

Journey of the Navigator

I sit here in my tiny boat staring at the surface of the water. I am watching for some sign of movement, some flicker of a change in the appearance of the water or the reflection of the sky that is mirrored in its surface. The ocean is completely still, like nothing I have experienced before. There is not a ripple or a wave to be seen in any direction. The vast expanse of the ocean is an uninterrupted plane of perfect calm stretching out toward the thin line of the horizon that offers my eyes their only confirmation of where I am located, because the sky is gray and as constant as the water.

I turn my attention from my eyes to my ears. I listen in the stillness for any familiar sound, the cry of a seabird or the slightest movement of a breeze. There is not one sound to be heard. I am suspended in a place of total stillness. In an instinctual reflex, my body adjusts its position in the boat, maybe just to touch the familiar texture of rough wood or to sense a shift of my body's own weight.

Yes, this is real, but why am I out here alone? I have no passenger with me. I have no memory of a destination. Did I become lost in a trance? Are my perceptions of my situation even reliable? I clearly must have navigated my way out here, but there is no meaningful explanation for my being where I am now. I am a person who follows the guidance that the Earth's elemental energies share with me, but anyone observing what I have done would think that I had lost all grounding and mental balance, totally out of contact, and unable to read the signs and messages. I need to understand what has led me here, and I trust that if I wait and I am patient, then the deeper reality of my situation will be revealed to me.

I return my attention to the water. In my mind's eye I observe the molecules of water joining together to form geometric patterns. They are like the fragments of a puzzle coming together to make tiny crystalline forms. Maybe in the absence of any disturbance from the outside world, in this stillness, water starts to do this by itself. Even in the inconceivable vastness of the ocean's depth, maybe the waters of the ocean yearn to form these micro-structures. And now, I watch these structures shift. I watch with all of my attention focused on this one thing: what is the water doing? The micro-structures shift from one crystalline configuration to another. My mind likens these geometric structures to those of snowflakes. The two must be related to each other—except that the structures I see in the water are moving. Could it be that these shapes are trying to express something? I sense that each configuration has a different feeling, an abstraction of a kind of energy flow. This one makes me think of something storing energy. The next one makes me think of energy splitting into two. The shifts go on and on. Now, the energy seems to be spiraling, now the energy is standing still. Am I reading too much into these forms? Is the water's restless activity an expression arising from within the water itself, or is it trying to communicate with me? My whole life I have been attending to water, and still its inner life is a mystery to me.

My mentor taught me to blend with the consciousness of water. It was one of the first things I was taught. We sat together in an all-night ceremony devoted to softening my boundaries and releasing my body's defensive reflexes. I held too much rigidity and I needed to be more like water he said. In the morning, he guided me to the edge of a stream that ran through the forest, and he told me to ask the water to reveal its history. Then he left me alone.

I wasn't sure what to do, but I knew I didn't want to fail. I imagined entering the

stream and becoming submerged in its soft gurgling flow. And to my amazement I was soon joined with the consciousness of the water. I traveled back through the water to the stream's point of origin. I followed it forward to where it joined with the sea. I learned that water is an open psychic gateway, and through water my awareness could be present anywhere that water was present. As my mentor had instructed me, I asked the water to show me its history, and let me tell you, the time span of the Earth's water is immense. I saw the early Earth bringing forth life long before the arrival of humans on the fifth-dimensional plane. I saw the current state of our habitation on the New Earth. I felt like the tiniest drop in an ocean shaped by profound forces.

When I ran back to my mentor to share all of this, he cut me off.

“Such things are not to be shared with words because words distort the profound meaning of true experience. Believe me, I know what the water has shared with you, and I share in your humility in the face of the elemental forces that move through our Earth.”

I came to understand the wisdom of my carrying my experience within myself, because I was changed by my new relationship to water. The water became an extension of my nervous system. And I discovered that I became a little less like other humans, because I carried the consciousness of water within me. The consciousness of water spoke to me and guided my actions. And as a navigator I understood automatically which currents aided my voyage and which not. When I navigated a ship, we would ride the waves like the schools of fish following in the gentle flow of the ocean's tides.

But what does it mean in this moment that no currents stir, and all movement is held in stillness? I look into the water again. Its surface had changed. It is not so smooth and shiny now. It seems to have acquired a dull, rough texture. I focus my attention again on the evolving geometry of the molecules. This time I understand that there is a vibration passing through the water. All is not static. Some energetic force has the water in its grip.

