

PART ONE

finding your inner siren





SIREN QUEST

So you want to be a Siren. Or if not a Siren exactly, you want to channel some of her power over men into your life. Maybe you have one man in mind, or more intriguingly, a bevy. Well, you've come to the right place. Within these pages, the collective wisdom of some of the great Sirens of history has been distilled to its essence and embellished with homespun lore from the awesome, lesser-known seductresses of my acquaintance. Maybe you'll borrow a page, a chapter, or a few of these lessons in love. Maybe you'll become a disciple.

But aren't Sirens born, you ask, not made? 'Taint necessarily so. The Siren's

power lies within each of us. She is part of our most primal selves, if we can only seize the courage to unleash her. Deep down, we all have the power to attract—to strut, crow, spread our feathers, and bring men shuddering to their knees. But first, we need to identify and personalize the qualities that make us so alluring. *Simply Irresistible* peels back the layers and exposes it all.

We begin by learning who the Siren is, along with her core values—the launching pad for lessons in love. We'll move on to study the archetypes—Goddess, Companion, Sex Kitten, Competitor, and Mother—using some of the greats as role models. Finally, we'll layer on attributes that individualize your appeal. You'll learn how Sirens create a signature style, why they are unforgettable, how they transport men—sexually or otherwise—and how you can do and be the same.

Our study is not frivolous. The advantages of being a Siren are not just about men, love, and sex appeal, as if they were not enough. In 1000 BC or in AD 2010, the rules for ordinary mortals do not apply to Sirens. This is in part because the Siren refuses to see the accepted mores of what nice girls do and don't do. And to the Siren, refusing to see obstacles often means that they just aren't there. But more to the point: in a man's world, the Siren's power is such that she almost always gets her own way—through her own brand of irresistible style and charm. The Siren calls the shots, and no one dares to stop her. And you do want to call the shots, don't you?

A PRIMER: THE BIRTH OF THE SIREN

The Siren's story begins in ancient Greece, with the beleaguered action hero Odysseus, who trudged dutifully through twelve chapters of Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey*. My memory of studying *The Odyssey* is indistinct, as I routinely got through school assignments on a phalanx of hastily read CliffsNotes®. It's safe to say that Odysseus' journey around the world was long, tediously grueling, and fraught with dangers that you and I can only dream about—quite literally. Not the least of these perils was his encounter with the mythical Sirens, recognizable as half bird, half woman, and all bad news.

Odysseus' sorceress pal Circe had warned him about the lethal enchantment of the Sirens' song. Perched on an island in the western sea between Aeaea and the rocks of Scylla (i.e., somewhere off the coast of Italy), the Sirens warbled to passing sailors. So seductive was their call that men would forget their homes, wives, and children, and make a beeline for these bird-like babes. Inevitably, the men would meet their untimely deaths on the rocks. But Odysseus took Circe's advice and, while his men plugged up their ears with wax, he ordered them to tie their gallant captain—ears unplugged—to the mast, so he could hear the Sirens' song. They passed unscathed, and the rest, as they say, is history, or rather, classical myth.

THE SIREN TODAY

Today's Siren is a woman who, by some mysterious combination of qualities, is irresistible to men. Not all men, necessarily. Not each man, every time. But a Siren's batting average is very high. We know these women as the man-eaters of history, from Cleopatra to Angelina Jolie. And, unrecognized by posterity, they live among us. Even without meaning to, Sirens play men off each other, break their hearts, bring them to unaccustomed tears, and cause them to commit rash acts. A Siren owns the room—or at least most of the men in it—when she walks in. Without singing a note, she has a song, and men will scramble over whatever lies in their way to listen.

Being a Siren is not being a babe, or a bombshell, or a hottie—though being any of the aforementioned does not exempt you from becoming a Siren. And you don't necessarily have to be young, buff, or smartly turned out. In fact, let me go out on a limb here: being physically exceptional can sometimes be a deterrent to becoming a world-class Siren—Helen of Troy notwithstanding. Being beautiful is too easy. Everyone naturally gravitates toward beautiful people; consequently, beautiful people are rarely forced to spend any time or thought on becoming magnetic people or in calculating how to get what they want. And Sirens are nothing if not calculating. Sirens rely on the force of their personalities to make the world take notice.

The essence of a Siren's song is, and always will be, sex appeal—a quality for which beauty is only a decorative effect. “Sex appeal doesn't depend entirely on physical attributes,” said the actress Dorothy Dandridge, quite rightly. “It's a kind of vitality and energy . . . it has to do with how you feel as a person.” Diana Vreeland might have been talking about a Siren when she said, “you don't have to be beautiful to be wildly attractive.” The roster of Sirens is filled with women who were not only without physical charms, but were downright plain—the Duchess of Windsor, the courtesan Cora Pearl, and the singer Edith Piaf, just to mention a few.

