

# M e r m a i d W i s d o m



## A Sea Priestess online manual

by Louise Tarrier 2018



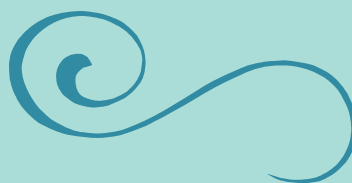
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# Welcome

*'You've been walking the ocean's edge,  
holding up your robes to keep them dry.  
You must dive naked under, and deeper under,  
a thousand times deeper!'*

*Rumi*

What is it about Mermaids? Why do they enchant us so? They remain firmly embedded in our mythology and we are drawn to them, magically, mystically. As we are drawn to the water and drawn to the sea. It's as if we instinctively know that it is from the water that we evolved and deeply remember our watery birthplace. The Mermaid draws us back, back to the beginning.

My first encounter with the mermaids was when I was just six weeks old and my parents took me out on a sea raft, a pleasure craft for the beach. Out on this raft, they accidentally dropped me into the shallow waters and then panicked when they couldn't find me on the sea floor. My mother tells me how for what seemed like an age they fished around looking for me. I believe the mermaids held me that day, and instead of drowning I was initiated into my divine soul purpose. Although of course, I didn't come into this knowledge until many years later.

I have always lived close to the sea and when I stray too far inland I hear the waves and the voices of the mermaids calling me home. They always have wisdom for me and the sea takes my prayers and my inner longings and sings them back to me. Whether wild or calm the sea always mirrors my emotional body and soothes me when I am in need of rest. Yet I also have a deep fear of the ocean too, a fear of being swept away and of drowning. I am a strong swimmer but I often stay near the shoreline. The Sea represents my shadow as well as my light. Mermaid Wisdom teaches me about shadow work, about soul work and about what is necessary to lead a life of joy and freedom. She teaches me about losing myself to wild nature and I am deeply grateful for her wisdom.



# Adapted Prayer to Stella Maris

## Mary Star of the Sea

O Mary, Star of the Sea,  
light of every ocean, guide seafarers across all dark and stormy seas  
that they may reach the haven of peace and light  
May you calm the stormy seas  
of our hearts.

As we set forth upon the oceans of the world and cross the deserts of  
our time, show us, O Mary, the fruit of our wombs, enfold us in the  
depth of your mystery.

We Pray that in heart and mind, in word and deed, in days of turmoil  
and in days of calm, you will be our guide.  
Our Lady Star of the Sea,  
we thank you for your bounty, for your love, and for your guidance.  
Keep us safe and held in your waters.

Blessed Be.





# Page One

## An Ocean mystery

Our mermaid journey often begins with a direct experience of the sea, but can also come from the childhood tales we have been told, or the films we have watched such as the Disney adaptation of the 'Little Mermaid', however, these sugary versions of the mermaid, hide her true nature from us. Hans Christian Anderson's original tale of the 'Little Mermaid' is actually as far away from our imagining of a nice 'children's' tale as we could wish for. In the original version, the Mermaid does not get her Prince. She is a soulless creature whose sisters drown sailors and who has to sacrifice her life so that her love the Prince will not die. Interestingly in this tale, she is rescued by the daughters of the air. In magical systems air is masculine and water is feminine. So, it is to the masculine air element that the Mermaid is banished and where if she does good deeds for 300 years she may just gain a soul. There is much in this tale of the religious symbolism of the time and the patriarchal world into which this tale emerged in the 1800's.

This telling is of course not the first, and the earliest feminine representation of the mermaid is the Goddess Astargartis who emerges in the Babylonian world and who later becomes Aphrodite of the Greek myths. And tales of the Mermaid come to us from all world cultures. The Selkie tales of the Celtic lands where the mermaid is the seal woman who loses her Selkie skin and is trapped on the land until she can find it and be reunited with her sisters. The Scottish Ceasg who was half woman, half salmon, and the Merrow who interestingly wear red caps to help them breathe under the water.

