

# Mermaid KINGDOM

by Janet Gurtler



Rachel's  
Secret

The title 'Mermaid Kingdom' is centered on the page. 'Mermaid' is written in a white, flowing cursive font with a pink outline, set against a pink, ornate, shell-like background. 'KINGDOM' is written in a bold, yellow, blocky font with a pink outline, also set against the same pink background. The entire title is surrounded by intricate pink floral and vine-like patterns. The background is a vibrant blue gradient, decorated with various elements: white and pink starbursts, blue gear-like shapes, pink flowers, and white circular patterns. At the top, there are stylized green and blue waves and a white, dotted, ribbon-like shape. At the bottom, there are more pink flowers and white circular patterns.



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Designed by Alison Thiele

Artistic Elements: Shutterstock

ISBN 978 1 4062 9294 7 (paperback)  
18 17 16 15 14  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A full catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound in China.



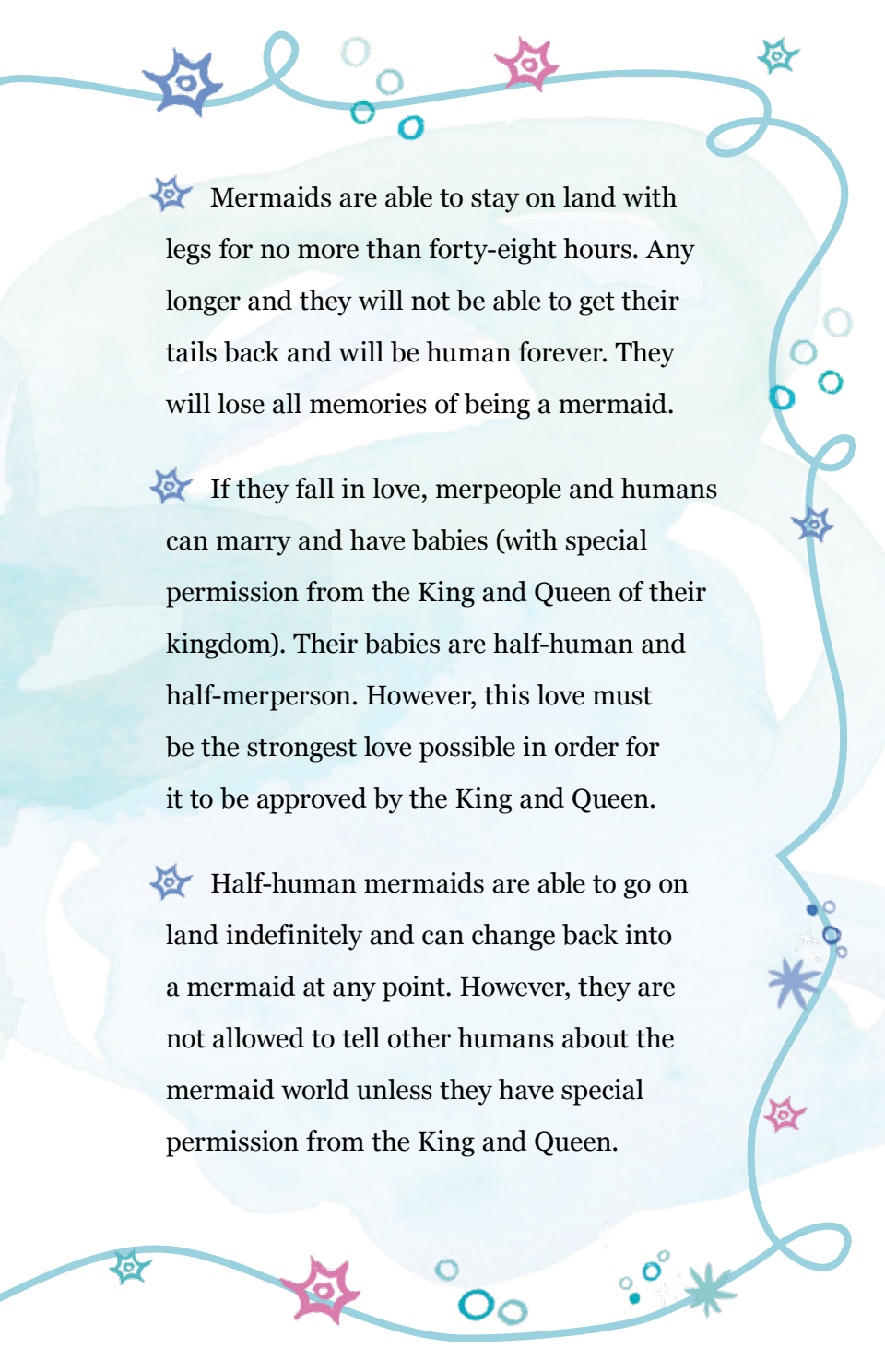
# Rachel's Secret

by Janet Gurtler  
illustrated by Katie Wood

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# Mermaid life

- ✧ Mermaid Kingdom refers to all the kingdoms in the sea, including Neptunia, Caspian, Hercules, Titania and Nessland. Each kingdom has a King and Queen who live in a castle. Merpeople live in caves.
- ✧ Mermaids get their legs on their thirteenth birthdays at the stroke of midnight. It's a celebration when the mermaid makes her first voyage onto land. After their thirteenth birthdays, mermaids can go onto land for short periods of time but must be very careful.
- ✧ If a mermaid goes onto land before her thirteenth birthday, she will get her legs early and never get her tail back. She will lose all memories of being a mermaid and will be human forever.



★ Mermaids are able to stay on land with legs for no more than forty-eight hours. Any longer and they will not be able to get their tails back and will be human forever. They will lose all memories of being a mermaid.

★ If they fall in love, merpeople and humans can marry and have babies (with special permission from the King and Queen of their kingdom). Their babies are half-human and half-merperson. However, this love must be the strongest love possible in order for it to be approved by the King and Queen.

