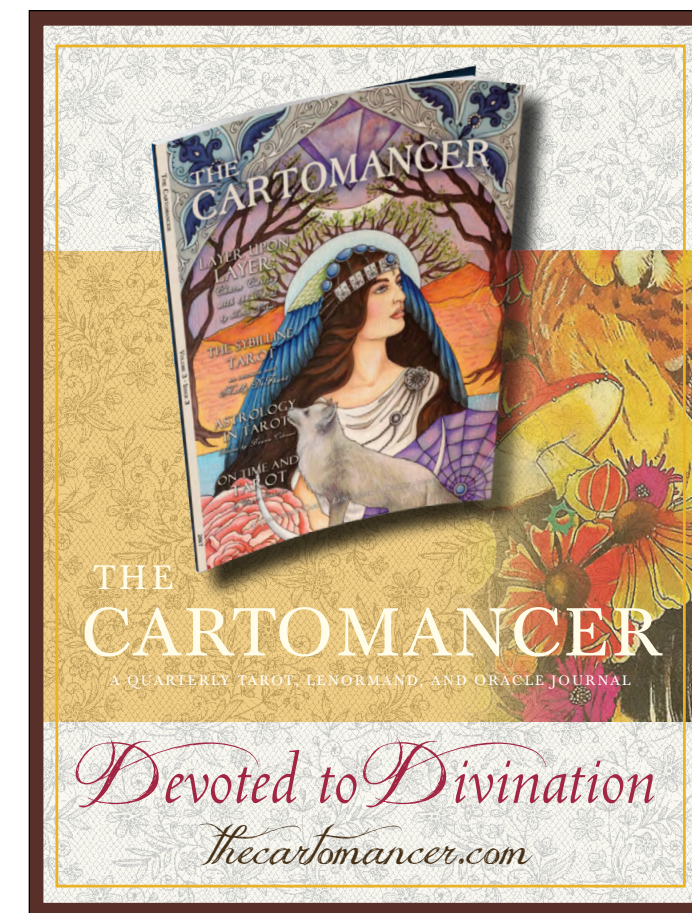
“People really come into themselves when they join this community,” Syrena says. “You see them realize and embrace this graceful, elegant, powerful version of themselves, and it’s such a joy to see. I think the confidence they acquire from being in the water as this amazing mythological creature permeates into other aspects of their daily living.” Tied with that, she says, is how lifelong friendships are forged in the Singapore Mermaid Pod. The group is really a family that each member has chosen to be part of. “I’ve never met two mermaids from my pod who don’t get along. We’re all here for each other, open with our support and ready with our advice, and it’s amazing. I feel so blessed to be able to journey with these incredible people.”

Why mermaids? “I mean, who doesn’t love mermaids?” she asks. “On a purely superficial level, they’re gorgeous, alluring, and have amazing hair. On a more symbolic level, mermaids are so protean and they’re constantly straddling two different concepts: the human world versus the oceanic world, the world of reality versus the world of fantasy, the ability to be vulnerable and pretty while being devastatingly powerful, the power to heal and restore, as per Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Little Mermaid*, along with the simultaneous power to destroy, à la countless fearful sailors’ accounts. Mermaids take these seemingly polarized elements and blend them together cohesively, comprehensively, in their very existence. That’s deeply compelling.”

Does she have any advice for aspiring mermaids? “Don’t be afraid to be who you are. You don’t have to follow a mold of what you think a mermaid should be. Pay close attention to the things, people, and causes that make your soul feel fulfilled at the end of the day and follow those paths. Your voice will be strongest when it is truest.”

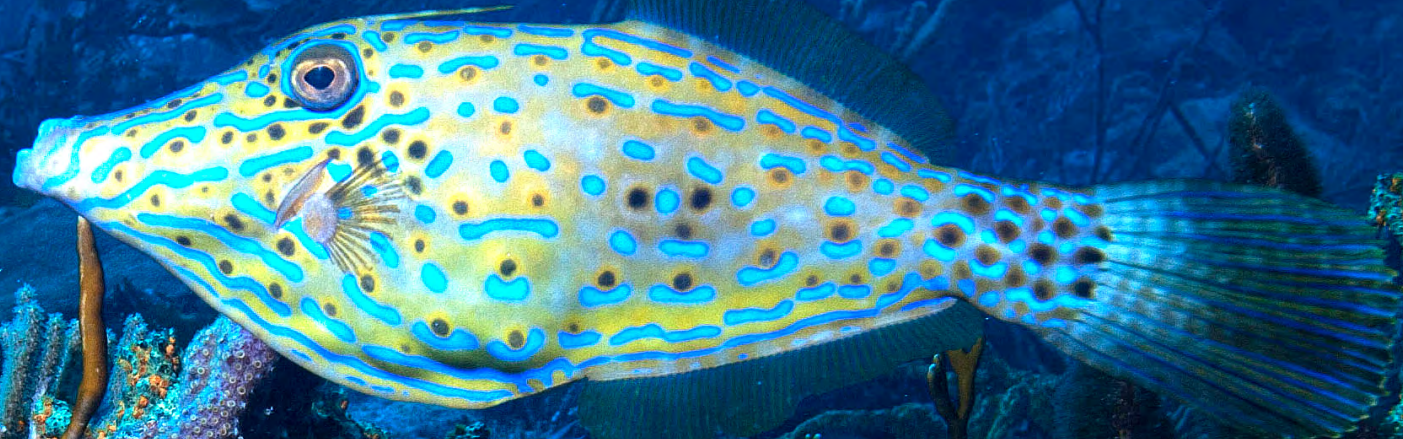


Read more about Syrena, and the Singapore Mermaid School, at themermaidsyrena.com and on Instagram @singaporemermaidpodofficial.



