

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a white, flowing, lace-up dress, is floating in dark green water. Her right arm is extended downwards. The background is a deep, dark green with some light green, out-of-focus spots. Overlaid on the lower half of the image is a large, stylized graphic element. It consists of a blue, ornate, swirling line that starts from the left, loops upwards and to the right, then loops back down and to the left, ending in a large, elegant flourish. The color of this graphic transitions from a bright cyan at the top to a vibrant lime green at the bottom. The text 'NATASHA HARDY' is written in a white, serif font, positioned above the word 'WATER'. The word 'WATER' is written in a large, bold, blue-to-green gradient font, with the letters appearing to have a slight 3D effect. The overall composition is artistic and evocative, suggesting a connection to nature and water.

NATASHA HARDY  
WATER

**Natasha Hardy**  
**Water: The Mermaid**  
**Legacy Book One**

**Аннотация**

Surrender to the power of the water...Alex knows she is different. She's plagued by nightmares that feel shockingly real and an intense restlessness she cannot explain. As the long hot summer holidays stretch before her, Alex seeks out adventure in the rugged mountains of Injasuthi. But during a camping trip to the mystic jade pools, Alex meets Merrick, a boy who tells her the shocking truth about herself, and Alex's nightmare is about to become reality. Because Alex is no ordinary teenager...she is a half-mermaid and her adventures are only just beginning. The first book in The Mermaid Legacy Book One: Water Book Two: Fire

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A woman with long dark hair, wearing a white, flowing, lace-trimmed dress, is floating in dark water. Her hair and dress are spread out around her. The water is dark with some greenish-yellow highlights. A decorative graphic in shades of blue and green is overlaid on the bottom half of the image. It features a stylized, swirling vine-like shape that forms the letter 'W' and extends into a large, elegant flourish at the bottom. The text 'NATASHA HARDY' is written in a white, serif font above the 'W', and 'WATER' is written in a large, blue-to-green gradient, serif font below it.

NATASHA HARDY  
WATER

## **Surrender to the power of the water...**

Alex knows she is different. She's plagued by nightmares that feel shockingly real and an intense restlessness she cannot explain.

As the long hot summer holidays stretch before her, Alex seeks out adventure in the rugged mountains of Injisuthi. But during a camping trip to the mystic jade pools, Alex meets Merrick, a boy who tells her the shocking truth about herself, and Alex's nightmare is about to become reality.

Because Alex is no ordinary teenager...she is a half-mermaid and her adventures are only just beginning.

# WATER

**Natasha Hardy**



ONE PLACE. MANY STORIES

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HQ

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**NATASHA HARDY** began writing when the adventure of her life had turned dark and gloomy, as all adventures must at some point, in order for them to be a true adventure. It was in the depths of the winter of her adventure that she found a way, through writing, to escape into the sun.

Like most escapes it turned into an adventure all of its own, where characters have their own problems to solve, albeit far more complex problems involving mythical creatures that aren't meant to exist, and expect far more than they reasonably should.

Her escapes, for there are many still to come, are sparked by the adventures she has had in the wildly beautiful South African bush, seasoned with the true stories of the explorers who make up her ancestry, and woven through with the intrigue, and sometimes sheer madness, of living in Africa.

She now spends most of her time – happily – in a world of words, and the rest trying to keep up with her full time doctor, part-time rock star husband and their two gorgeously mischievous little boys.

She would very much like to chat to you at [natashahardybooks.com](http://natashahardybooks.com).

To my husband and boys who are the sparkle and magic in my life, my family for their unending love and support, and to the Light that shines on in the darkness.

A huge thank you to:

My English teacher Mrs Allison, for showing me the magic of words.

Victoria, my HQ Digital editor, and overall guide through one of the most exciting and daunting experiences of my life.

The editing team for seeing the potential in *Water* and helping me to make it into the best story it could be.

The design, marketing team and technical team, for turning my dream into a reality.

My friends, for the encouragement and laughs you have given me along the way.

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# Prologue

We'd been running for days. The children were exhausted and I was worried that we'd lose some of them if they didn't rest soon.

I still seethed at the betrayal. How could they?

The fathers of some of these precious little ones who were so trusting and so young!

Slavery at that age would mean they'd never really remember freedom, which of course was what the slave traders wanted. If a person couldn't remember freedom then freedom was not something they'd long for, not something they'd fight for. They would be happy with their lot in life, content to live as animals, owned creatures.

I didn't have the energy left to expend on fruitless anger. Anger that I could do nothing with because we were in a hopeless situation and should I have the opportunity to confront these monsters my worst fears would be realised, and all would be lost.

We'd crossed the river sometime around midnight when the moon was directly above us and I was pushing to get to the dark slash of forest that signalled a vague hope of rescue.

Vellamo, love of my life, had promised to meet us there with as many men as he could find from neighbouring tribes. My heart twisted, as the bile rose in my throat, at the certainty of the battle that would follow. The tribe that pursued us was renowned for their ruthlessness. No one left alive unless they wanted them for

darker purposes.

“Almost there,” I whispered to some of the women beside me. One of the small babies cried pitifully as its mother shushed it urgently, trying to keep it quiet, and all of us safe.

My heart began to pound with fear as we approached the forest. Our tribe didn't venture into the forests of these mountains. There was ancient magic here that was not friendly to the mere mortals that lived on its door step.

A rustle in the trees ahead froze every muscle in my body, as I crouched, spear in hand, ready to fight whatever revealed itself as best I could.

A warbling whistle filled me with relief as I recognised our tribe's greeting. He was here, Vellamo, he'd kept his word. My body trembled with exhaustion as he stepped out of the shadows along with some of the other tribal leaders I'd been hoping would come.

He was so beautiful in that moment, tall, lithe and strong. I was only too happy when he led our little band of vulnerable women, children and babies into the shelter of the mountain.

As we picked our way through the shadowed valley over boulders and around the icy stream I was surprised to hear the rustle and whispered voices. Instantly my senses were on high alert.

This was not part of the plan.

I daringly brushed Vellamo's arm, challenging his decision with a questioning expression meant only for him to see.

Insubordination of this nature was not well tolerated in our tribe, and I was afraid to offend him.

“They are the families of the other tribe’s men, Sabine. They are also worried about the safety of their families.”

I thought this over carefully. It made sense that if the men had agreed to leave their villages to protect us, they would be concerned about the safety of their loved ones too.

Regardless, the logic didn’t completely wash away my anxiety.

I was all too aware how power could corrupt, having watched the chief of our village agree to sell the women and children in exchange for more grazing land and power, women and children, some of whom were his own daughters and grandchildren.

We rounded a corner and I stopped short, my heart in my mouth.

We were at a complete dead end, a massive waterfall in front of us, falling in a white froth into an inky pool.

One entrance.

One exit.

I looked up at Vellamo again, struggling not to question his authority, struggling to follow him into what appeared to me to be the worst possible position. I didn’t touch him, but he must have felt my hesitance, and surprisingly wasn’t offended by my concern.

“This will allow us to defend you more easily without worrying about them coming around from the back.”

His voice was firm but his eyes gentle as he took my hand and

led me and the other weary travellers into the perfect trap.

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