Mermaids are also known as the handmaidens of the Water Goddesses and are the Priestesses of Water or the Grail Maidens. The mermaid is translated as a woman of the sea in old English but Mer-Maid is also translated as Maid of Mary or Maid of the Goddess. We also see them represented through the myth of the Siren, bird-like creatures who sing seafarers astray and who wreck their ships on the cliffs or as Undines who curse men denying them sleep and instead bring them death. The shadow aspect of the mermaid and her sisters is very prevalent in the tales and is a good guide to just how powerful mermaid wisdom is! We are given clues through her totems the voice, (sound), the mirror, (moon) and the Comb, (natural order) that the Mermaid is a powerful Goddess symbol and one that is very very old. Stretching back far in time, to the very beginning of our existence.

The mermaid has parthenogenic qualities representing the primordial ocean from which we all came, and she is associated with many Goddess Mythologies. Isis was known as the 'Queen of the Mermaids', and 'Morgan' from the Breton tradition means 'born of the sea'. Domnu an ancient Celtic Goddess of the Fomorii is also known as the Goddess of the sea creatures and the merfolk and in some tales it is said that she was banished and overthrown by Danu (her sister Goddess) back into the deep abyss of the oceans.



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Domnu by Elana Albanese 2017

The mermaids long ancestry is also told in the legend of the Nereids, who were daughters of Nerus and Doris, Nerus's parents were Pontus (the Sea) and Gaia (the Earth). The Nereids were the first daughters, and at times are depicted with fish tails and at others with legs. The Ocean Nymphs from the Mediterranean cultures are also associated with the Pleiades and the sailing ones. They are able to navigate the seas and to follow the stars.

The mermaid is also associated with the moon. In her mythology, she is often seen on a moonlit night sitting upon a rock combing her hair and her appearance often coincides with the moon phases, having a cyclic nature and representing the cycles of women. She holds the mirror which like the moon is reflective, allowing us to see the light and the shadow. She is associated with the transformational moments of life, at birth and death. As a Siren we see her depicted on sarcophagus carrying away the dead to new life. As the mermaid, she is representative of our sacred sexuality and the life-giving bounty of the ocean.



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The mermaid is mysterious like the ocean itself. We know more about the moon than we do about the deepest parts of the oceans. We have only twice travelled to the lowest depths of the Marianas Trench the deepest part of the ocean and there are many parts of the ocean that remain completely unexplored. 70% of the world surface is oceans, as is 70% of our body. NOAA the National Ocean and Atmospheric Association estimate that we still have to explore 95% of the seafloor. No wonder that the myth of strange sea creatures and merfolk still lives on in the collective unconscious.



# Page Four

## Mermaid 'Tails'

*The Goddess Atargartis plunged into a great lake to change her form to that of a fish. But the powers of the Gods would not allow her to change form completely. For her beauty was too great to lose. So her bottom half became that of a fish, and her form above remained like that of a human. - Syrian Legend c.1,000 BCE*

The mermaid is at ease in the watery realm, the realm of emotion and of intuition. The realm of feminine sexuality. She is at home with her feminine qualities. She embodies flow and the connection to our deeper unconscious desires. She embodies the dream world and fantasy because she is able to navigate worlds that we are unable to, we cannot live in her world.

The mermaid teaches us about moving between states of consciousness. She is a representation of the conscious and unconscious parts of our being and an archetypal symbol for feminine consciousness. Half woman, half fish; her bare-breasted top half representing the mother and love, nourishment and nurture, familiar to us as mammals, her bottom half fish: cold-blooded, primeval, a mystery. The fish part of her is from a strange place where we can't go unaided. In the world of the fish, we can't breathe and we are alien. The top half of her body represents our conscious state and her bottom half our unconscious.

As a feminine archetype, she is often viewed from a masculine perspective and perceived from this aspect she can become an erotic fantasy or a subject of dread and fear. Her story, when viewed from the perspective of the masculine, is an embodiment of infatuation and dread. She lures the masculine into a supernatural world through sexual temptation and her voice. Her voice is hypnotic and it is taking the masculine element of air and distorting it. She is creating a magic that hypnotizes the masculine and which potentially leads to its destruction. She becomes visible only through the lens of fatal attraction. Yet always she has a yearning, a yearning to unite with the masculine. She has become estranged from the masculine, from the elements of fire and air, yet of course, she seeks them out to bring herself into balance.