I decide to try a test. I pick up a small pebble from inside my boat and I toss it into the waters. I watch it hit the water and disappear as if sucked into a waiting mouth and swallowed. There are no ripples, no effect from what just happened. I know now for sure that this stillness is an active force. The vibration is an expression of this force, and the water's molecules are responding to it.

I lift up my head and listen intently. There it is. Barely audible but clearly emerging from out of the silence. I can hear the vibration. It seems to come from all around me, and its tone changes ever so subtly. What is this sound? What great power gives voice to this? I could lose myself in listening this way.

What was I doing before I arrived here? I remember walking to my boat where it rested up on the beach. In that moment I was propelled by the wind pushing on my back and whispering into my ear. The wind is my ally, and I listened. It guided me to launch my boat into the water, then it filled my sails and led me away out of the harbor. The wind knew where I was supposed to go. It told me that I needed to do this.

That happened some days ago. How long ago was that? How many days have I been out here? The wind, the water, and the stars all spoke to me, encouraged me. I blended with their intentions, and I did what they guided me to do, because I am a navigator—one in the line of navigators. This is what I was always meant to be, and I have my mentor, Barkas, to thank for helping me to fulfill my destiny.

I think back now to the first ceremony he did with me. At the time I had no idea of what this ceremony was or what it meant. I had been given over to him to see if he might take me on as his apprentice. I had no inkling of what his attitude toward me was, because his face held that noncommittal smile all of the time. One night, he brought me to an outdoor fire and told me to sit. He said that he would make an offering to the wind for me. In this way he would try to connect my spirit with the spirit of the air. So, all night we sat together across from that fire while he sang songs, and he slowly assembled this offering constructed on a foundation of one large leaf. Upon it Barkas carefully added small bits of seeds and flowers and other things that I did not recognize. It was a physical object imbued with the energies Barkas had woven into it with his songs. When the first light of morning lifted the veil of darkness from around us, I could then see the beauty of the offering in full color, so delicate and perfect like the most precious beauty of the Earth held in the palm of one hand.

It was then that Barkas handed the offering to me and told me to follow him. He led me into the forest where he explained that I was to give this offering to the air. It was up to me to decide where and how I did that.

And who was I to decide such a thing? I had no experience with offerings, and I certainly didn't have any idea about what this all meant, but I would certainly try to fulfill the directions that Barkas had given me, because I wanted to succeed in being his apprentice. I set off into the forest with a stride of confidence. I had the idea that I would look for the most perfect spot to place the offering. So, engaging my psychic ability as unpracticed as it was, I asked the forest to show me that spot. I turned around 360-degrees and back again until I was facing the direction that seemed most beneficial to me. I walked some distance, and then I repeated the turning and took off in a new direction. After several adjustments like this, I came to a tree that attracted my attention. Just above the height of my head, the trunk of the tree divided into two. In the cranny between the two halves of the trunk there was a perfect space where I could place the offering. It would indeed be as if the tree's arms were lifting the offering up toward the sky. I approached the tree and discovered that I would have to stand on my tiptoes in order to place the offering in the gap. I balanced myself carefully as I lifted the offering with one hand and slipped it into the niche, but it wasn't totally centered. Stretching up on my tiptoes, I gave it a slight push into the right spot.

Then the whole world collapsed around me. My body was shocked by the sudden bolt of energy converging right in front of me. I fell backwards and landed on my back on the forest floor. And as my head cleared, I looked all around and then up to the offering to discover that everything was right where it was before. What had happened? I tried to make sense of my fragmented sensations. My overriding impression was that the whole space around me had suddenly collapsed into the offering, and a moment later everything had been restored. What exactly had moved? There was only one answer: the air or the spirit of the air had rushed in to take the energy of the offering. Now I knew what the energy of air felt like. I knew it was conscious. And now, I realized that I had been asleep to it my entire life, but the consciousness of air was really there surrounding everything.

I ran back to Barkas. I wanted to tell him everything. I needed to share my realization. I found him sitting by the fire and looking into its flames. He was very still, but just the same I was bubbling over with words as I tried to explain what had happened to me. Did I do it right? Was this what was supposed to happen?

He gave me no reply. He simply looked at me with the dispassionate smile that

became so familiar to me in the years that followed. He asked me to sit with him by the fire, and we gave thanks to the spirit of the air for the connection that had been made with me. I felt so grateful to Barkas and excited for the possibilities that his training might open up for me in the future.

