

Adhere

“The flutes were shining black to brown, and only a few small barnacles adhered to the shell.”

To stick to something.

Bulwark

“It was at once property and source of food, for a man with a boat can guarantee a woman that she will eat something. It is the bulwark against starvation.”

Something that provides protection for or against something.

Canoe

“They were high and graceful canoes with curving bow and stern and a braced section midships where a mast could be stepped to carry a small lateen sail.”

A light narrow boat with pointed ends, propelled by a paddle or paddles.

Clarity

“So that sea and land had the sharp clarities and the vagueness of a dream.”

The quality or state of being clear.

Deft

“Kino deftly slipped his knife into the edge of the shell.”

Neatly skillful and quick in one's movements.

Estuary

“The town lay on a broad estuary, its old yellow plastered buildings hugging the beach.”

The tidal mouth of a large river, where the tide meets the stream.

Gloat

“And to Kino the secret melody of the maybe pearl broke clear and beautiful, rich and warm and lovely, glowing and gloating and triumphant.”

To show in an improper way that you are happy with your own success or another's misfortune.

Illusion

“What he had seen, he knew, might be a reflection, a piece of flat shell accidentally drifted in or a complete illusion.”

A thing that is or is likely to be wrongly perceived or interpreted by the senses.

Incandescence

“Kino lifted the flesh, and there it lay, the great pearl, perfect as the moon. It captured the light and refined it and gave it back in silver incandescence.”

The steady giving off of the form of radiation that makes vision possible.

Irritate

“An accident could happen to these oysters, a grain of sand could lie in the folds of muscle and irritate the flesh until... it coated the grain with a layer of smooth cement.”

Make (someone) annoyed, impatient, or angry.

Mangrove

“Across the estuary from the town one section of mangroves stood clear and telescopically defined, while another mangrove clump was a hazy black-green blob.”

A tree or shrub that grows in chiefly tropical coastal swamps that are flooded at high tide.

Mirage

“Although the morning was young, the hazy mirage was up.”

Something that comes from or exists only in the mind and is not real.

Obscure

“Kino moved cautiously so that the water would not be obscured with mud or sand.”

Having an often intentionally veiled or uncertain meaning.

Perceptible

“But in the song there was a secret little inner song, hardly perceptible, but always there... and this was the Song of the Pearl That Might Be”

(Especially of a slight movement or change of state) able to be seen or noticed.

Poultice

“She gathered some brown seaweed and made a flat damp poultice of it, and this she applied to the baby's swollen shoulder, which was as good a remedy as any”

A medicated covering used to heal an injury.

Recede

“In the pale light he could see the little waves break over her, and her skirt floated about and clung to her legs as the water receded.”

Go or move back or further away from a previous position.

Remedy

“She gathered some brown seaweed and made a flat damp poultice of it, and this she applied to the baby's swollen shoulder, which was as good a remedy as any”

A medicine or treatment for a disease or injury.

Shrill

“His heart beat out a heavy rhythm and the melody of the maybe pearl shrilled in his ears.”

(Of a voice or sound) high-pitched and piercing.

Strew

“Light filtered down through the water to the bed where the frilly pearl oysters lay fastened to the rubbly bottom, a bottom strewn with shells of broken, opened oysters.”

Scatter or spread (things) untidily over a surface or area.

Subside

“He worked the blade lever-wise and the closing muscle parted and the shell fell apart. The lip-like flesh writhed up and then subsided.”

Become less intense, violent, or severe.

Tact

“It is not good to want a thing too much. It sometimes drives the luck away. You must want it just enough, and you must be very tactful with God or the gods.”

The ability to deal with others in touchy situations without offending them.

Undulate

“Above, the surface of the water was an undulating mirror of brightness, and he could see the bottoms of the canoes sticking through it.”

To move or be shaped like waves.

Vague

“So that sea and land had the sharp clarities and the vagueness of a dream.”

Of uncertain, indefinite, or unclear character or meaning.

Writhe

“He worked the blade lever-wise and the closing muscle parted and the shell fell apart. The lip-like flesh writhed up and then subsided.”

Make continual twisting, squirming movements or contortions of the body.