HEALING THE SEA

by Jill Gleeson



Healing the Sea

Fill Gleason

It's a perfect patch of briny deep. The coral here, about forty feet down and ten minutes from the coast of Petit St. Vincent, a tiny, tony private island and resort in the southern Grenadines, is pristine. I see none of the bleached spots I will discover tomorrow when I snorkel farther off, in the direction of the Tobago Cays Maritime Park, a protected habitat for sea turtles and where Johnny Depp clowned with Keira Knightley in the first *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie. They break your heart, those swathes of pale reef, abandoned by sea life, ghost-like and wan. But here, closer to Petit St. Vincent, this slice of thriving coral hosts tropical fish by the multitudes, less a rainbow of colors than a sunset, the creatures resplendent in fierce hues of orange and yellow, vibrant pink and purple, racy red and bright blue too.

I'm usually a tentative, even anxious diver, but today I feel relaxed, peaceful, because I'm alongside the best—a staff member from the Jean-Michel Cousteau Caribbean Diving Center. Jean-Michel, son of the late sea-exploring legend Jacques Cousteau, opened the center on Petit St. Vincent in late 2014. There is only one other like it in the world, in far-flung Fiji. Cousteau's intent, he says, was to help “connect the ocean to the existence of every human being. My father used to say, ‘People protect what they love,’ and so it is our hope that by encouraging and enabling divers to explore the waters around PSV and by initiating sustainability measures on the island, we will be creating ambassadors of the ocean and land for generations to come and share this important message: ‘Protect the ocean and you protect yourself.’”

As my dive master, Gilan, leads me around and over the reef, I understand the wisdom of Cousteau's strategy. I've been transported to another world, one of magic and light, removed as if by a million miles from the hectic, unkind world of man and machine. I find control of my body, inhaling and exhaling to ascend or descend slightly, careful not to disturb the coral. Gilan points out marine life to me: spiny lobsters, their long antennae waving in the current, looking like a welcoming; massive crabs, skittering and comical; and spiky sea urchins, shaped round like a planet, oddly beautiful. And then out of the shadows glides something more lovely than all the rest, moving slowly, with faultless grace.

It's not a mermaid but a spotted eagle ray, its wingspan some six feet across. I understand them to be shy creatures, uninterested in interactions with humans, but this one glides to a stop just above the reef where I hover—an invitation, I imagine, to join him. I swim until I'm perhaps five feet to his flank, out of range of his poisonous tail barbs, awed by his proximity. The ray's hide is spotted white against black and his curved mouth looks for all the world like a happy grin. I swear I can feel Gilan's concern from across the water separating us, but I have no fear of this creature, only a wary respect, and he seems to have no fear of me. After a few moments I paddle

carefully away. I know these few exceptional moments spent with this strange beastie will stay with me far into the years to come, exactly as Cousteau envisioned.

Cousteau came to open his five-star Professional Association of Diving Instructors dive center on Petit St. Vincent thanks to the island's owner, Phil Stephenson, a longtime ocean lover who has been diving since the 1980s. The Philip Stephenson Foundation, a private nonprofit charity that focuses exclusively on promoting marine exploration and protection, is a grantor of Cousteau's Ocean Futures Society. The way Stephenson recalls it, he'd been telling his famous friend what a treasure the waters around PSV are—and how he should consider the site for a second dive center—for a year before Cousteau showed up to investigate. After extensive research into the reefs and aquatic life in the area, Cousteau deemed it the ideal spot to share the wonders of the undersea world with the nascent divers he hopes will become future conservationists.

But the pair have more on their mind than simply sharing and spreading their love of the sea. Ocean Futures Society scientists have been working with Petit St. Vincent management to “green” the 115-acre island, which features an elegant 22-cottage resort the well-heeled have flocked to since it opened in 1968. Among the bigger initiatives are the installation of a system to collect rainwater for irrigation, a new wastewater treatment plant, and a water bottling facility that has almost completely eliminated the use of plastic bottles on the island.

The push to help what Cousteau lovingly calls “this precious resource, the ocean” goes beyond PSV to include the wider region. “Another project I am very proud of is the restoration of the Ashton Lagoon in Union Island,” says Stephenson. “This lagoon has the largest remaining mangrove forest in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. A failed marina development in the 1990s blocked the natural flow of water. My foundation financed the first restoration phase conducted by the Nature Conservancy and a local NGO, Sustainable Grenadines. The project opened back the channels to allow ocean currents to once again flow in and out of the lagoon, restoring it as an important nursery area for fish, conch, and lobsters. TNC and Sustainable Grenadines have also planted 3,000 saplings of mangrove, replacing ten acres of depleted coastal mangrove forest.”