From that day forward, I was connected to the consciousness of air. The wind was the expression of the air that guided me. The wind was my ally. When I needed the wind to power my sails, I called for my ally. When I needed to choose a direction, the wind told me which direction was most favorable for me. The consciousness of the air is always present with me. And maybe it was the spirit of the air that convinced Barkas to accept me as his apprentice on that day long ago.

So, once again I ask the air: What am I doing here in this place? In the middle of the ocean with no passenger and no direction? Could the air be as inscrutable as the water? What is unfolding here? I feel the stillness held by the air. I feel its consciousness surrounding me and embracing me. The air would have me stay calm, calm as the quiet waters, calm as the quietest breath.

I wait. I am a navigator. I blend with the elements, and I too become as calm as the air and the water. This is my life's path. And as I wait, I close my eyes and I listen. The faint sound in the air is almost like singing, like the distant singing a song that is meant to stir the heart with deep feeling. In my mind's eye I see the molecules of the air moving like the water in circles and geometric designs, spinning and turning from clockwise to counterclockwise. These patterns can be felt on the skin as a kind of restlessness quality in the air. They are dancing with the sound. That vibration and these subtle movements of the air are synchronized like partners in a dance. That vibration is also moving gently through me like it is through the air.

When there is nothing to mark its passage, time seems otherwise to stop. After what must be many hours, the only change I observe in the world around me is the dimming of the day's light. And as I follow the changing hues, I also notice that the movement of air and water has become more animated. Maybe that is in response to the sound that is wavering slowly and becoming louder. Night or day, the subtle movement of the Earth's energies is like shifting harmonies to me. Today those harmonies accompany that faint melody, and I ride along the melody's undulating waves like a surfer riding waves along the ocean's shore. What ocean of strange harmonies is pushing me ahead? To what distant shore am I being guided?

It is long into the night when I see the first star appear in the canopy of the sky. The clouds must be clearing. And slowly more and more stars are being revealed. My friends, the stars, speak to me with the clearest words. They look down and see everything. They each have a seat in the Cosmos and add their unique voice to the Cosmic chorus of light. They sing a different song from the one that reverberates around me in the water and the air. The stars create a cosmic counterpoint. Cosmos and Earth singing their unique parts back and forth like a double chorus. And as more stars reveal themselves in the sky, the ocean reflects their many faces on its mirrored surface. I am now surrounded in a sea of stars above me and below me. Tell me: What wave is moving through the Earth? Is it moved by your Cosmic harmony?

My mind drifts away to a vision of a past journey. I am thinking of the great temple complex of Ankare that lies on the edge of the water far to the west. It is one of the most beautiful places I have even seen. The high temple towers shine brilliantly in the morning's light. That is how I first witnessed them after a journey of many days and nights across the ocean, the longest journey that I had yet undertaken.

Barkas had asked me to navigate a large ship filled with people who were accompanying an old spiritual leader to the temple complex. They had obviously asked Barkas to guide them across the sea, but he turned this journey over to me. I was surprised, but I took it as an expression of his confidence in me. It was a beautiful thing to be assisting this revered teacher. The irony of my involvement was that the teacher, this very old woman, sat silently in the back of the ship, while I, by far the youngest person aboard, sat in the front. A few of the passengers were attendants who traveled with the teacher. The remainder were the crew who raised and lowered sails, took turns at the oars, and steered the ship, depending on what I asked of them.

As navigator my job was to guide the ship across the ocean to this place that I could only see in my mind's eye. As I sat in the front of the boat, I talked with the wind to make sure that it carried us in the right direction. I ask the waters to steer us past all dangers. And at night, I talked to the stars who could see everything from their vantage point far above us. In this way, I saw the presence of storms ahead, and guided our ship around them. I saw islands that we steered our way around. I was being so very careful, not just to be a good navigator, but to be sure that this old wise teacher reached the temples in safety.

So, you can understand then that when the golden Temples of Ankare came into view with the morning's light reflecting off of the towering spires like rainbows filling the sky, it was for me a deep event, my first completed long journey and my arrival in a sacred place so very different from all my previous experience.

After we had docked the ship, the crew made way for the teacher to pass onto the shore. The teacher surprised everyone by walking straight to the front of the boat where she gave me a gift of her beautifully decorated hat. "I am returned home now. I won't be needing this anymore, and I want you to have it and to keep your head warm when you navigate through cold places. Thank you for returning me to my home." And with that she stepped onto the shore and walked slowly away surrounded by her attendants. Only then did it hit me that she had returned home to die.

