



WINTER  
2025

# Siren Says

a zine by  
NeriSiren

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# *NeriSiren Says*

An Open Letter to My Favorite Teen Mag,  
Going Into the Next Four Years.

The very first teen magazine I begged my parents to subscribe me to, all the way back in 1996, was *Girls' Life*. I'd just started middle school and was craving some connection with my fellow pre-teens—both the ones in my class and across America.

I was a rather awkward, lonely eleven-year-old, feeling more convinced by the day that there was something “wrong” with me. Something that made me vaguely radioactive—that turned other kids off, made them not want to include me in things.

My parents raised me to love and be proud of myself, so I knew deep down that none of those fears were true.

Still, when I saw a classmate reading the latest issue of *Girls' Life* before choir, my Cool Girl Opportunity radar started pinging. And when the June/July 1996 issue arrived in my mailbox, I felt like I'd joined the ultimate club.

One that accepted me on the spot, no questions asked (as long as my parents paid the subscription fee, ofc).

And it really lived up to my hopes! Not only did the magazine enlighten me re: mid-90s pre-teen pop culture, and offer me advice re: mid-90s pre-teen socializing—it also inspired and validated my INDIVIDUAL personality.

There were ads for cozy fantasy games that promised to make “that secret world inside [my] head” actually playable. There were book recs that showed me fellow (albeit fictional) “weird” girls living their best lives.

There were features for horse girls (yes, I totally was one), soccer girls, flea market entrepreneurs, and articles about kids caught in the middle of war, kids exploring spirituality, kids in under-funded schools, kids doing big things at the community level.

And there was just an overall vibe that made me feel SEEN and not judged.

I could skim the fashion pages and find outfits that I, an economically middle-class tadpole, could actually ask my parents for.

There were ordinary, non -celebrity kids on the covers.

Now, I'm genuinely not trying to be all "Back in my day, grumble grumble..."

But times are getting extremely toxic and scary for a lot of GL's current audience, and it feels extra important to speak up as a once-teen GL reader myself.

I'm calling on Girls' Life to bring back some of their original 90s vibe, but with an even MORE inclusive range.

Their latest issue includes a fantastic feature about actress Marissa Bode, who plays Nessarose in the *Wicked* movie.

Bode is the first disabled actress to play the character—like Nessa, Bode uses a wheelchair.

And she talks about why we NEED to be better at representing people who've been mocked or ignored by pop culture...especially in stories ABOUT under-represented identities.

I think Girls' Life should do more of that on a macro scale. Promote more diverse media—movies & books about queer kids, BIPOC, kids from various faiths, neurodivergent kids, kids with disabilities...

Books like *Good Different*, by Meg Eden Kuyatt; *Two Tribes*, by Emily Bowen Cohen; *Melissa*, by Alex Gino; and the *Lumberjanes* comics are just a few great examples!

And when someone writes to Dear Carol about their gender identity or sexual orientation, please—PLEASE—don't dismiss their feelings by telling them to "just focus on being a kid," or that confiding in a BFF crush could spoil the friendship, or that they might change their minds later.

Treat your LGBTQ+ readers like you treat your cis and hetero readers. NORMALIZE their experiences.

Including different pronouns in a crush quiz or a dating feature is nice, but there's so much more to good representation than that. Every Girls' Life reader needs to feel like they belong on every page.

Be the magazine that SEES them, the way you saw eleven-year-old NeriSiren when she was feeling very far from Good Different herself.

Sincerely,

*NeriSiren*



## Self-Care Lessons From The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom



### **Hey! Listen!**

**I'm not a medical professional, and none of this replaces modern medicine.**

**Please keep your doctor & therapy appointments.**

Sometimes, your strength and stamina — both physical and emotional — get hit by real-life Gloom. A sudden event, an illness, a trauma trigger, grief, burnout... Here are some of my personal tips for such times, inspired by my favorite Zelda game.

- ♥ Take naps.
- ♥ Get some sunlight.
- ♥ Do puzzles or other cozy, small-scale projects to recharge.
- ♥ Listen to music.
- ♥ Eat something — comfort food is totally valid. You can mix it up with a copious fruit bowl or fried salad later.
- ♥ Look for your local Monster Control Crews — organizations that help us fight a variety of social and individual battles. Mental health & disability advocates, human rights groups, disaster relief, etc.

And sometimes, it just helps to know these groups exist. You can't always get directly involved in something—especially if you're in Gloom recovery. On days when the news feels extra-depressing, remember all the people who are already On It.

- ♥ Remember that you're not alone. You DONT have to tough it out or solve a world crisis by yourself. Look for the sages in your own life and don't be ashamed to ask for help.

# COZY PUZZLE GAMES

(that aren't Zelda)

Based on the  
Nintendo Switch  
versions, unless  
otherwise specified

## Storyteller



a story prompt puzzle game that riffs on classic lit, fairy tales, and even the Bible.



