

The Threshold

She stood there, at the boundary of two worlds. She'd woken early, her sleep broken and shallow, awash with disjointed and misremembered dreams. In the distance, the sun rose slowly, a thin pink glow, holding the promise of a summer day. The water lapped forward touching her bare feet, her toes sinking into the wetness of the sand. Almost an invitation from the world beyond.

The girl stepped forward.

Squatting down in the waves she reached into the water with her hand. It was cold and clear, and yet the coolness of it called to her. She raised her fingers to her lips to feel the bitter salt of it.

It tasted of home.

She straightened and, looking around, took another step. The water reached up to her knees now and she looked down, feeling the sharp ridges of a shell with her foot. Her senses sharpened. The distant cry of a gull was suddenly piercing, unpleasant. The slight breeze felt almost rough against her skin.

She stepped.

The water reached up to her thighs. It made her shiver, not with the cold but with her need for it. A tingle of fear rose up. Like a fledgling staring into the unknown, she was afraid of it and yet unable to turn away. Beneath her feet the world was all softness.

Another step.

Standing waist deep, she felt a slow wave roll past her, through her, almost. It caught her breath. The air felt insufficient, suddenly too thin. She wrapped her arms around her against the wind. The water did not feel unknown.

Last step.

The edge of the sandbank was before her. She couldn't tell how she knew. She sensed it, its form, the soft dropping away into the deep. She teetered on the edge, and the water held her body, suspended, motionless. Her eyes lifted for a moment. The first rays of the sun streamed from the horizon, blindingly bright. She felt the wave come rather than saw it. It raised her up and she spread her arms like bird finally taking flight.

The sea enfolded her. There was no need for breath. The other world had welcomed her into its cool embrace.

Peace.

A completeness that needed no explanation.

Above the waves, dawn broke in earnest. The gull's cries slowly grew more distant. When the first people came, the sea had already erased all signs of what might have been a girl.