The Caribbean can use the help, even in the southern Grenadines, which are generally acknowledged to be in better shape than the rest of it. Overfishing, unchecked coastal development, and climate change have killed 80 percent of the coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass meadows in the Caribbean, according to Sylvia Earle. Earle, a fabled ocean explorer and marine conservationist, headed a gathering in support of Mission Blue, a marine conservation organization, on Petit St. Vincent last November.

“This is a point in history that is unprecedented, with opportunities to take action while there is still time to protect



© Jonathan Palmer



© Jean-Michel Cousteau Diving



© Jean-Michel Cousteau Diving



© Jean-Michel Cousteau Diving



© Mike Roy Photography

and restore vital ocean systems,” she says. “There is evidence that with care, recovery can occur. Together with local communities, the Philip Stephenson Foundation and Mission Blue are supporting efforts to create safe havens—no-take areas—in the Caribbean to help reverse the trends and achieve sustained prosperity for people and the living ocean.”

Perhaps the most innovative project in the waters surrounding Petit St. Vincent is the ongoing reef restoration on the eastern, Atlantic-facing side, which will be achieved with help from the island resort’s Elkhorn coral nursery. Founded in June of last year, the nursery is under the care of about a half-dozen local staff trained to dive by Cousteau’s team, who also helped build the nursery trays where the fast-growing Elkhorn coral is cultivated. The volunteers tend to the coral, which propagates at a rate of roughly six centimeters per year, removing the algae, fireworms, and snails that otherwise might kill it in this early stage of development. Once the coral is big enough, the volunteers will take cuttings and cement them onto the barrier reef where the coral once flourished, restoring the reef ecosystem.

“It’s going very well,” says Dan Beldon, a manager and instructor at the Cousteau diving center. “The coral is ready for transplantation on the reef, and our guests are more and more interested in it. Local staff and fishermen from surrounding islands are also aware of our efforts, and we engage with them on a regular basis to explain what and why we are doing this and how it will benefit the local communities. By not fishing in the coral restoration area, they allow the de facto creation of a fish replenishment sanctuary. This year, the size of the project will double. We will train more local divers and expand the coral nursery while replanting coral fragments on the reef and figuring how best to involve our guests in the work we do.”

When asked about the most magical thing he’s witnessed in the ocean, Beldon waxes a bit poetic, as lovers of the sea tend to do when speaking of the object of their affection: “Tiger, whale, and hammerhead sharks, humpback and pilot whales, orcas, dolphins, eagle rays, a myriad of fishes, eels, colorful reefs, tiny symbiotic marine animals, lobsters, and other shellfish, they all make for a breathtaking spectacle under the waves, adding to and sustaining the diversity of life on our planet. They are all beautiful and inseparable from each other and from us. As goes the ocean, so do we.”



For more information about Petit St. Vincent and the effort to heal the sea in the southern Grenadines, visit petitstvincent.com.

Find Jill’s columns about adventure, love, loss, and healing at womansday.com/author/17246/jill-gleeson.



Wedding Ceremony for Agwe and La Sirène by Gerard Valcin. Collection of Jonathan Cheek

