

Transcript for The Who's Dat Phat Girl Podcast - With Brooke Hoover
EPISODE #26- The Not So Little Mermaid

Hey y'all, I'm Brooke Hoover. A Louisiana native, actor, writer and comedian. I've lost 100 pounds through diet and exercise or shall I say "lifestyle changes". My twenty year and counting health journey has taught me that just like taking a diet pill for weight loss, body positivity doesn't magically happen overnight. I'm working on re-gaining my self esteem and re-kindling my love affair with Cajun and Southern comfort food in a healthier way all the while juggling eating as clean as I can, re-establishing myself in the entertainment industry which, as we know, is historically fat phobic all the while showing my inner phat girl some love - that's phat with a PH - pretty hot and tempting. Let me tell y'all a tale or two...

Hey Y'all. In honor of my approaching birthday, on July 28, same birthday as Jackie O and Sally Struthers, I want to talk to y'all about something near and dear to me. I was thinking about what makes me really happy? What's something I love? I love flamingos. But, I really, really love and have always been in awe of MERMAIDS.

And, I want to talk about the subject of WHAT ARE THE STORIES WE TELL OURSELVES? ARE THERE DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF THESE STORIES THAT WE TELL OURSELVES VERSUS WHAT OTHER PEOPLE SAY ABOUT US VERSUS WHAT THE NEGATIVE PART OF OUR HEADS TELL US VERSUS WHAT THE POSITIVE PARTS OF OUR HEADS COULD BE TELLING US? WHAT ARE THESE STORIES?

Growing up, there was a story I really loved and it's The Little Mermaid. But, it's not the Disney version. Yes, I did watch the Disney version but the one I watched on repeat was the Japanamé version of Hans Christian Anderson's Little Mermaid and it SHOOK ME TO THE CORE. Does anybody out there remember it? It's definitely NOT Disney-fied happy ending. At all.

Marina, the little mermaid - the OG Little mermaid - she dies at the end - the good girl - the good girl dies at the end because the prince is too damn stupid to see that she's his true love and she turns into foam and dust. And ends up in the ether. The very end of the movie cuts back to real people and we see the statue in Denmark in her honor. And one day - I always said this ever since I was little and I still mean it - I'm going to make a pilgrimage out to Denmark - a pilgrimage to Denmark? To go see the Little Mermaid statue. But, I just remember walking around my house crying at the age of three or four and learning quickly that LIFE WAS NOT FAIR.

Then, about a decade later, The Disney Version comes out. The ending, of course, does NOT end in death for the good guy. Of course, Ursula, it's like BYE FELICIA to her but she's a bad woman but Ariel ends up becoming a HUMAN so she can live her life with Prince Eric. If it were up to me, I would have stayed a mermaid.

But, I digress. The point is I LOVE mermaids. They have seashells to cover their boobs. They can swim without ever needing to come up and catch a breath. Their hair is always perfect despite the overload of salt water.

And, in fifth grade, when I was 10, even despite a somewhat traumatic event two Halloweens prior of being called out for my FAT and my UNDERWEAR showing in my beloved GENIE Harem Girl Costume, I still, still despite all that, told Momma: MOMMA, I WANT TO BE A MERMAID THIS YEAR.

And, it was probably around my birthday since summer time is when we started planning out my Halloween because Momma always made my Halloween costumes and we needed (Momma's voice) "several months to plan, baby." That's Momma's voice. For those of y'all who know Momma, that is a caricature of her voice. It's not really her voice.

Except, this time around, Momma wasn't going to make the mermaid costume. She goes: BABY THIS IS A COSTUME I SIMPLY CAN NOT MAKE. IT IS GONNA BE TOO DIFFICULT.

So, we had to enlist the help of a family friend Miss Jan who was an expert seamstress.

I had just turned 10 - July 28th - I was in full prime of baby fat turning into pre-teen fat and kind of getting boobs. But, I didn't care about all that. I still wanted to be a mermaid. I didn't think about any of the potential consequences. I wanted to REDEEM myself from that genie costume fiasco when two of my "friends" made fun of me. I wanted to be a mermaid and free just like Ariel and her predecessor, the Marina, the real Little Mermaid.

