

Have you noticed an influx of fashionistas in your neighborhood? These newcomers are intriguing, and you'd like to inspect up close those unisex infinity scarves. You've already snatched a few strangers off of their research vessel/vacation dock. You might have been raised by alligators or gestated in a nuclear cooling pool, but you recognize something special when you see it.

Maybe you're hoping that someone will finally "get" that you just want some language lessons. Or maybe these newcomers smell really neat, with notes of rosemary mint body wash. People around here smell like Long John Silvers, unsettling to say the least. Then again, maybe what you really want is a new you. It's like an ache. No one has ever propped on an elbow and watched the cute way you sleep.

Take note, though, that things are bound to get complicated in a hurry. The local sheriff, who hasn't been interested in your activities before, now motors in a Bass Tracker every night, spotlighting the opaque surface, trying to pierce the rising mist that may or may not be comprised of toxic off-gassing. The situation won't seem like a big deal at first, even though the light is unflattering. But see below for 10 things working against you. There's a fine line between being hot and being a hot mess.

- You are probably the only one of your kind in general, and certainly the only one in this particular bog. Whenever you're out and about, you're conspicuous, like a celebrity or a duck boat.
- There are about seven billion humans.
- You're not as strong a swimmer as the other creatures that share your home, even though most of them are snakes
- With you, the "smoky eye" isn't working. Too much smolder can be just as off-putting as not enough.
- Your walking isn't terrific, either
- These newcomers are bankrolled by think tanks, corporations, trust funds, etc. Unlike Sheriff McSnoozy, they have the single-mindedness that accompanies expensive shoes. You won't get away with any "don'ts" in this crowd, like gauchos or serial kidnapping.
- There are a lot of green undertones in your complexion.
- The webbing makes operation of guns and grenades almost impossible for you.
- You are really very nice.
- There were no siblings to teach you about mercilessness, and you have never seen a fishing net.

If you are not killed—and what are the chances you won't be?—you will end up as a science project or as an attraction in the Gators and Friends Exotic Zoo. A real D-lister.

This whole thing is likely to escalate into a harpoon scenario that ends with the one kind-hearted human in the group weeping over your corpse, those weirdly separated fingers creeping around on your head gills. Those fingers are crazy. They're all doing different things as if they're not even associated with the same hand. It would be a cool experience if you weren't dead.

The good news is that it doesn't have to be this way—even without changing a thing. You have the ability to walk and also to snatch copious scientists/vacationers, what with that excellent strength in your deltoids. In this sense, you are already a go-getter. However, subtlety is not your forte. Tone it

down, Chester. No tip-toeing around in the daytime. Not only are the UV rays damaging, but the humans can see you (and shoot you). Also, add a clear gloss to your routine. Even incognito, care for your lips should include a shimmery topcoat.

Like any regimen, this one will take some self-control. You want to nuzzle them under your chin, like you did that family of ducks last month, something that didn't turn out well. But take heart! The benefit of being a humanoid mutant is that you are generally human-shaped. As another option, why not try to blend in? With some small changes to your appearance, you can join them instead of hiding under the power station.

- *Who's that lurking under the morass? It's sleek, beautiful you!*

- o Start with a mud mask to slough off fission products.

- o Dot concealer above and below the brow ridge.

- o Use coconut oil to highlight your natural iridescence—gentle, yet effective.

- o For inspiration, see sample makeovers on p. 42.

- *Complement your new look with these strategies:*

- o Insinuate that you are an exchange student.

- o Carry a pamphlet about your rare skin condition.

- o Shrug occasionally so that your silence can be construed as “broody.”

Maybe you'll get to attend a potluck or two while the situation cools down. As you bide your time, decide which human might be best to snatch based on how well he/she applies your “prescription” moisture balm and how often the others complain about that person's long baths, late hours, and/or melancholy sighing. Caution: Limit yourself to *just one*.

Eventually, the newcomers will tire of small town life, pack up, and head to the Coca-Cola Museum on the way out to the interstate. They'll promise to write, but they probably won't. Still, you'll have a new friend who can double as your oldest friend. It beats a sharp stick in your irresistible eye.