

*The Animals Know*

On a humid and purple-skied night in September, Lucy dreamed, as she often did, of the moon turning slowly from right to left across the sky. Below, the ocean shuddered, influenced by the moon, and heaved a great sigh turning its shoulders with the forceful and precise lethargy of a sleepwalker. Lucy tried, in her dream, to resist the unstoppable rolling of the ocean as it swelled into a massive, round behemoth and collapsed over the seaside cliffs to continue pouring, eyes closed, uphill, carrying with it branches, shells, feathers, mud and pebbles, fish, ants, a dog, drowned spiders, cars, fences, mailboxes, and trees, engulfing everything human and familiar in its unfathomable mass of foam. Geese and flying insects fled like the world leaving all at once, off into the east and up away from the wave. Its broad, muddy hands continued in their wild, groping, slapping searching, wrapping around and gently shaking Lucy's home. As dirty water poured in through the warped wooden window panes, the quaking rippled in waves throughout the house so that the once-white siding lifted and ruffled like the feathers of an indignant and massive bird crying into the night so fiercely that it forced open Lucy's eyes and reverberated through the sky for several seconds after all the other sounds of the dream had stopped.

Those echoes faded into the silence of her waking world so subtly, and she found herself damp with sweat in her bed, where she dreamt she had been, that for several seconds Lucy could in no way confirm that she had actually awoken. She stepped cautiously onto the carpet, afraid it would give way below her, and looked out the window. From her room on the second story Lucy could see every quiet house and car, and the ocean, flat and stationary, all the way back to the horizon. Illuminated in the blue light of the waning gibbous moon, Lucy felt she was the only creature awake within the range of her vision.

Her own room was as she had arranged it. Dolls, books, photographs, and trophies from her trips to the beach remained silently atop her dresser, pinned to the wall, laid out across her windowsill. After her eyes readjusted to the darkness Lucy noticed that in a far corner of her room, a vase of wildflowers that she had collected the previous week had fallen to the carpet and

was leaking amber colored water onto the floor. Only then did she realize she had not taken a breath since waking, for fear of disturbing the silence. She gathered the flowers from their puddle and returned them shakily to the vase on her desk. As the red warmth of sleep returned to the edges of her body she suppressed thoughts of the cataclysmic earthquake that she knew, with the instinctual certainty of an animal, lay in her future. Stepping softly across the creaking hallway to the bathroom, she saw a light was on under her parents' bedroom door and heard the soft cooing of their muffled voices. She decided to ask them in the morning if they had felt any tremors in the night.

But when the morning came, the previous night's disturbance was forgotten, replaced in Lucy's mind by a new oddity. In fact, Lucy's father, Sherm, had been the first to notice the portent of a change to come. It began in the very tip of his nose, a kind of numb, stiffness that soon spread through his nostrils, up between his eyes, and down into his upper lip. The sensation of rigidity was most apparent at times of extreme facial deformation. For instance, in exchanging funny faces with his son or in the moments of contortion before a sneeze.

Maggie, his wife, was the second to notice, when they rubbed their noses together, as they would do, tenderly, in the dark, in the warmth of one another's arms.

"You feel scaly," she whispered.

"I can't really feel you at all," said Sherm.

They were talking, of course, about each other's noses.

It was not until a plastic deformation became visibly apparent that Lucy, his daughter, took notice. She stared at him intently over breakfast, unsure if he had always looked this way, and she was only now noticing, or if it was, in fact, a new development. With all of the careful tact she could muster, she asked, "What's wrong with your face?"

"Lucy!" her mother scolded.

Her father winked at her, "hey, I think I'm kinda pretty lookin'. And I think, my lovely wife might be inclined to agree." He wrapped his arms around Maggie's unresponsive shoulders.

“There’s nothing wrong with your father’s face.” Lucy side-eyed her mother skeptically until she admitted, “We have an appointment to see a doctor tomorrow afternoon. But I’m sure it’s nothing.”

Lucy looked back at her father, nonchalantly stirring his eggs. “It’s sort of pointy,” she said, “It looks sort of like you’re growing—”

“A beak!” her little brother, Leo, interrupted “Dad, you’re growing a beak!”