A TRIBUTE TO LA SIRÈNE

BY JONATHAN CHEEK

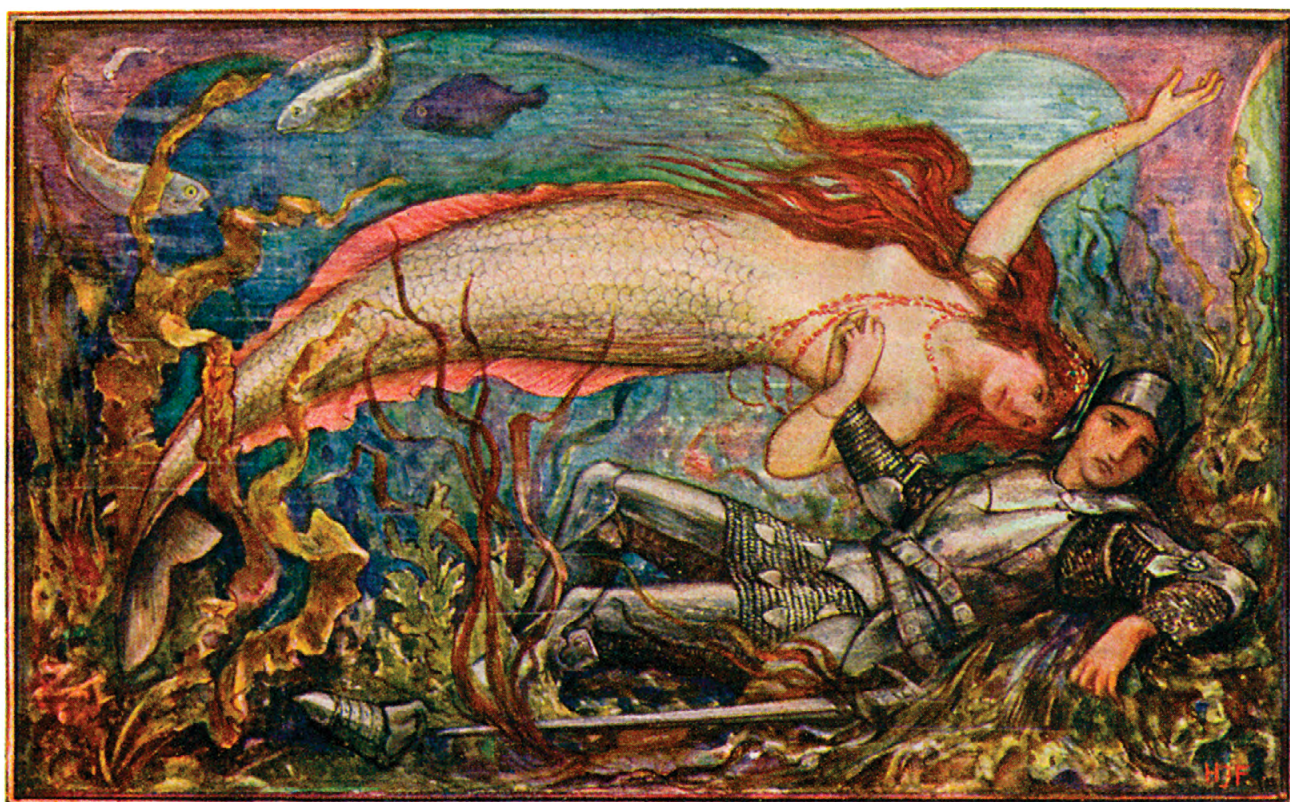
Haitian art is a rich source of fascinating images for appreciators of mermaids. The mermaid figure La Sirène appears in two realms: the sacred imagery of Haitian Vodou and popular Haitian art. She is the mermaid deity who links Haiti to ancient African sources of women’s spiritual power and wisdom. La Sirène is associated with beauty, vanity, seduction, and wealth, but she also can be aggressive or involved in mysterious transformations. She is often pictured with special symbols, such as a trumpet, a mirror, and a comb for her long flowing hair.

In this painting by Gerard Valcin, La Sirène appears next to her husband Agwe, who is in the form of a merman admiral of the Seven Seas, and the white veil behind her suggests a wedding ceremony.

Vodou ceremonies for La Sirène usually involve chants and invocations such as this: “For La Sirène, enchantress, Queen Shantrel, wife of Agwe, half-fish, half-woman, who knows the mysteries of the sea. Sing the sacred music for us. Enchant by chanting. Accept our offerings. Enter into our hearts, our arms, our legs. Enter and dance with us!”

The Tears of a Mermaid

Incandescent beauty inspired by pearls, sea glass, seaweed, and salts from the deep



H. J. Ford for Andrew Lang's "The Brown Fairy Book", Wikimedia Commons.

BY RONA BERG

“What symmetry! What art! They are the tears of mermaids!”
—A jeweler describing a string of pearls in *Desire* (1936),
starring Marlene Dietrich and Gary Cooper

Mermaids are renowned far and wide for their hypnotic beauty, which can be downright dangerous to mere mortals who may easily find themselves swept away by it. From the Hebridean coast to the shores of Sligo, tales abound about those who are seduced by the iridescent glimmer of a mermaid’s tail; a pearly, illuminated cheek; a shimmering halo of wild wavy hair that floats on the surface of the sea.

A mermaid’s lovely luminescence is embodied by what is known in legend and lore as “mermaid’s tears”—pearls and sea glass that reflect the pearlescent, iridescent, shimmering, and incandescent qualities of her beauty. And those aspects are cherished by earthbound women too, who drink liquid elixirs mixed with crushed pearls, stroke on iridescent powders and luminescent creams, and bathe in seaweed hoping to glow like an undersea siren.

The allure can be perilous and powerful, which is, of course,

a large part of its appeal, with an otherworldly glow that attracts—and shipwrecks—countless sailors. Like a whale’s song, a mermaid’s glow surely helps them find one another down in the deep.

Here’s how mere mortals can hope to capture the beauty of a mermaid.

PEARLESCENCE & IRIDESCENCE

“All art is autobiographical. The pearl is the oyster’s autobiography.”
—Italian film director Federico Fellini

I’ve always been drawn to pearls. A single delicate strand, a pearl in each ear, an iconic Chanel choker—pearls can illuminate the skin with radiance that appears to come from within.

Years ago, I traveled through India and found, to my delight, a vast pearl market in the city of Hyderabad. Hyderabad, though landlocked, is the unlikely pearl capital of India, an ancient hub of pearl traders dating back many centuries. Pearls were brought in from Sri Lanka, Venezuela, Iraq, and Japan and crafted into exquisite jewelry by Hyderabadian artisans.