The trip back was less demanding. The teacher's attendants and most of the crew stayed in Ankare. I navigated the remaining crew in a boat of smaller size. When everything was finished and I returned to Barkas, he congratulated me. I knew that he had followed our journey in his mind's eye by talking with the elemental spirits.

"And now I feel free to move on. You are now ready to fulfill the most difficult tasks. I have every faith in your abilities. You are a great navigator. And now I wish to return home."

I shot back, "You are not going away to die, are you?"

He looked at me with that dispassionate smile. "No. But I want to walk the hills of my own island and to speak with the people of my homeland one last time. Much will change soon."

I remember thinking: Why does he need to do this? After all of our years of traveling together, why does he want to visit his old home and talk with his people now?

And why does this memory come back to visit me, here in the middle of the ocean? Maybe the stars know the answer. They seem excited to be visible in a sky that is so clear, so crystal clear like their voices seem to be whispering just above my head. I send them my love, and in cosmic balance I receive their love. And I wonder, what do they think of the stillness that holds everything in its grip?

Morning will be coming soon. I can see a faint haze of light in the east, and the stars are retreating from the sky, again to turn inward toward their own worlds.

I feel a turbulence in the body of my boat. It is shaking in an irregular way. I look again at the water in the glint of the sun's morning glow. The surface is more alive than before. I have never seen such a thing. There are visible waves now moving up and down everywhere, but there is no particular direction to their motion. The sea's surface has become rough as if there were a storm giving energy to this turbulence, but there is no storm. As I look out across the water, I can see the texture of small geometric patterns laid out like the designs on a blanket. The peaks and troughs form interconnecting circles or stars with many points. Yes, it is as if the micropatterns of the water are expressed in the movement of the waves moving up and down in a single place.

And now another wonder, I can see that within the peaks of the waves are small fish. The many fish of the sea are joining in the motion of the water. It is like a dance. As far as the eye can see, waves stand and fall while fish join in their euphoric celebration. This makes me feel giddy. It is an inconceivable joy to see the concord of nature's small creatures with the forces of the elemental spirits. It causes some deep resonance within my heart. Did I ever experience this before? To see nature's creatures join together in a dance of life? And clearly this celebration is gaining energy. Maybe I thought that the stillness would eventually return. Maybe I thought that the water and the air would revert to their usual complacent disorder, but now I can foresee that this process is evolving, evolving toward a higher and higher state of frenzy.

I am caught in the energy! I feel the resonance of the vibration all through my body, and it is an exuberant rhythm. It is affecting my perception and my mind. I try to move toward my boat's mast, but my sense of balance abandons me, and I have to hold onto the sides of my boat. I decide to lay down as best I can. I lay with my back against the bottom of my boat. I feel the vibration resonating through my spine. I close my eyes and try to steady myself, but then again, my boat does not harmonize easily with the vibrations that are shaking it. My boat is rigid and asymmetric in its design. I think that is why it vibrates now in such a rough way.

I miss Barkas' reassuring smile, but I did tell him that I accepted his desire to return home by himself. I accepted it, but I have no similar feelings in myself, no feelings of connection to my homeland like that. His decision still surprises me. During all my years with Barkas, we lived in whatever port town we were called to. If we had anything you could call a home, it was only his small boat. Ours was a life of constant migration. We were mariners of the sea who needed no home port. I loved that.

The village of my childhood seems so far away. What is my relationship to all of that now? I don't feel like a person with a home. No, I am a displaced soul, a stranger to every place that I visit. I belong only to myself and to the elementals who shared their consciousness with me.

I remember the pivotal moment that occurred when I was a child of eight. I was playing in the village square with my friends, but everyone had stopped moving to watch a group of newborns passing through the village on their way to the City of Light at Habbershield. Seeing the newborns journeying like this was a novelty to me then. I barely understood that I was born of the New Earth, while my parents had arrived from the Old Earth. There was this feeling of big changes happening across

the world, and I watched in fascination as these confident and inspired youths, barely older than me, were on their way to a life that they chose for themselves—quite different from the life in the villages where they had grown up. I wanted to join them and to have a great adventure too.

