

## Dialogue and Transition

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Cynthia Anne Hale

Water rushes through my hair, yet birds pull me from the depths. Weaving my body around trees of seaweed, I have just learned a strong front stroke. Holding arms and hands straight and still along my body increases my speed and the distance I can cover. The melody of a singing bird catches me.

*Daybreak. I'm not ready yet.*

Climbing onto the beach, I feel the ocean still upon me, its wet-dry salt sticking sand to skin as I stand alone. Even though there are people all around, I'm searching. Insistently, a bird calls.

*Is it a gull?*

My attention turns to the blue-green depths again. In that moment, I know without any doubt: the emerging seal-like creature is there for me. We embrace as beings of earth, and the ocean within us mingles. Water drips between its sleek oily fur and my damp cotton clothing, as I deeply inhale musky animal. I smile, we turn down the rocky beach, our slow strides matching perfectly and naturally.

*Another bird sings back, its voice swelling and then trailing off as I dive down again. I surface briefly, add yogurt to the grocery list. Back down again.*

I look up into this loving creature's eyes and see with surprise yet relief they are pools of ocean like mine. With people everywhere, the creature soothes me in its wise primal language that I only partially understand. After a while, I know it must be enough for now, yet ...

*The birds, clearly not gulls, quartet loudly. Is it me they're calling? If we grill tonight, there will be plenty since Catherine and Grace may stop by.*

... I'm not ready. The creature embraces me, deeply enfolding my sorrow and my hope and as I stand weeping our salt mingles. At the edge of vastness, I am at peace.

*The ozone breeze strokes my face. I've never known the names of birds chorusing through my window each morning. I smell the night salt and the realms it interweaves. Breathing deeply within the ensemble of chirps and coos, the air brushes me with the sweetness of a rainy day. Cocooned in the comfort of well-being beyond words, a cloud of ocean mist radiates as I step from night into day.*