In China, pearls are a traditional remedy for nervousness and emotional distress. They are said to resonate with the moon (in the same way that moonstones and opals—moon-resonant gems with similar qualities to pearls—do). In traditional Chinese medicine, pearls are also used to ease breakouts on the skin, make the pores look smaller, and tighten and tone the skin. Pearl extract is said to keep the skin as smooth as, well, the surface of a pearl. Pearls are also considered love potions, said to bring good fortune.

The other day, my friend Maria found a pearl in her oyster in the middle of dinner at a favorite restaurant in Montclair, New Jersey. It is exceedingly rare to find a natural pearl, and Maria felt extremely lucky. She now carries the pearl with her everywhere she goes as a talisman.

Most of us have been raised to think that pearls are made when a grain of sand gets into an oyster, but apparently that’s not the case. Oysters are skilled at swishing out sand, but when a tiny piece of coral or a tiny living creature ends up in the oyster shell and irritates the sensitive flesh of the oyster, it then sheathes the unfortunate intruder with nacre—the smooth, fabulously luminous substance that becomes the shimmering

pearl. Each is unique and perfect, like a mermaid. Nowadays, most pearls are harvested in underwater oyster farms in China, Japan, Indonesia, Vietnam, Polynesia, Australia, and the Philippines by inserting an irritant into the oyster, the same way it happens naturally.

Throughout the ages, drinking an elixir made with crushed pearl was considered the ultimate beauty secret. It was also said to make a woman feel more balanced and enhance her natural elegance and grace. Though pearl elixirs are still popular (see below), a luminizer with a pearl tint is another great way to light up the skin for an otherworldly glow.

Kora Organics Rose Quartz

Luminizer With pulverized rose quartz—also known as the stone for romance—a little goes a long way to light up the face and décolleté. Apply luminizer to the cheekbones, bridge of the nose, and bow of the lips for a radiant look. koraorganics.com

Moon Juice Pearl Extract Powder

Sourced from freshwater pearl farms, this concentrated pearl powder is meant to be mixed with water, tea, smoothies, and tonics and sipped to tighten up the skin from the inside out. moonjuice.com

IRIDESCENCE & SHIMMER

In addition to pearls, shimmery, iridescent blue and green sea glass is also known as mermaid’s tears. According to legend, mermaids were so powerful, they were capable of changing the course of nature itself, but Neptune, the god of the sea, strictly forbid it.

One stormy night, a schooner struggled in a storm in the San Juan Islands, and it was in danger of being lost to the sea. A mermaid who was in love with the captain swam alongside. Just as his ship was about to go down, she used her power to calm the wind and quiet the ocean waves. She saved his life, but Neptune punished the weeping mermaid and banished her to the depths of the ocean, from which she was unable to surface ever again. Her tears are said to wash ashore as sea glass, or “mermaid’s tears.”

Try a dusting of sparkling powder on your eyes and cheeks to shimmer like a siren of the deep!

Honeybee Gardens PowderColors

Stroke on a touch of shimmer with these naturally iridescent mineral pigments, in mermaid ocean marine shades like Castaway and Celtic. They are vegan, gluten-free, and gorgeous! honeybeegardens.com

Salt & Sea

Seaweed and seawater are known to firm the skin, which is why you will never see a mermaid with skin that isn’t taut and smooth. Sea salts help replace electrolytes and trace minerals that may have been sweated out.

Bathing in sea salts and seaweed helps remineralize the entire body. And skin-nourishing seaweed has garnered a well-deserved reputation as a curative ingredient in treating conditions such as eczema, psoriasis, dermatitis, acne, and thyroid disorders. Seaweed absorbs its nourishing nutrients from the sea, so it is easy to see why seaweed baths are so beneficial.

Try these salt and seaweed brands to keep your body taut and smooth as a mermaid’s.

OSEA Sea Vitamin Boost & Hyaluronic Sea Serum

Spray on the Boost—loaded with antioxidant rich organic algae—to clean skin and follow with the Serum for a soft and luminous glow. oseamalibu.com

Ishga Organic Skincare Invigorating Body Lotion

Packed with a unique blend of Scottish seaweed extracts, trace elements and minerals, and Hebridean natural spring water, this will leave skin silky soft. ishgaskincare.com

Follow Rona Berg on Instagram @ronaberg



Photos courtesy Qatar Tourism Authority

Precious Pearls

Qatar's Long Love Affair With the Gemstone From the Sea

BY JILL GLEESON

There aren't many like him left. In fact, Saad Ismail Al Jassim believes he may be the last remaining pearl diver in Qatar, a tiny nation that sprouts like a turned-out thumb into the Arabian Gulf. Currently the wealthiest country in the world thanks to its reserves of oil and natural gas, Qatar was once almost entirely fiscally dependent on the pearling industry. Pearls in the Gulf had been harvested for an eternity, but in the mid-19th century the activity became the economic engine that drove Qatar. Men like the Old Pearl Diver, as Al Jassim is known throughout the country, braved formidable conditions to glean the sea's gleaming gemstones.