HAVE ABSOLUTE CONFIDENCE IN YOUR ALLURE

The Siren may doubt her abilities in other areas, but she has absolute faith in the irresistible force of her appeal to men. She was born with this unshakeable confidence, and it keeps her smokin', even when it's cold. After all, just like the rest of us, Sirens have bad hair days and overdrawn checking accounts—and they even occasionally get trumped by other Sirens. The Hollywood glamour puss Slim Keith, for example, lost her second husband to the inestimable Pamela Churchill (later Harriman), and Pam forfeited Fiat heir Gianni Agnelli to an Italian heiress. But to a Siren, it's the amorous successes that resonate. She treats her low moments as aberrations and her triumphs as gospel.

Surely, you've witnessed the phenomenon of the woman who, for no evident reason, is so taken with her own beauty, talent, or sense of self-importance that she hoodwinks the world. Even those who are not hoodwinked somehow manage to go along. “She's so beautiful and smart,” I remember often hearing about an acquaintance with this kind of impenetrable confidence. I had (perhaps a little cattily) observed that the woman in question had a *derriere* the size of a private heliport and a penchant for restating the abundantly obvious as if it were news just in from Mensa. Didn't anyone else notice? This Washington political hostess, as she was, so intrigued an Arab king (and a major-league one at that) that he showered her with expensive gifts, among them a white Arabian stallion. Is there

a woman alive who wouldn't like to flaunt an Arabian stallion as proof of her appeal? For the Siren, there seems to be no end to the power of this kind of positive thinking.

To truly be a Siren, you need to decide that you too are fantastically irresistible, even if it requires the same crazy leap of faith that you might draw on to suddenly become a redhead. You need to make this decision over your own most strenuous and reasoned objections. The evidence is slim, you say? The jury's still out? Well, you're missing the point. As you must know by now, it's the confidence *itself* that's the draw. Don't look for the evidence of your appeal—create it with your towering self-regard. Even if you have to fake it. Treat it like a performance, and dress the part. Persuade yourself that you beat men off with a stick. You'll find that confidence in motion stays in motion and carries everybody in its gravitational field.

CELEBRATE MEN

Sirens never begin sentences with “the problem with men is. . . .” Nor do they trade jokes that suggest that men are the inferior sex (unless they're really, *really* funny). And God forbid that they should have books on their shelves with titles like *Men Who Hate Women and the Women Who Love Them*. (Time for spring cleaning?) The plain truth is that Sirens love men—individually, as a group, practically as a religious persuasion—way too much to think ill of them. Indeed, they strongly identify with men. And basking in that high regard, men have allowed these alluring women to twist them any which way. But while a Siren will often prefer the company of a man, she would never, ever choose to be one. She thinks it's a damn shame that men can't share in all the fun she has being a woman.

Life for the Siren is there to be embraced, in all its variations, along with the men in it. But she especially enjoys the power that comes with getting the undivided attention of men. In fact, she's a tiny bit addicted to that attention—it is part of who she is. Take men away from the Siren, and you'll still have a formidable, fascinating human being, just not a particularly fulfilled one. To Gloria

Steinem's declaration that "a woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle," the Siren says "have you got one built for two, or, better still, three?"

So delete those male-bashing e-mails. Put an end to late night complaint sessions. See men in all their flawed glory as your best friends and brothers. Look for reasons to celebrate men and to get all gooey behind your hard candy shell. Though male-bashing may be the shibboleth of the politically correct woman, be the first on your block to buck the trend. If men are from Mars and women are from Venus, in the Siren's world, the planets merge.

SIRENS CELEBRATE MEN

Man and woman are two locked caskets,
of which each contains the key to the other.

—Isak Dinesen

One of the best things about love is just recognizing
a man's step when he climbs the stairs.

—Colette

Men ought to be more conscious of
their bodies as an object of delight.

—Germaine Greer

Men make love more intensely at twenty,
but make love better, however, at thirty.

—Catherine the Great

I feel like a million tonight—but one at a time.

—Mae West

Of course, old habits *do* die hard, and you may struggle with turning an old attitude into something shiny and new. It might help you to hear something about

my Siren grandmother's approach. Even as a little girl, I knew she held women to much higher standards than men, and men always got the benefit of the doubt. My brother had only to show his cherubic face to get first prize, whereas she was always faintly disappointed if I didn't have something clever to say. When I was a teenager, she gave me a little insight. "Women have all that natural emotional intelligence, and men are given only blunt instruments," she said, as if this was self-evident, "but they are such delightful creatures. Try to be a little forgiving." In matters of the heart and human relations—the only world she felt really mattered—my grandmother held that women possessed the superior tools. She advised using them kindly.

