

On Whales and Dolphins

Combing the beach, I look for the large ones who may be washed ashore, the whales and the dolphins who have died and lay upon the sand. Is it the size of these creatures, or is it the beauty of their lives that I seek to emulate that draws me toward them? Perhaps, it is merely the surprise of the thing, their massive presence, their lives ended as I stare into eyes gone still.

Many others come to stare and they are sad as I am sad, too. What was its life like, this great gray hulk with tail like mermaids, like voyages in the sea I will never know? The dolphin, bluish-gray and white, its skin, or hide, something other than that of reptiles, or of mammals, even birds, it lay as though caught between worlds, not of this one and no longer of its own.

Some say they are creatures destined for a world far beyond our own, in unseen planes of existence, higher life forms resonating with the higher frequencies found only in spiritual realms. They are teachers and they are wise beyond our ken, beyond our ability to even hear the sounds of those unsee-able, unknowable mysteries. Maybe that is why I and others upon this beach seek them out, look upon them, and grieve as their rotting stench spreads up and down the shoreline dunes.

Once, I walked along the shore, the waves reaching near as I leapt away from them. Searching for bits of sea life-- colorful shells and stones, unusual life, like skates and by-the-wind sailors, maybe a jellyfish-- the most beautiful creature of all was found. What is it? Someone showed it to me and I marveled at the tiny seahorse in the palm of her hand. Its body was like that of a lizard, its skin glistening and shimmering in rainbow iridescence, but its head unmistakable, with only two arms and little hands. Like a fairy being it appeared. It is true, I saw a fairy. Seahorses are fairy beings. What was its life to end thus, amongst mere scatterings upon the shore's tideline? What stones, what bits of wood and feathers damp upon the wet sand could be its grave? Fairy being, little seahorse on the sand, I honor you.

Freedom is to be found while beach combing. The entire ocean to one side that adds to the sky above as one expanse of infinite possibilities, walking and stooping, investigating and wondering, marveling at the endless beauty of the shore. Seaweed drapes the sand in piles, with flies and skittering crabs, sand crabs, rock crabs, and, there, a bright orange starfish clinging to the pier. Each wave that comes forth from out the sea, ripples and rolls between its tall posts, weaving patterns in shadow and in sunlight. Freedom, whales and dolphins enjoy, though I know not of their watery lives in depths deeper than my mind can fathom. Their lives are a mystery, like all mysteries in this infinite universe. I am but a wanderer upon the shore, pondering their existence having ended, being the nearest encounter I may ever have with these lofty, yet somehow primordial beings of the sea.

Out upon the ocean, I've been, though in boats with crews to see to my needs. Orca whales, dolphins, and moon fish floating upon the surface of the ever-moving ocean delight my fellow travelers. Seabirds like pelicans and terns, gulls and shearwaters, come sounding forth in their cries upon the wind, announcing the plentitude upwelling from the deep. And I, but a tourist in their world, must return to land, once again hoping for a glimpse of whales and dolphins washed onto the sandy beach of my earthly home.

By Corrine Ardoin
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