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For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord,
as the waters cover the sea. (Isa. 11:9)

Still, I have seen the sea oats swaying on the shore
and all the gulls and pipers in ballet,
while the surf's chant sets my thoughts adrift
on paper boats that dance
among the nets of kelp, to explore
the tide pools' scuttling secrets. But the bay,
that jealous heiress, conceals her gift
beneath the hourglass sands that shift
and undermine my balance.

Here, where cats watch owl-eyed and keep
colonies in caves cut deep by tickling tide,
I pause. The jasmine lie like fallen stars.
Whitecaps mock the sails of foundered ships;
in ebb's hiss I hear Prufrock's mermaids hushing me to sleep.
There, where Catalina shimmers, a brooch pinned to the wide
lapel of Earth, I search. Does it lie beached on sandbars,
pirate-plundered in forgotten wars,
or full-fathom-five sealed on coral lips?

At last I toss my questions to the sea.
If you could tell me what I long to know—
If you could whisper truths unfathomed; and I
in some lightning tongue
could read your testimony:
how you were formed and where your currents flow;
what makes your tempests blow; and why,
on the canvas of your twilight sky,
the colors of eternal life are flung.

—Karen Todd

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