In many stories about the mermaid she falls in love with a human man and through a bargain with the underworld, she is allowed to remain on the land but only if she can gain his love, the love of the masculine is a dependency of her remaining on land. As part of this bargain, she also has to make a personal sacrifice, such as losing her voice. In these tale's this bargain often goes very wrong for the mermaid.





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She realizes that she cannot stay on the land and that the object of her desire cannot survive in the water. In many tales her love is unrequited and she realizes that she has made a bargain that ultimately cannot be fulfilled. She is unable to successfully integrate the two parts of herself and/or to find fulfillment through the love of the masculine. She ultimately becomes a creature that cannot exist successfully in either world. The story of the mermaid is portrayed as a world of either/or? She must either remain self-contained in the mystery of her own world, or make the sacrifice of her own instinctual nature. Can she survive if she enters the world of the masculine and can the masculine survive if he enters her world?

It is in the power of the voice that we experience one of the first totems of the mermaid. She is either mute on land or she is an enchantress, a siren with a voice that enchants and lures men to their death. The siren sings and men are lured to their death. Ulysses ties himself to the mast of his ship to resist the temptation, the death call of the siren. The lack of voice of the mermaid is a clue to the silencing of the feminine and the mermaid represents the silencing strategies that have been used on women in the past by a patriarchy that fears the feminine. In her silence, she must retain and restrain her emotional body, her emotions which are the seeds of her deepest knowing and longing.

The mermaid must lose this voice when she enters the world of the masculine. The feminine voice and the tones of the feminine are I believe extremely important to the planet and the feminine voice is a vibration, with its own tones and nuances. Yet over millennia the feminine has been silenced. The voice of the mermaid signifies her ability to swim and dive the emotional sea and embody her robust sexuality. When she sings the song of the sea she is singing for all of nature, her voice is freedom and her song is part of the elements and the planetary vibration. The mermaid voice is part of the song of the spheres and represents creation itself. The song of the spheres is associated with feminine sexuality and the creative possibilities that emerge from the union between lovers. The mermaid reminds us of this power in her tale.

That she is denied her voice, can make all seem hopeless for the mermaid and as if she can never unify her inner polarities. However, in the stories the mermaid also carries a mirror, a comb, and a lantern and it through these magical totems she is able to show us how to navigate this polarity and unify both elements of our psyche.

She is the holder of the mirror; the mirror is the window into the soul. She can look into her heart and see what is there to be discovered. In her use of the mirror, she can look deep within herself, understanding her motivations and her true nature. It is within these reflections that she can understand her deepest desire.



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We often see the use of the mirror in many fairy tales, because it has a lot to tell us about feminine power. The mirror is the moon, we can only see the moon because it reflects the light of the sun. We can only see ourselves in the reflection of the mirror. The mermaid's ability to reflect is one of her key strengths. The mermaid teaches us that through truly seeing ourselves that we can remove our masks and access our authentic nature. Through her use of the mirror and connection to the womb she also teaches us that as women, our cycles, and nature are connected to the cycles of the moon. She teaches us that the lunar water element which represents our intuition and our soulful longings can be accessed when we tune into the lunar presence and recognise our connection with the moon. We can access the lunar tides within our own body and in doing so access the power of our own wild feminine.

The mermaid sits on a rock combing her hair as a symbol of bringing order to nature. Her comb untangles, it moves through her hair separating each strand and bringing order. Her comb symbolizes the natural order, not manmade order, and places her in touch with her instinctual self. Her comb signifies to the masculine that she values natural order. She teaches us how as women when we are in our own wild nature that we can be in touch with the natural world. In the past hair has been seen as being an element of our life force. To cut our hair is to lose our connection to nature. The mermaids comb symbolises our power when we are in right relationship with nature. It is a message that in union the natural order will be restored.