"Divers wore three things," Al Jassim says from behind the counter of his pearl shop in Souq Waqif, a traditional market in Doha, Qatar's shining, modern capital. "We wore a weight on our feet to pull us down, a net we used to collect the oysters, and a clip on our nose to keep the water out."

The work was dangerous. Sharks and other undersea predators sometimes killed divers, as did pressure-related illnesses like the bends. Drownings weren't uncommon. But Al Jassim, who began diving at eighteen and at eighty still stands ramrod straight, often longs for the time when he would go to sea for months at a spell, spending his days diving like a sleek porpoise down deep into the bathtub-warm waters of the Gulf. Some hundred or two hundred feet he would free dive, in search of the one oyster in 10,000 that would offer up an Arabian Gulf pearl, which, like a mermaid's tail, is fabulously luminescent, thanks to the high salinity of the water.

The advent of cheap(er) Japanese cultured pearls in the first decades of the 20th century killed Qatari pearling—that and the Great Depression. By the 1950s, the industry would disappear for good. The country still remembers its heritage, however, in ways big and small. Doha's recently completed \$15 billion artificial island, an opulent melange of apartment buildings, shops, restaurants, hotels, and homes, is not only named The Pearl in honor of its location on a former pearl-diving site; its shape also echoes a string of the gemstones.

Meanwhile, the annual Senyar Marine Festival, usually held in April, pays tribute to the traditions, customs, and values of pearling and Qatari sea culture with activities like pearl diving demonstrations and tournaments. Even the St. Regis hotel's Remède Spa, Doha's largest, tips its hat to pearling with its Pearl Facial, which uses crushed pearl extracts for its anti-inflammatory properties. And Msheireb Museums in Doha offers a fine pearling exhibit.

Or simply take a stroll through Souq Waqif to Al Jassim's shop. He may take the clip out of his pocket that he once used to keep his nostrils closed as he dove for pearls, or he might point out the stone weight in the room's corner—so heavy it's difficult to lift—that carried him down, down into Neptune's realm. He'll do so with pride but also a trace of sadness for those days, forever lost, when he pulled treasures from the deep and was made more of sea than land.



For more information about Qatar, visit visitqatar.qa.

Vintage-Style Mermaid Crown



TOOLS AND MATERIALS

- 5 sprays of beads or crystals on wire, available from a crafts store or online, each ranging from 10 to 12 inches
- 3 to 4 strands of costume or thrift store pearls in various diameters
- Vintage dangling pearl earring (or something similar, like a beautiful rhinestone or a vintage broach)
- Small clamshell
- An assortment of smaller shells
- Hot-glue gun and glue sticks



1. Weave the sprays of beads together, winding each little spray onto the main stem to create a circlet. The circle should be about an inch to 1½ inches larger than your head. You need room to add the shells and other baubles.



2. Continue to wind the sprays of crystals tightly around the circle so none of the sprays are poking out too much.

A TUTORIAL BY TRICIA SAROYA

Photos by Steve Parke and Tricia Saroya

Model: Melissa Wimbish MUA: Nikki Verdecchia of NV Salon Collective, Baltimore

Mermaid Crown Tutorial

Tricia Saroya



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



8.

3. Attach one hanging strand of pearls. Position roughly above where your ears will be. Make sure the strand is long enough to hang just below your chin. Hot-glue one end to the wire of the wreath and then glue the other end to the wire on the other side of the wreath.
4. Take a long strand of tiny pearls and loop it over the front part of the wreath. At each place where the strand drapes over the wreath, hot-glue it to the wire.
5. Take a vintage dangling pearl earring (or something similar) and position it in the center-front of the wreath. Hot-glue it to the wire, allowing the dangling part to move freely. This will eventually be on your forehead.
6. Start gluing in shells. Place the clamshell in the center and then taper smaller shells on either side. This is where you can let your imagination run wild.
7. Hot-glue individual pearls from strands of pearls.
8. You can also cut small sprays of crystals or beads and either hot-glue or wrap them into place.
9. Add loops on the sides of the short strands of pearls.



9.

Follow Tricia Saroya on Instagram @triciasaroya.



VERONICA VARLOW

Life of a Love Witch

The lure of the sea, the mystery of the deep waters, and the enchantment of the swirling tides have woven their threads into the story of my life. My childhood was spent on Florida's Treasure Coast. The nickname proved to be more than just a catchy name to entice tourists, for the ocean itself manifested golden pirate coins to the lucky few.

I was raised on tales of mermaids, pirates, fairies, and dragons. My mother, who always had an affinity for the ocean, resembled one of the mermaids from Peter Pan's Mermaid Lagoon with her thick, beautiful hair and her honey sun-kissed skin. She would swim in the ocean for hours while I played in the sand, building castles and carving moats with the incoming tide.