★ Half-human mermaids are able to go on land indefinitely and can change back into a mermaid at any point. However, they are not allowed to tell other humans about the mermaid world unless they have special permission from the King and Queen.





## Chapter one

Shyanna and Cora were chasing each other around, laughing so much that tears were falling down their rosy cheeks.

“Come on, Rachel!” Shyanna shouted to me.

My friends flipped in circles, swishing their glorious sparkling mermaid tails behind them. I smiled from the swing where I sat watching them, loving my two new friends with all my heart.

“Remember when, at your twelfth birthday party, you tried to convince Alexa you were thirteen?” Cora

asked Shyanna. She looked at me and explained, “Alexa almost ended up getting beached in an effort to see Shyanna’s legs.”

“Oh, I still feel terrible about that,” Shyanna said.

“Only because you got into so much trouble!”

Cora added.

They both giggled, and I had to admit that a small part of me felt left out. I was new to Neptunia. After my mum had died, our entire life changed. My dad and I needed to start again, and moving to Neptunia was just what we needed. We’ve just moved here.

I was lucky to have two best friends already, but it didn’t make everything perfect. I missed my old best friend, Owen, every day. Sometimes I even missed living in Caspian and being closer to land. It was easier to get to the beach and meet up with Owen from there.

Yes, Owen was a human. And having a human as a best friend had its challenges, especially because he didn’t know that I’m a mermaid. Confused yet?

Here's some background: My mum was human before she became a mermaid. My dad fell in love with her when he had spent some time on land. Because their love was so strong, she was given special permission from the King and Queen to become a mermaid and marry him. I was half-human. I could go on land whenever I wanted for as long as I wanted. It really was an incredible love story.

Shyanna was the only one who knew my big secret, and I intended to keep it that way. It was hard enough being the new mermaid in Neptunia. I couldn't imagine how the other mermaids would feel if they knew I was half-human!

"I can't wait for my real thirteenth birthday," Shyanna said as she twirled around. "I can't wait to get my legs! My leg ceremony is going to be so wonderful!" Her eyes opened wider, and she glanced at me. "I mean, the ceremony is only part of it. Having legs and being able to walk on land will be the best part."