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MEDIA CONTACT: Monica Fernandez, Media Director, media@redhen.org

P.O. Box 40820, Pasadena, CA 91114 / (626) 356-4760 / fax: (626) 356-9974 / redhen.org

Aqueous

A NOVEL BY

Jade Shyback

Living below the surface with parents not her own, Marisol Blaise is determined to earn her place in the underwater merstation known as Aqueous, until she learns a secret that will crush her world forever.

Taken at a young age to one of three underwater merstations on the eve of Earth's collapse, Marisol Blaise must tackle the grueling challenges of the trials to be assigned to the elite diving team known as the Cuiers. Desperate to prove to herself, the residents, and all of her parents, dead and alive, that she is worthy of her salvation and the prestigious placement, she works tirelessly to shatter misogynistic beliefs, only to discover that it was not the men who constrained her. A much uglier untruth exists.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jade Shyback was born in Red Deer, Alberta on June 24, 1973. A nature lover, she spent five glorious years with her parents and brother in Nanaimo, British Columbia, riding her bike and scavenging for sea life on the rocky beaches of the Pacific coast. At age nine she returned to Alberta to live on a farm nicknamed Mosquito Flats until she obtained a degree in English, the only faculty that would have her, from the University of Calgary. A career in financial services led her to Toronto and onward to Abu Dhabi where she raised three daughters amidst sand and camels while working in Dubai as a financial regulator. She now lives in Oakville with her 'guard' dogs and judgmental cat. Jade's hobbies include beekeeping, boating, playing tennis, and gardening. *Aqueous* is her debut novel, and despite her love of the ocean she would never descend two and a half kilometers to live beneath it.



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MEDIA CONTACT

Monica Fernandez

Media Director

626-406-1206

media@redhen.org

MARKETING CONTACT

Tobi Harper

Marketing Director

626-406-1209

marketing@redhen.org

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FROM AQUEOUS

Leaving the grand pavilion, I proceeded through shades of blue toward the arboretum. It was the most basic description of human submergence—blue, like the way I was feeling. From icicle hues near the station’s exterior floodlights, to shades so close to midnight that they rivalled the darkest black, the ocean’s watery embrace cocooned us in a kaleidoscope of blue that permeated the station and saturated our existence. Beautiful, beguiling, melancholy, and deadly, the blue arms of the ocean cradled us, danced for us, and threatened us. She was an intoxicating nymph, captivating and seductive, yet dangerous and unrelenting at the same time. As refugees, her blue shelter had welcomed us and then restrained us, knowing that we were powerless to escape, and it would be easy to forget the beauty of blue, were it not for the arboretum.

“Lead the way, Professor.”

And lead I would. Quashing my disappointment, I would lead with lies and deception when those around me needed my untruths. I would lead future trainees to believe that they could achieve their dreams. I would lead the girls onboard toward a shatterproof ceiling and the residents that cared about me to believe that I was satisfied. I would lead all of them with altruistic dishonesty, toward uninsured happiness. All but one, that is—Felix.

Felix would not be willingly led. He scrutinized Creighton and me as we approached the group, appraising our welfare and stripping away my falsehoods with each and every step. It was futile to be fake. He understood how I was feeling. After a decade under the sea I had finally been crushed.



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