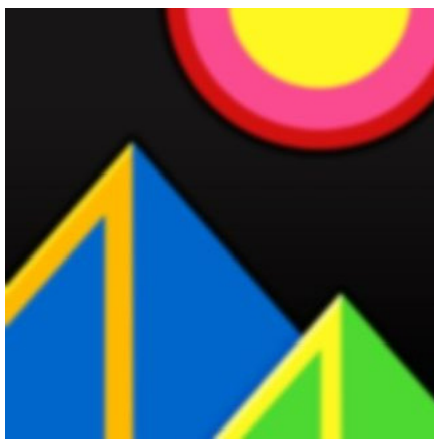
**NOTE:** some story prompts involve darker classic lit themes like murder and suicide. It's all presented in a goofy style, which may or may not be your thing and that's totally cool!



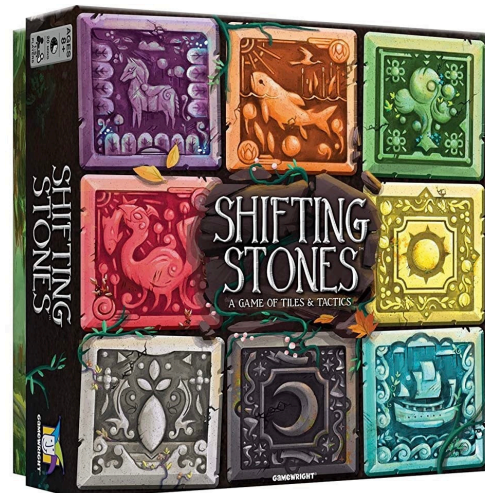
a SUPER magical-surrealist, wordless story puzzle with mythic-spiritual themes.

## Shifting Stones

Color Zen



a color-matching game with very catchy lo-fi music.



a board game with pictogram tiles that you flip and rearrange according to pattern cards.

# Season's Readings!

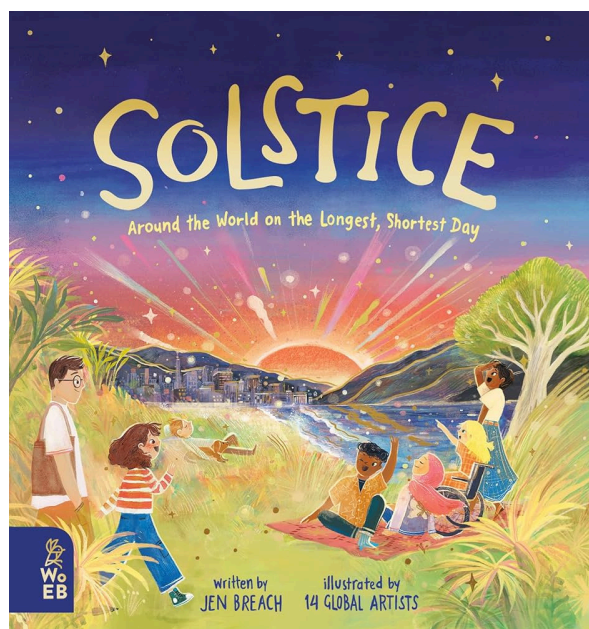
The First Christmas Sweater,  
by Ryan Tubridy



Little Witch Hazel:  
A Year in the Forest,  
by Phoebe Wahl



Solstice:  
Around The World  
On the Longest,  
Shortest Day,  
by Jen Breach



## YULECORE / NEO BAROQUE MOOD LIST



“Stella Splendens,” by Jordi Savall

if you're in a  
Traditional mood.

by Vox Vulgaris

if you're in a more  
instrumental mood.

by Qntal

if you're in a Dark  
Fae / Medievalcore  
mood.



“Locked Within A Crystal Ball,”

by Blackmore's Night

if you're in a  
HARDCORE  
Dark Fae /  
Medievalcore  
mood



“Gagliarda,” by Mannheim Steamroller

if you're in a Ren Faire  
dance party mood



“Cold Frosty Morning,” by Shelley Phillips  
and Friends

if you're in an  
on-the-nose kind of  
mood



“Banquet Hall,” by Loreena  
McKinnitt

if you're in a vaguely-  
nostalgic-contemplative  
mood with a faint trace  
of pleasant melancholy

Something  
Random

# BOOK SPINE POETRY



## The Whales' Song:

The mermaid's voice returns  
along the path of witches.  
The drowning summer tides  
will tell us  
what the wild sea can be.

Thank you  
for reading!!

And check out the other zine I contribute to:

Sonic Chihuahua, by Angélique Jamail!

Details at [sapphostorque.com](http://sapphostorque.com)

Or @angeliquejamail on  
instagram.



<https://postcardsfromlalaland.wordpress.com>



@nerisirens\_coffee\_grotto

← @ also on  
threads!



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w/ PicsArt