During that time in my life, when my VHS tape of *Peter Pan* was nearly worn out from being rewound and rewatched so often, many of my classmates were "growing up" and making fun of me and my friends for believing in myths and fairy tales. But the Treasure Coast didn't let me down. That year, a lifeguard, swimming with his friends, hit his foot on something a mere hundred yards offshore, and that something was a rusted cannon submerged at the bottom. Eventually after digging and enlisting the help of others, they found 5,100 coins, all minted from 1652 to 1659. The sleepy town was suddenly buzzing. It was possible to have almost nothing one moment, and then discover pirate and riches beyond your wildest dreams the next. In my mind, this was proof that fairy tales come true.

That summer, the beach was flooded with treasure hunters sifting through the tides with wire baskets that looked like McDonald's fry-cooking contraptions. The 5,100 coins that were found with the cannon were not contained. There was

no chest of treasure holding it all, and the coins were scattered along the ocean floor like shells, roaming and moving with every hurricane or raging summer storm that Florida is known for.

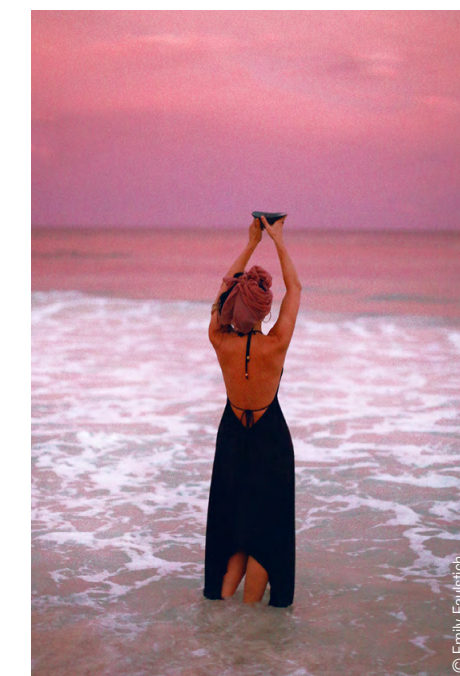
I built a huge sandcastle with my brother with a moat and a tunnel to the ocean. I remember us making up a song about the tide bringing the coins to the castle. It went something like this: "All the coins come to the castle, / all the coins decorate the halls, / all the coins come to the castle / and give us sparkly golden walls." That summer, I never put on shoes, content to walk barefoot and find myself at the water once again, sifting through the sand in the same way Charlie of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* carefully opened his beloved Wonka Bars. The golden ticket was real and it was out there. The ocean held the abundance and kept it secret.

One of the main treasure-hunting boats that had anchored off the beach featured a crystal-crowned mermaid on the prow of

the ship. This finned woman was watching over the treasure hunters and finders, keeping them safe and feeding them coins. I remember seeing a picture of her close up on the front page of the local newspaper and begging her to let a fellow mermaid's daughter in on the treasure.

My treasure arrived in other forms.

In October 2017, the little girl in me delighted in the fact that, once again, I found myself mostly barefoot, running up and down the sands of a foreign land. I stood side by side with nine other women on a beach once known as the City of Dawn, one of the last cities built by the great magical Maya of Mexico. The sky was a showgirl that night, decked in burnt orange and rose pink reflected in the mirror of the endless Caribbean Sea. That night I created a ritual to bring in our own unique selves, inspired by my childhood by the sea. One by one, we walked out to the sea, our dresses floating behind us like mermaid tails. We dipped wooden bowls into the saltwater and whispered our fantasies of the future to the water. We held the bowls above our heads in a toast to the sea and the sky. We then gathered in a circle in a canvas tent illuminated by candles and dipped nine crystals each into the saltwater gift we received from the ocean, filled with our whispers of dreams. The full moon charged the crystals as we set them out overnight. Then we made crystal crowns with them, adorning ourselves like the mermaid I once saw on the treasure ship from my childhood. Our lives are the treasure. Each new day of this enchanted journey is a golden opportunity discovered.



© Emily Faustich

Read more about Veronica Varlow's Witch Camp and workshops on lovetwitch.com. Instagram: @veronicavarlow.



FROM OUR READERS

We asked our Facebook and Instagram fans: Why do you love mermaids? How do they inspire you?



Illustrations © Guinevere von Sheeelen

I always used to pretend I was a mermaid because I am quite clumsy on earth. I'm lucky to live by the ocean and have spent most of my life under the sea! —*Diana Weirich*

Mermaids represent making the impossible possible and breaking free from a sheltered existence by daring to cross over the surface even though they were designed to live below it. They represent freedom, romance, passion, and beauty. —*Lisa Dawn Tynes*

When I was little my grandfather told me I looked like a tiny blonde mermaid swimming underwater and that my air bubbles were like golden coins. I'll never forget how magical his words made me feel. —*Heather Lynn Taylor*

The reason I love mermaids, in addition to the romantic symbolism and mythological stories, is that they get to explore all the uncharted parts of the ocean. I wanted to be a mermaid as a little girl so I could discover new species of fish, befriend whales, and generally become a champion of the sea. Mermaids for science! —*Jackie Hames*



For me it's the feeling of freedom and the wonder of the world under the sea, imagining what a mermaid would see—the ocean bottom or all the fish swimming or unknown treasures that time has forgotten. Sunken ships or sunken civilizations that would never see the light of day. That's what I think would be a day in a life of a mermaid. —*Violet Twomey*