But, the costume pattern Momma and Jan found involved a full body flesh tone leotard top. Like for God's sakes it was a long sleeved mermaid costume. What the hell? And, on top of the flesh tone leotard thing, there's where the padded seashells go. So, I'm not wearing like a bikini top like I thought maybe I could. And, then the tail is attached to the leotard much like you're wearing like a dress or a skirt type of thing. So, in my mind, my self-conscious ten-year-old self says, "WELL I MUST NOT BE ABLE TO WEAR A BIKINI TOP AND SHOW MY STOMACH BECAUSE I AM FAT. BECAUSE MOMMA REALIZES THAT THOSE KIDS MADE FUN OF ME WHEN I EXPOSED MY STOMACH AS A HAREM GIRL GENIE TWO YEARS AGO. So, I'm fat, I'm wrong and I'm relegated to a almost matronly mermaid costume." Again, this is the story - the story - that I told myself.

Even though when we found the perfect fabric for the tail and seashell boobs like a needle in a haystack at Hancock Fabrics on Drusilla Lane one sweaty summer August morning in Baton Rouge, I still kept focusing on "I Have to wear long sleeves and not show my stomach because I am now FAT. I am now WRONG. Something's WRONG with me."

But, I still really wanted to be a mermaid. So, I was going through with it. I was going through with this costume that I didn't want to wear. And, hey, nowadays as an actor, there's been plenty of times that I've worn costumes that I did not want to wear that were not "flattering" if you will. And, I just had to roll with it.

So, cut to Halloween 1990. Where your Halloween costume to school day. So, that morning, I even dyed with the spray my hair pink (pink because I didn't want to be Ariel - I wanted to be like one of her sisters - and pink is my favorite color) but I felt my hair looked stupid. Like a train wreck. I felt like a little kid - like a girl - not yet a woman (thank you Brittney Spears who's from Kentwood, Louisiana. Hey girl, talk about somebody who redeemed herself. Yes.) I was too uncomfortable to wear a bikini top if that would have been an option given to me. See, I just wanted it to be an option.

I felt trapped. And Mermaids are supposed to feel free and flowy. THE STORY I KEPT TELLING MYSELF WAS: I AM TOO FAT TO WEAR A REGULAR MERMAID COSTUME. Whatever a regular mermaid costume is, I don't know.

Looking back, and on my instagram, I will be posting a picture of it, so y'all go follow me there @br00keh00ver and the "o's" are not the letter O but they're zeros. So, go follow me there for the photo. But, looking back at that photo.

I realize that costume was really fabulous. Looking back, I try to remember that moment of when Momma and I found THE PERFECT FABRIC for the MERMAID TAIL AND SHELLS at Hancock fabrics, like a sleek silvery green with little baby miniscule drawings of fins. It was perfect y'all. Again, go look at the photo y'all. The photo won't do it justice. I want to remember that moment more. But, in my body, what I remember most is how shy and awkward and stupid I felt.

The WHOLE TIME my ten year old self thinking DID I MAKE A BAD CHOICE? Should I have picked another run of the mill costume? But, as we know, Momma and Brooke, we never did run of the mill Halloween costumes. This was the whole STORY going through my head. I should have realized how cool and awesome I looked, despite all my fear. I wish I had worked with what I had going for me.

Cause again, now looking back like 30 years later, I'm like "Dude, this was so cool, Brooke!"

All right so side bar - I just finished Selma Blair's memoir "MEAN BABY" highly recommend it - and in it she quotes Joan Didion "There's a point where you go with what you got or you don't go" and I couldn't agree with that more in this instance of the mermaid costume. I mean, I went. I just didn't go full throttle. At all. So, to add to Joan Didion's quote, I want to say, let's make it a little bit more PHAT girl shall we y'all? "There's a point where you go balls to the walls with what you got or you don't go." Like "go big or go home" is kind of what I'm saying here. But, sometimes you

can't always go big. So, Joan Didion's saying "Go with what you got." So much to think about y'all. So much to think about. So many mermaid tails to want to wear.