Then she saw me, and she stopped in her tracks. I felt the sudden connection, and I was frozen on the spot. “So, you are going to be navigator,” she said out loud. She came over to me and knelt down to bring her face close to mine. “I saw a vision of you guiding a ship. Do you have an interest in the oceans and ships, sails and things like that?”

I was too shocked to respond, but it was as if she was looking straight through me into my imagination and my dreams. Her little diversion with me had caused the other newborns to stop, and the curious from our village to gather. My parents came rushing up to surround me and make sure that I was ok, and certainly to make sure that I didn't get taken away by these unconventional wanderers.

Mattery as I learned was her name, she told my parents what she had seen in her vision. My parents may have been dubious, but they respected psychic ability. Mattery explained that being a navigator was a special capacity and an honor. And while I was certainly too young to begin training now, she would like to assist me when I came of age. Mattery told them that she would return to talk about my future when I was more ready. All that I really understood was that I immediately liked her and that she had really connected to me. After that day, my parents treated me a little differently. They had to consider if maybe I did have a special future.

My only notion of what it meant to be a navigator was that it would free me to explore the world, and that notion inspired me to fantasize about travels to distant lands. I imagined flying like a bird across great continents and swimming like a fish to distant islands. My play fantasies of faraway adventure were a challenge to my friends who could only imagine life as they experienced it in our village. And as I continued to grow, my yearnings took me farther and farther away from the realities of a farming village.

Mattery returned in my 12th year. She had become a full citizen of Habbersheld, and she wore the white tunic shared by many newborns. By then, I was sure that I belonged elsewhere, and I was proud to have another life waiting for me. I think that my parents already knew that I was headed away from them. I was the first of the newborns to leave our village, and many families came out to say goodbye to me. As Mattery and I journeyed to Habbersheld, she explained to me that other people would be involved in deciding what exactly happened next.

My arrival at Habbersheld was a bit of a disappointment to me. Instead of instantly welcoming me as someone with an unmistakable destiny, the newborns who met us at the entrance made clear that there were rules I had to observe. There were protocols to be followed when such a young newborn arrived. Frustratingly I was restricted to the outer rooms at Habbersheld because I was apparently too inexperienced to enter the higher-dimensional spaces. And I would need to be interviewed by a panel of their most experienced psychics.

Mattery was resolutely confident and looked after me while I settled in to my new surroundings. When I met with the panel, they explained that they were being careful not to steer the course of my natural development. They asked me if I would give them permission to read my aura and observe my core energy. Their insight into my life's mission was that I was genuinely heading along a different path from the newborns gathered in the City of Light. Indeed, they invited the master navigator, Barkas, to come visit Habbersheld and meet me. Barkas was visiting a nearby fishing

village—a strange coincidence if you ask me. He would decide if he would take me on as an apprentice.

He arrived two days later. Mattery and I were excitedly waiting in the entrance room when he walked in through the door. His eyes locked on me almost immediately. I didn't know what to expect, and I searched his face for some understanding of what it meant to be a navigator like him. He was old but his face was lit with a pleasant smile. His clothes were plain and practical, and he walked with the gentlest step. He was so very agile and alert. I suddenly didn't feel so confident.

The leaders of Habbersheld came to greet him. And as the conversations about me began, I became very self-conscious. When Barkas looked over at me, I wondered what he was seeing? I was so physically awkward, why would he accept me? But by the next day, I thanked Mattery, and departed Habbersheld with Barkas. I was ready to put my Habbersheld experience behind me and to place my total trust in Barkas. Something about him seemed so grounded and secure. His acceptance of me assuaged my insecurity about my future. I think that I have modeled myself after his example ever since. Yes, I do miss him.

I wonder what he would think of my strange predicament out here in the expanse of the ocean. My boat is vibrating in an uncontrollable way. The mast is moving back and forth under great stress. The body of my boat is beginning to break apart.

Barkas! I could use your help right now. I am in the midst of an overpowering storm that comes from nowhere and goes nowhere. I am having trouble maintaining any focus while being shaken by the vibration. Even holding onto my sense of being in one place is difficult. My mind has obviously been wandering about.

I try to relax my body and to blend with the vibrating energy. I try to adjust to the flow.

Is this the right strategy? I am facing a challenge different from anything you trained me for. If I don't make the right decision, might I perish in the middle of the sea?