Mermaids are inspiring because of their grace, beauty, and mystery. So many stories are told, yet what is true? Are they metaphorical? Are they real? They remain a gilded secret even now, in the 21st century, pure magic! —*Alexis Powell*

I love mermaids because of their relationship to bodies of water and the plants and animals that exist within them. They inspire me to be fiercely protective of aquatic life! —*Kelly Dailey*

I have always been interested in mythology and even went to college for cultural anthropology, but mermaids were always fascinating because there are so many variations of them, from Yemaya to birdlike sirens. As a mermaid performer myself, I use the myths and stories to empower me to conquer my fears of water and get in a tail, which plays terribly on my claustrophobia. I look to inspire other people, not just women, as mermaid stories have for many, many generations. —*Arielle Taylor*

When we're swimming in our mother's womb I think that's when we first hear the call of the sea; perhaps that is when I first fell in love with mermaids! Our connection with all things unknown, mysterious, forbidden, and fantasy begins in our imagination before our birth and is carried with our spirit to the stars. —*Melissa Waits Ferguson*



When I was a child my mother told me I could be anything I wanted to be when I grew up. I took a minute and thought about it and responded, "Well I want to be a mermaid." —*Louisa Haskell*



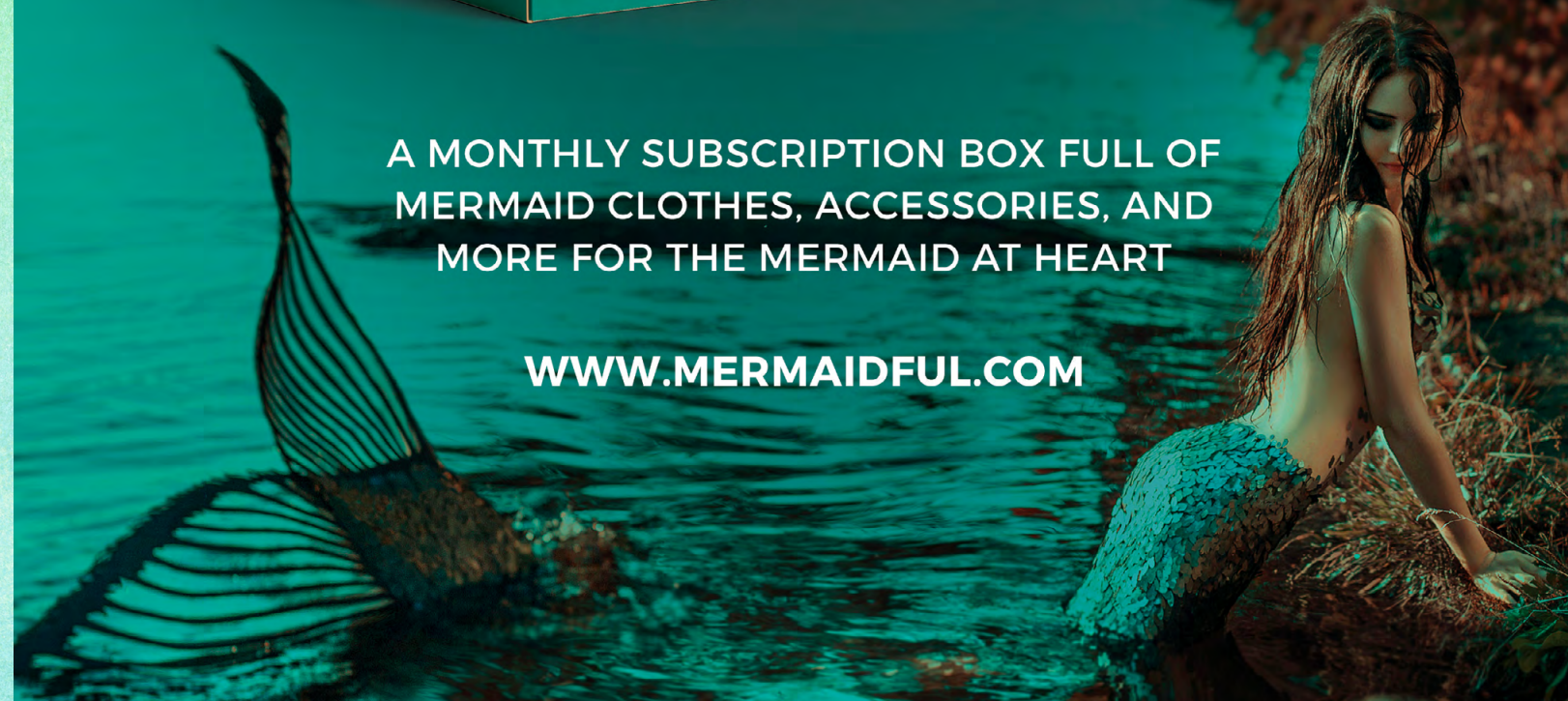
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JULY 2018

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