

Today the weather patterns are reversed, winds are from the south. Grey haze drifts over the island from Kilauea volcano, hundreds of miles away on the Big Island SE of us. After clear, cold mornings in which the green cloaking the West Maui ridges was as sharp as if those ridges were freshly cut and draped in new velvet, the wind has swung around and suddenly it feels like summer again. This morning is calm and warm. The fans are back on. The blankets are off. A respite, for those of us who are no enthusiasts of winter and who would view chestnuts roasting on an open fire as part and parcel of prison or purgatory.

I am at the beach, here on the north shore. In the last month the waves have grown larger, more unruly, and the water temperature has dropped to the point where I no longer even feel tempted to get completely in, settling instead for kicking around in the froth of the waves while I walk. The ocean had taken on its winter personality, green waves roaring up the golden sand and breaking madcap everywhere, tempting no-one but the bodyboarders, and the surfers on really big days. The NE trade winds pushed and pulled the waves as well as the walkers on the shore, stinging us with flying sand and staking a claim to the season. Swimming seemed like a dream that I had once.

But today summer has given us a little something to remember her by.

I can't believe my eyes, this is better than Christmas morning. The ocean is flat, powder-blue with suspended sand near the shore and a soft greenblue beyond that. There is no wind except a little whisper in the tops of the ironwood trees. I don't quite know what to do with myself. Jump around for joy? Run in and out of the water like a little kid? I settle for an indulgent stroll down the double curve of the long beach, heading for the end of the beach that is protected by an arm of reef. During the winter it is the only place semi-protected from the waves, the only remotely calm water. Still, during the winter I get in maybe to the knees, marveling at the hardy souls who swim laps in the frigid green "pool", dodging floating seaweed shoved over onto their swimcaps by the massive waves breaking on the outer reef wall.

However, today there are gifts strewn about by some goddess, clearly.

The pool is a slice of lightest green crystal. Water moves in it, eddying around the boulders half-enrobed in gold sand. It's low tide, as well, so the

protecting wall of reef is exposed, looking ruffled and fuzzy with seaweeds and urchins. Seabirds peruse the exposed reef, tweezing breakfast from it and sometimes just standing, looking out to sea. Beyond the reef, sleek dark blue curls and tubes roll lazily in and don't break so much as sigh down on the reef wall, like they've been gone for so long and are just happy to get home and rest. When they do fold over onto the reef, there's a shallow sheet of foam that shushes through the seaweeds and urchins, and drapes into the pool like a veil.

As if I could resist this. I'm in.

The water is cool, but there's none of the usual wind and so I know I'll forget the coolness in a bit, as soon as I lose track of being human and start becoming the other thing I am. I stroke out to the reef wall, wanting to see that purple and green rumpliness up close, see if I recognize anyone living in there, looking for crabs and anemones, mollusks and echinoderms. A wave slips over the reef wall, water cascading inches in front of my eyes. A slow current moves me along the length of the reef toward the open end of the pool. I play otter, laying on my back and inspecting my toes. Too much time in shoes. The seabirds shift away with a twee twee twee of warning to their brethren—I could be a predator, laying low in the water like this, letting the current pull me along. I duck down to feel what it's like to have the ocean enclose my head, feel my hair streaming, lifted. With eyes open it's all light green under there, quiet and...full. Fuller than air is full. I grab a handful of sandy bottom, try to stand on my hands, and feel the current, slow but sure, tip me over before I can get my balance. When I surface again I am farther down the beach than I thought, which is fine. I do my blessing ritual, cupping seawater in my hands and dumping it on my head once, twice, three times—for the ocean goddess, for the ocean, for the water. I go to the bottom again, grab a boulder and become an underwater kite. Little tufts of seaweed drift by. I want gills.

In a little while I'll be getting cold and it will be time to rise from the light green liquid crystal like the land mammal I am, dry off in the sun, go find something for breakfast. It's easier for the seabirds. But for now I turn over and regard the sky, lifting my feet off the bottom and letting the ocean take everything I am.