

Cocooned

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IN SUMMER, when a good friend returns to Sydney from her home in London, we make an annual pilgrimage to McIver's Ladies Baths beyond the south end of Coogee beach. Each time we've visited I've discovered something new — the beauty around the shallow edges where the sandstone becomes a rainbow of pink, purple, orange and green; crabs crawling between crevices; limpets and zebra periwinkles that remind me of the aniseed boiled lollies my nana gave me when I was a kid. It's where I've felt as though I'm cocooned when I swim beneath the sandstone cliff that curves around the pool on one side, and where I've discovered an underwater rock that's weathered into the shape of a heart. It's also where one of the pool's custodians told me stories about the place — that it used to be a birthing area for Aboriginal women and that today it continues to hold the kind spirits of women past.¹

¹ *This extract was previously published in The Guardian, 26 Jan 2020.*