Finally, the mermaid is often depicted holding a lantern, this light can be seen as treacherous but it is also the light of her heart and it is a symbol of the fire of the masculine that can be brought into its fullest expression in union with the feminine. She holds the lantern to show the way into our deepest emotional longings and desires. The masculine can follow her there to gain the fulfillment that is the understanding of the uniting of all of the elements. The mermaid teaches us that in order to be met in love from a place of equanimity of the masculine and the feminine that we must be initiated into the fullness of our heart. We must be at ease in our emotional body and in the emotional landscape of the heart.

There is a strong connection with the mermaid and the sea hag. It is the sea hag who the mermaid visits when she wishes for the magic to enable her to leave her world for the human one. Here we find the mermaid as the uninitiated maiden. As the maiden she has the attributes of the new moon, She embodies enthusiasm, playfulness, purity and she is open to life. But she also has yet to meet with the shadow and in her role as the maiden, she shows how the uninitiated feminine can constrain and keep the individual in thrall to unrequited love.



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The masculine element of self can be constrained and a woman can remain childlike and unable to meet the masculine in its true form, instead, the masculine takes on fantasy qualities and attraction can be based on a limited set of attributes. The mermaid has placed the Prince on a pedestal, and she has made him into the perfect man instead of the complex character that is his true nature.

In order for the uninitiated feminine to become fully initiated and integrated with the masculine, she must meet with the elder initiated woman and in her tale, she meets with the sea hag, The hag demands that the mermaid gives up/sacrifices something in order to meet the masculine in fullness. This is a sacrifice that is worth making for it does not require her to sacrifice her true nature only the false self or ego that wishes to keep love and itself safe and controlled. The mermaid begins to understand that love cannot be controlled when without her voice she cannot tell the Prince how she feels but is dependant on the Prince recognising her feelings. By asking her to make this sacrifice the hag has made her face her fear and understand that control is an illusion, that love cannot be controlled and that she must surrender her heart whilst still retaining her natural instincts and her integrity. She must lose something in order to understand that by changing herself for the 'prince', the masculine she cannot attain true love. She has to learn to be at once open whilst at the same time retaining that essential essence of her true nature, her instinctual self, her wild mermaid self.

The mermaids tale teaches us that love is the greatest risk we will ever take and that every time we lose our heart to another, then we must face the fear of rejection or loss. We cannot control love we can only watch it unfold opening our heart wider and wider. In her total acceptance of love and understanding of this truth, the mermaid takes us back to a place of innocence and of understanding that we can never be fully separated. That in love we are never separate. Her gift is the uniting of the masculine and feminine within herself that enables her to sacrifice all for love.

It is a shift that we must make to see the mermaid after her initiation with the hag, retaining her wild soul self, her instincts fully intact so that she is able to act on them to bring her deepest desire to fruition. It is through this lens that she can help us to deepen our understanding of what it is like to walk the edge place between two worlds and to fully manifest our creations. In the sea, the mermaid is in the realm of the unconscious and here she is the instinctual nature of feminine energy, she is the sea goddess, she is at ease, in flow with the very waters of life. She is in touch with the ancient knowledge that we all originate from water and that the water is the mother of all creation. She is a representative of our deep unconscious creative depths and of our wild soul self. In order, though to bring our desires and creative imagining into the world we need to take them out of the water and to bring them into life. We need to borrow legs so that we are able to breathe life into our dreams and deep desires. The mermaid's story is one of love and loss but within it, she shows us how to swim through our emotions and to experience them without drowning in them.





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*'Trust the mermaid  
for in diving deep  
she has seen what lies beneath the  
surface  
and she has welcomed it with love  
regardless of appearance or quality'*





# Page Nine

## Creativity and the Mermaid

As the source of all creation, it is no wonder that we associate water with our creative impulses. Water is associated with our intuitive unconscious impulses, the place our creativity springs from. Like water, it bubbles up from our depths waiting for us to bring it into manifest form.

The mermaid teaches us that we need to be in touch with the unconscious world. This is a place of dreaming, of imagery and of co-creation with the divine. This is the world of the idea and the impulse, which is yet to come into manifestation. It is a world that is ripe in symbol, myth, and story. A world that is governed by our emotions and it is from our emotional world that we can understand our deepest soul yearning. This emotional energy is a key part of our human experience and can be pleasurable, deeply painful or both. The mermaid shows us how to swim through our emotions and to experience them without drowning in them. By tapping into our emotions through our unconscious we can expand beyond the limits that we may set for ourselves in our conscious world into the world of our imagination. As a child, it was the imaginative world of the Mermaid that spoke to me deeply. Her world of underwater cities and sea creatures fuelled my own imagination.