I need to understand the nature of the vibrations that are shaking my boat. I look out across the ocean's surface, and the vibration's patterns are creating huge spikes in the waves. And then too, riding along with these waves are groups of dolphins. They seem in such perfect harmony with the movement of the water. And there are whales too! All of the life of the sea is harmonized with the vibration and joined in a dance.

Where do I fit into this dance?

I wonder now if I am changing. I know that the vibrations are affecting me deep in my body. At first, I thought that it was just my spine that was taking in the vibrations. I thought that it was just my nervous systems that was being affected. Now I think that my limbs are changing.

I look up into the sky. There are clouds now dancing in the same kind of geometric patterns that were revealed in the water and the air. And the sea birds too are here, zooming and floating in harmony with it all. The whole world seems to be united in this dance. From the micro-structures to the macro-structures, one energy, one

intention, one consciousness. It must be that the Earth has called all life and all elements to the celebration.

My past and the present are so blended together. How long have I been here? Am I dreaming this moment or dreaming of the past?

I thought that I was as prepared for the challenge as I could be, but I realized from the gravity of Barkas' words that he took this very seriously. He had taken me as far as he could. It was now up to the New Earth to accept me as a navigator or not.

The next day we walked into the mountains. The terrain was rough and craggy. We climbed up the side of a rock face to a plateau where there was the narrow entrance to a cave. It smelled of stagnant air. Near the entrance to the cave Barkas built another ceremonial fire—much bigger than what we needed for warmth. We spent the night in ceremony, a ceremony intended for me to offer myself in service to the New Earth. In the morning I followed Barkas as he carried a torch from our fire and entered the cave. It was a long way before we reached an area with a flat floor. There Barkas told me that he would leave me to establish my own relationship with the great powers of the Earth. He said that to survive in the cave, I would need to surrender completely, otherwise I might be torn apart. He would leave me in the darkness and return at the end of the process. He gave me a flask filled with the tea he made from certain leaves he had picked along the way. In the waning light of his torch, I was searching his face for some sign of what he imagined was ahead for me. But he soon left me behind in total darkness.

One thing about being in total darkness is that all of your senses come alive. You are surrounded in the universe of everything that your expanded senses take in—and importantly too, what your senses might decide to create. I lost all sense of my physical orientation with the space around me. I was alone, but I thought that I knew myself, and I was confident of being able to endure any length of time alone. Occasionally I sipped some of the tea that Barkas had left with me. It was bitter and full of nasty tastes, but I imagined that it also helped my body to sustain itself. I focused on maintaining my inner balance, while time ceased its movement.

I reminded myself that Barkas had said that this ritual was about my relationship with the great powers of the Earth, especially about devoting myself to the service of the Earth. I reached out with my psychic senses to the greater world of spirit that surrounded me. I was in a small cave, but I felt as if I were in a large room. 'The mother's womb,' is what I thought. 'This is like a birthing process.' It was then that I realized I was not alone. There in the unseen expanse were beings of consciousness who were watching me. And for the first time in many months, I felt fear. 'Did they see something in me that I did not?' My psychic awareness sprang into high alert.

And this led me into searching my memories for the mistakes I had made, for those uncomfortable blunders that I had habitually kept hidden from myself. This included my mistakes with Barkas, ways I had embarrassed myself when I was growing up, how I had hurt people, how I had treated my parents. Yes, I had been hurtful to many, and I had separated myself from the people who were closest to me. For this I felt shame. Then too, I was never satisfied with myself and the level of my skills. I never approached the level at which Barkas moved about in the world. I admired the way that he belonged to no place while being so secure in himself. And still, I didn't know him. I had made myself into a kind of orphan. If I were to travel back to where I grew up, would anything or anyone be familiar to me? And there it

was, a feeling that I had long denied. My bravado masked my feeling of not belonging. I had given myself over to the Earth as a substitute for my relationships with people. And in truth, it was this inner pain that propelled my endeavor to become a navigator. But I had never really faced the consequences of my loneliness. I had simply distracted myself. Now my self-denial was obvious to those eyes in the darkness who were studying me.

Was it too late to change my course? Maybe I could tell Barkas that I had come to the realization that I wasn't ready. I could ask his forgiveness and just walk away. My life was a fraud, and I needed a way of starting over. And I knew what he would do: he would look at me with that dispassionate smile, and I would still have no idea of what he really thought.

That caused me to smile to myself. The irony of it all. Barkas had accepted me in spite of all my arrogance and all my faults. I realize now that he must have recognized all of this about me from the beginning. I have been so slow to wake up to what was really going on.

