

BECOMING LAGOON-LITERATE by Karin Ingersoll

Text to Accompany a Film by Sonia Levy

We Marry You, O Sea, As a Sign of True and Perpetual Dominion

I have been watching you for thousands of years. We were waiting and waiting for your arrival, waiting for the gifts of humanity and all the infinite possibilities held in your divine corporeal coding. The joy and love felt by us, the land and sea, when you finally appeared, settled, and grew your towns, is still cradled deep in my heart.

I have felt you pull fish from my belly. I've heard the melody of your ores glide across my face. I have smelled the baked bread and roasted meat from the cities you've built upon my marshland. But I also felt the weight from the processions of your warships and trading vessels carrying an expected subservience.

I smelled the waste from your dumps and the smoke from your factories. My lungs suffocated from the discharge of your military-industrialized urban centers, crop fields, and livestock farms. I tasted the toxins of your petrochemicals. I have felt the dredging up of my bones as canals and shipping lanes were created. I have felt the transferal of new plants and animals, carried into me by the ballast water of your vessels ferrying war, goods, and petroleum. I have watched you build the great sea dams and defense systems in the Adriatic Sea, which sit like tombstones upon my skin.

Throughout the centuries, I have been speaking to you. I fear you have forgotten how to listen. I worry you have forgotten who I am. To remember, I ask that you tell stories about me. Create art around me. Sing songs to me. To remember my deep knowledge, I invite you to study me with your science alongside your ancestral narratives. Your own submerged histories will reveal mine. And mine will reveal yours.

I long for you to listen to my currents swishing, to my great tides groaning, my gravel crackling, my anemones hissing, and my muddy silt rasping. I urge you to listen to my fluttering fish, my squishy sea sponges, commanding wind, gentle clams, and swooping shorebirds. I yearn for you to study the patterns I paint in surface textures so that you can remember my submerged histories, and more importantly, so that you can remember your own.

I wish you would give me a face, a voice, a place in your consciousness that is equal. I ask you to place your physical body inside me, but not only as a place to sail your naval and trading ships as a conduit between extractive regions. To place yourself inside me until you feel the kinesthetic reconnection of our anatomies. You must be exactly silent, incredibly inwardly still, so that you can hear, see, and absorb my

messages of how to move toward a different way of knowing and being in this world. When you are quiet enough to hear me, you will begin to see that your deeply programmed dualistic beliefs are illusions. There is no separation between us; our histories and our bodies have always been intertwined. Trying to dominate and control my movements, my life, is futile. Your movements are always involved with mine. Your life is always involved with mine.

I urge you to watch my seagrasses dance. Contemplate the rhythm of their long shapes, like the elegant fingers of a deity. Understand why they offer steady anchors for seahorse tails in my diminishing underwater forests. The seagrasses are always reaching out to feel what my molecules want to create so they, in turn, can co-create alongside me. Their movements remain their own while also staying in cadence with me. Because while the seagrasses are autonomous, they are simultaneously part of my whole. We can be both. We are both. Look and you can see their subtle gestures and what they can tell you.

Dancing allows the seagrasses to feel the knowledge I still carry on the cretaceous claws of moeche burrowing into my sludge. Dancing enables them to remember how to constantly reinvent themselves inside my swirling spaces. Dancing and listening and recreating their movements, which are my movements, too, the seagrasses are free to find innumerable ways of traveling inside me while remaining anchored in their own identities and histories.

The grasses find self-determined ways of floating around and over your seawalls, sandbags, microplastics, car tires, and industrial waste. The seagrasses must now dance with the cacophony of motorboats zooming like race cars on a speedway mixed with the occasional jarring of mysterious explosions; the clinking and clanking, the banging and screeching. These invasive sounds may change the dance but they do not inhibit the act of dancing. Even with the soot and pollution floating past them, they dance. Even when their home waters and rock lands are colonized by sulfur from large ships and the agricultural discharge that trickles into their blades, they dance. They dance to continue to embody a way of knowing and being inside my waters that reminds them that being part of my whole enables a beautiful knowledge of self, inside the source. You must listen, watch, and remember the patterns, pulses, and passageways that connect the seagrasses to the land, to the moon, to you, to me.

I have watched you. The seahorses have watched you, just as the clams, fish, and seagrasses have watched you. We know your internal architecture is inconsistent with the systems you build. You are capable of moving like the seagrasses. We have seen you swim and dream and dangle your feet in our underwater scape. It feels good. Yet you have constructed a world around and in us that is static, imperious, disjointed, linear, and unmelodious. It's unclear to us why you create a world inconsistent with your own nature, that inhibits your potential and ability to expand into me, into the land, and into each other. Your creations have attempted to silence me, which has also worked to silence yourself.

Find your sovereignty. Break the contracts you unknowingly made with fear about how you think you should exist inside and beside me. You don't need to consent to the governing story about progress or military might. Continued industrialization is not your destiny. Your current systems won't allow you to flow and expand into your infinite potential. It is time to choose new teachers: the birds, waves, clouds, and sea flowers. They can show you a new type of wisdom. But to hear it, you will need to submerge into the blackness. I welcome you, all the way into the darkness of our history. Don't fear the darkness. This is where our consciousnesses can merge and reunite into who and what we can co-create together. We have a long history, you and I.

If you place your body inside mine, you will feel my knowledge, just as the seagrasses, the anemones, the crabs, the pebbles, the bubbles, the currents, and the fishing birds can. When you reach into me, you will recognize your power alongside mine, and all the land and seascapes on Earth will begin to reflect your new sacred awareness.

When you place your humanity back into my spaces and times, you will embody and quickly become fluently and beautifully lagoon-literate. You will begin to see the potential in my lagoon-scape, and realize that the potential is, and always has been, you.