*'It was a palace made of seashells, lovelier than anything you can imagine, A crystal stairway led up to the door, and it was built in such a curious way that at each step you took the stair sang like a forest bird' '*

*The Witch of Lok Island- A Brittany tale'*

The way in which she expressed herself in the natural world. Her adornments were all from the ocean, crowns of starfish, sea pearls and shells. She was wild and free and able to express herself in ways that spoke to my own wild soul. The mermaid was able to weave a natural magic that allowed her freedom from the constraints of ordinary life. She personifies play for me as do the dolphins and the whales. As a child I would play for hours on the seashore, collecting together items from the small rock pools, hauling large amounts of seaweed from the sea, and then making sand castles to hold my treasures. Of course. I was always a mermaid and would sit on the rocks around the small pools and survey my realm.

Mermaid wisdom teaches us that our emotions can fuel our creations. Our joys, our sorrows can bring about the most exquisite of imaginings, it is hard to listen to music or to view a piece of artwork and not sense the emotion that created that work. And you do not have to be an artist to tune into your emotions and sense what wishes to be created. The Mermaid teaches us how to live a 'creative life', a life that has meaning because it reflects our deep emotional responses to our life and its circumstances.



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## Mermaid Treasure

The mermaid can inspire us to discover our own treasures, hidden in the cave of our life. What do we keep hidden from the world that we would like to share? What do we keep hidden because we are ashamed? What do we keep hidden for fear or judgment? What are our mermaid treasures and fears? How can we express them in a creative way that allows us to bring them up from the depths and onto the land?

In finding our treasure the mermaid can assist in our healing journey and she can be the inspiration to change aspects of our lives that keep us small or deeply unhappy. She can encourage our playfulness and engagement with life. She can also make waves and teach us how to dive into them so that we can meet them with equanimity.



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## Mermaid Treasure ritual

This ritual is one that you can use to dive for your personal treasure. You can take your treasure out of its watery cave and express it creatively. Giving it form in the earth realm. You can do this ritual as a meditative journey or you can go to the beach and find yourself a real rock pool. Making sure of course that you are aware of the tide and time, and that you are in a space where you can safely close your eyes.

Take a moment to fully relax, steady your breathing, and feel the muscles in your body deeply relaxing. You may want to close your eyes. Imagine yourself seated on a rock next to a small rock pool. The tide is out and your feet touch the bare sand. Imagine the texture of the sand between your toes, how does it feel? What color is the sand, are there any smells or sounds in the air? Are there any other creatures with you?

Feel yourself totally immersed in this rock pool landscape. When are you ready, imagine you are dipping your toes into the rock pool water? Is it warm, cool, or icy cold? From your seated position imagine that you are able to look into the rock pool. Your gaze is soft and as you, look into the pool you are drawn into the water. What do you see reflected in the rock pool? Is it your own reflection? Can you see what is in the pool?

As you look into the pool, you begin to see the reflection of a woman behind you, and you know that she is a mermaid. She doesn't speak but instead draws your attention to an object in the rock pool. You reach down and pick up this object. What is it? Take time to examine this object and to feel the weight of it in your hand. Feel its texture, spend time with it. When you are finished looking at the object return it to the rock pool. Looking at your reflection again thank the mermaid for her gift.

When you are ready either journal about your object or creatively imagine it through art, music, poetry or whatever form gives you the most pleasure. Remember to keep the innocent heart of a child and don't judge your creations.

If you would like a writing prompt then you can use:

My Mermaid treasure is..... free write without censoring your words or reading them back to yourself until you are fully finished writing. If you become blocked but sense that there is more you wish to write, keep returning to the prompt, and free writing until you have written all that you need.

May you discover your treasure!





Love, Gratitude and many  
blessings on your Mermaid Journey



Picture by Tiana Art 2016