And the truth is that I felt love for his training. I loved this path. I loved my journey. How else could I have become something more than a resentful child? And even under the watchful eyes of those observing me in the darkness, I could let down my guard a bit. My mind was once so asleep, but I did the best that I could. Looking at myself now, I could smile at my countless misjudgments. I was like a balloon held to the ground by the strings of my regrets. If I could cut the strings, then maybe I could let go and float away from everything. I lay down on the floor of the cave, and I curled up into a ball. I would ride out the storm of whatever should follow.

I must have fallen into a very deep sleep, because when I came awake, I discovered that the walls of the cave were covered with drawings made of light. There were drawings of plants along with creatures of the land and the sea. I stared at the pictures trying to decide if they were really on the walls of the cave or simply in my mind's eye. I stood and reached out to touch one of the drawings, but my touch didn't change it at all. I discovered that everything was indeed like a painting on the walls. Now I began to study the abundance of images, I recognized many things, but there was much that was unfamiliar to me. I focused on a large image of a human being whose hand was raised in a gesture of greeting. I felt immediately that this image was an ancestor who was welcoming me to the service of the Earth. It was my confirmation that I was accepted and that I belonged. I lay back on the floor of the cave and looked up at the ceiling. There were images of the stars, but not in their usual arrangement. Some stars were much closer than others, and their individual qualities were very obvious to me. I shifted my attention from one to another while trying to take in the energy of each. It struck me how the energy of the Earth held a unique place in the family of these stars.

I eventually fell back asleep, and when I awoke, the images were all gone. I was again surrounded in darkness. Sometime soon thereafter, Barkas rejoined me in the cave and guided me back to the outside world. We emerged in the brightness of an indescribably beautiful vista. He had prepared a meal for me that was laid out on a ceremonial cloth. But first we were supposed to sit together by the fire. Yes, fire was the element missing from the constellation of my consciousness. Barkas and I sat and stared into the fire as we had done countless times before, but this time, I looked into the flames with a longing: I wanted to connect with its elemental energy.

Change, constant change, transformation, and transition. That was the fire's essence. I cried as I watched the memories of my life being transformed and consumed in the fire—all feeling of their substance passing away. The significance

of my loves and my disappointments evaporated into nothingness. My history ceased to matter. Everything was transitory. There was nothing to hold onto—nothing except the present moment.

Barkas looked at me with tears in his eyes. I didn't want to ask him about it. No words could have passed between us. But during our ceremonial meal, Barkas did present me with a gift. It was a knife with a golden hue, a very handy tool for countless everyday tasks. And he told me that this was the end of my training.

Now, right here in the middle of the ocean, I feel like I have just emerged from that cave once again—just like I have squeezed through a narrow opening and emerged into a world of abundant light. My heart is so full. And like looking into the fire that day with Barkas, I know that a passing has occurred. I understand that there is a death in every birth. My old self that was filled with familiar habits and accustomed ways has passed away. One by one, the memories of my life have passed before my eyes only to be released into the vast emptiness of the sea and the sky.

My perception stretches out to embrace everything that surrounds me. It happens without my having thought of it. It happens without any effort on my part. My dear friends move so close to me: I am the ocean, and I am the sky. I can feel them, and through them I can feel the whole of the Earth. My consciousness is joined in the Earth's matrix. There is no word for this: trans-consciousness? pan-consciousness? I am the love that binds the Earth together, and I am power that brings forth life. I am Isis and Osiris reborn.

The never-ending story of endings giving rise to beginnings has chased itself through the hallways of time, but this day, this day is a new beginning for the Earth. This newformed world demands something new of me, a change in my consciousness. I was a navigator of the Earth's great seas, and now I turn my skills toward navigating this new reality. The sound of that vibration has almost faded away. Has it ceased, or am I simply accustomed to its sound? Is the stillness returning, or have I become a part of the song?

The song of the Earth is illuminating my heart. It is a love song to living as part of the Earth. I have never felt so completely in love with the Earth. I feel like a twig on a giant tree being shaken by something much greater than myself.

I am floating above the sea. The air sustains me. My body has taken on a crystalline form. I look up to the sky, and I see the sacred geometry in the clouds. I look down to the water, and I recognize the sacred geometry in the waves. Everything has changed in the very essence of its nature. My boat is gone, dissolved into the sea, consumed just like other things that were meant to pass.