

Betrothal

by [Cristina Nehring](#) (February 2025)



The Wave (Gustave Courbet, 1869)

Not like Edna in *The Awakening*,
Not like Edna who walked into water
To end her life.

You sallied into the sea to swim
To frolic with your friends, the waves,
To trick and to tickle them

And to be knocked upside

And slither over the pebbles
Beneath them.

An athlete, you were used to the to and fro
In the South of France.
So it was anathema that one of your allies, the ripples

Pulled you under and sunder. It was a crime.
And yet your time—who knows—
Might have been coming, later or sooner.

And rather than languish in long-term disease
The ocean said “I’ll do as I please.”
You plunged under the foam;

A mermaid reclaimed by her lover, the tides.
You tried to escape
But the Lord had your nape.

Farewell, fine friend, our love will not cease,
We’ll cherish you always
Not only You

But your daring—
And your wily wedding
With the water gods.

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Cristina Nehring’s most recent book is *The Child Who Never Spoke: 23 1/2 Lessons in Fragility*. She is also the author of *A Vindication of Love* which made the front page of the *New York Times Book Review* as well as two books in French. She writes for *Atlantic*, *Harper’s*, the *New York Times* and the

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