But, nowadays, I just wish I still had that costume. I don't know what happened to it. It symbolized the point of me going from a girl to a teenager in so many different ways. At the time, it just felt like a trap. And, I think that's how young gurls feel at that kind of pre-teen era. You know we want to feel loose and free as a young kid but we can't because those dampers of society and the negative talk is already starting to happen. Oy. Looking back y'all, I realize that it was actually - the mermaid costume was maybe, arguably one of the best Halloween costumes that I have ever had. And no offense to Momma because every costume Momma made was fabulous. So, I'm not say that this was because Momma didn't make it. Momma totally designed it. She just didn't stitch it. Miss Jan did. But, to give y'all an idea of the mermaid costume without having to go look at the picture on Instagram of it, it was similar to the one Cher wears in one of my favorite movies "MERMAIDS" FABULOUS. (Tries to do Cher's voice) Love Cher. I was trying to talk like Cher there. (Tries to talk like Cher again) I love to be a mermaid. No that's not a good Cher impersonation.

Y'all, shortly thereafter, kids at school would call me URSULA. And it wasn't from wearing the mermaid costume. I ended up going to a different school. A school where the kids - I went from like a hippie dippie sweet school to a very preppy school of perfection and I stuck out like a sore thumb. So, that's where I started getting called "Ursula." Because how dare I want to be a mermaid. I'm supposed to be the huge giant who happens to be fat- yes, she is- grotesque sea witch. Ahhhhhh. That's the STORY I put in my head. Because I let those other people, those bastard kids put it in my head for me. Nowadays, I would give my ... VOICE ... (Sings from The Little Mermaid) "Up where they walk" if we will - you know what I mean cause the Little Mermaid gives her voice - I would give my VOICE to be Ursula in a play, movie or TV show. Because she's awesome. She's fierce. She's fun. She's cool and it's up to us to make her the sexy, the pretty, the in charge Ursula instead of "I'm the fat girl so I got relegated to being Ursula." No. it is up to us to flip that story. This is a metaphor. Substitute that Ursula however you want, y'all.

I'm not going to be relegated to being a crappy mermaid or an ugly sea witch. I'm not going to let someone else tell my story. AND ESPECIALLY - for this year coming forward - this new year of birth if you will - I am going to tell myself I am especially NOT GOING TO LET MY OWN NEGATIVE VOICE TELL A STORY THAT I - THAT MY HEART - IS NOT WRITING FOR ME. That's what I will tell myself going forward from this birthday, heeeeeeey.

Now, recently talking with Momma about the mermaid costume, I said, "Momma y'all made me wear a long sleeved mermaid costume because y'all were afraid for me to show my stomach and my fat. It was because I was fat, right?" And Momma goes, (Momma's voice) "No, baby, we didn't want you to show your skin because you

would have gotten in trouble at school showing that much skin!!!!!! That's why we did a leotard long sleeved mermaid costume, baby"

So, see - y'all for nearly 30 years I told myself a story that didn't even need to exist. That wasn't even true. Let's go out there and be like Joan Didion, Selma Blair and The Little Mermaid let's go out and make our own stories.

Thanks so much for listening, y'all. It is my hope to inspire, uplift and entertain you with this Who's Dat Phat Girl podcast. So, if you're HUNGRY for more, you can book me to speak or perform my solo show that inspired this podcast Phat Girl Costumes written by yours truly and directed by my best bud Brian Lady at your virtual or in person event. Please visit Brookehoover.com/fluffybuttproductions or email me at contactbrookehoover@gmail.com for more information. And, let's follow each other on instagram - I'm @Br00keH00ver and those O's are not the letter O but they're ZEROS. Not because I want to be a size 0 but because I guess I'm just so clever with my late 90s Yahoo! self

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