EMBRACE LIFE

Be she a kook, character, sexpot, intellectual, muse, mother, or moll, the Siren lives large. Each embraces life in her own way and is determined to live it as thoroughly as possible. "I love life, I love people," said Lady Randolph Churchill (Winston's mother) when, in her mid-sixties, she was asked to explain her popularity with younger men. "I have known all the world has to give—ALL!" confessed the scandalous courtesan Lola Montez on her deathbed.

Though her very existence may hinge on a man (as would have often been the case before the twentieth century), the Siren makes the most of her little corner of the world, managing to embellish it in her own swashbuckling style. I like to cite Margaretha Geertruida Zelle, who reinvented herself as the early twentieth-century siren and spy Mata Hari. Orphaned, shuffled off to relatives, and married young to a violent stranger in the Dutch West Indies, she came back at life as a "sacred dancer from a Ganges temple" within the salons of Paris. As she lived, so she left the world. At her execution on trumped-up charges of treason during World War I, Mata Hari, dressed to the nines, blew a kiss at her firing squad and smiled, causing one soldier to faint and another to marvel, "*Sacre bleu*, this lady knows how to die." A contemporary Siren, the singer Tina Turner, also has a vitality and larger-than-life quality that can't be suppressed.

Risk a little rejection. Let go of the extraneous details. Try remembering that the only thing you have to fear is not fear, actually, but yourself. Embrace your life as if you were the beneficiary of a windfall profit, even as a tax auditor is knocking at your door. Begin as you might any project: draw up the proverbial list of things large and small that make your life embraceable. In no time, you'll find yourself as cheerful as that mad nun Maria in *The Sound of Music* (though you'll want to resist the urge to remake the drapes into clothes that blend with the upholstery).

To get you started, here is a short list (Siren style) of things that make life embraceable, in no particular order:

- ◆ New clothes that give you confidence.
- ◆ Traveling to an exotic location and broadening your world view.
- ◆ Having someone fall so deeply in love with you that he'd willingly make a fool of himself.
- ◆ Realizing that you've gotten really good at doing something, even if it's hospital corners on bed sheets.
- ◆ Good books that both carry you away and teach you something new.
- ◆ The ocean and the mountains—the reality and the idea.
- ◆ Working really, really hard at something and getting results.
- ◆ Friendships that somehow survive.
- ◆ Being unexpectedly moved by anything.
- ◆ Food that transports you, even if it's Jujubes with a popcorn chaser.

the allure of archetypes

How did Eva Perón seduce a nation? Did Greta Garbo really want to be alone, or was she trying to make them sweat? And why, many wonder, did Pamela Harriman prevail over more attractive women? The basis of their appeal, my friends, lies in their archetype.

Sirens are, of course, a proud breed of individuals. But like the sports car with a sturdy chassis, each Siren’s character is built on a solid foundation—her working archetype. Sirens come in five varieties, namely, the Goddess, the Companion, the Sex Kitten, the Competitor, and the Mother, and those categories roughly correspond to primal male needs (after food, shelter, and a close shave). If you doubt me, ponder the oft-touted Mother Figure. It is no news that men never fully outgrow the need to be mothered, regardless of how evolved they may be. They are hardwired for it, just as women are set up to expect the arrival of their paternal “white knight.”

Beyond mothering, men need to connect, to conquer, and to dream—not to mention, to create and multiply. Without necessarily even knowing how they come by their ability, Sirens satisfy, on some level, those ancient desires.

It goes something like this:

SIREN	PRIMAL MALE DESIRE
Goddess	To Dream
Companion	To Connect (Validation)
Sex Kitten	To Create (Multiply)
Competitor	To Conquer (or Take)
Mother	To Be Nurtured

Though each Siren is predominantly a single archetype, she can mix it up, borrowing from other categories—as in, the Goddess Siren may be in part a Competitor. Or, ever versatile, she will bring her mothering skills to bear if the

situation demands. And, regardless of archetype, every Siren knows when to draw on her inner Sex Kitten. The Siren's talent for rising to the challenge lies in her highly developed empathy for men and her intuitive ability to apply those skills. But the men who are attracted to, for instance, a Goddess Siren are chiefly drawn by the dominant qualities of her archetype, such as her mystery and/or her other-worldliness. These chapters explore the archetypes, using some of the world's most famous Sirens as case studies. Aspiring Sirens can learn much from the experts and should choose their behavior to achieve their ends.