“I guess it is kind of like a beak, now that you mention it,” he paused. “Does that mean, that when I kiss mom, I technically peck her?” He turned to his wife. “Would you rather I peck you with my kisser, or I kiss you with my pecker?”

She didn’t look at him. “I don’t like that joke. You don’t have a beak.”

Whenever she got a chance, Lucy liked to discretely slip away from the stress of home to the little beach down the road. It was a small and rather pebbly beach at the edge of a rather small town, and especially since summer had definitively ended and the wind blew cold and damp, there were rarely many people. The occasional dog walker or beach yogi was easily avoided. She imagined them washed away in a wave.

Lucy liked the cold air. She usually wore shorts and a thin jacket so she could feel it when the wind blew through. She liked watching seagulls chasing after crabs and bugs, watching pelicans skim the peaks of the little gray waves, exploring rocks and tide pools, finding interesting shells or pieces of tortured driftwood. There was a rhythm to the ocean, something reassuring in the constant wash of white noise, and Lucy liked to be sure that everything remained in its proper place.

This day in particular, Lucy walked north along the shore until the beach sloped up into a shallow, grassy hill. On the west side of the hill was an abrupt cliff, which, during high tide, faced a constant bombardment of waves, but when the tide was low, as it was when Lucy found it on this day, a pathway opened up between the cliff and the sea where many of the mundane

treasures of the ocean which so fascinated Lucy could be discovered in the comfort of perfect isolation.

The previous night a section of the cliff face about twenty feet across and fifteen deep had collapsed and washed out into the sea. Lucy was shocked at the change. She recalled suddenly the tremor from the night before that she had, by that time, convinced herself was no more than the creation of her paranoid imagination.

Stepping cautiously into the indentation, she examined the newly revealed faces of the cliff wall, and remembered her dream. Along the back wall, facing out toward the ocean, was a thick vein of red earth. Curious about the brilliance of its color, she carefully removed a pinch, and squishing it between her fingers, found it to be a stiff, but perfectly malleable, red clay. She looked up the cliff face before her, and deciding it was stable, scooped a whole handful of the clay from the wall. There, with only the roar of the ocean for company, she sat, and played in a way she hadn't done for years, forming creatures and people from the clay, thoughtless as a child.

Only when she feared that the incoming tide might hinder her return home did she place her creations back against the wall, where they would be safe from incoming waves, and set back toward her home, surprised that the gray sky was already beginning to darken.

The next day, Lucy was dragged by her mother to the doctor's office for her father's appointment. Leo was excitable and altogether unaffected by the sense of dread that seemed to spread like black tree branches from within Maggie, penetrating invisibly into her daughter through her shoulders and scalp. Lucy whispered at Leo *shut up, shut up, shut your little mouth you idiot*, but he continued to bubble light-heartedly in such a way that Lucy was certain irritated everyone in the waiting room. When he climbed up onto a chair and started singing, Lucy ripped him down and smacked him and dragged him to a corner of the room. "Sit down and shut up and read this. You're bothering everybody in here."

Leo quickly became engrossed in a book of pictures of ships in bottles, buttons, fossils, and glowing marbles. Lucy tried to distract herself by reading magazines but saw only prophecies of disaster, falling in black and white from the delicate pages. She found it easier to look at the bloated albino catfish, which alone occupied a full two-fifths of the 50-gallon aquarium that divided the waiting room in half. Lucy felt that the fish had not always been so large and singular, but it drew her gaze with its filmy, blind eyes and pulsing, flaky, tumors so she could not recall any details about the myriad colorful tropical fish that had once kept it company, before one by one they disappeared, and the catfish continued to swell well beyond anyone's expectation. The receptionists, charged with its upkeep, refused to replace its food when it ran out, but still the lone fish had continued to grow until it could no longer turn around in its tank. Suddenly, through the water, Lucy thought she saw a face she recognized, a boy she knew from school, Damon. She ducked down and hid her nose in the first magazine she could grab and stayed frozen in that position for several minutes until he came around the corner with a large woman, who must have been his mother, and left the office.

Maggie was silent throughout the appointment. The doctor only confirmed for them what they already knew. Lucy's father was indeed growing a beak on his face. "It looks perfectly healthy as far as I can tell," the doctor said. "If you have any concerns, I could refer you to a veterinary specialist."

"I think I'll be alright," Sherm replied. "Thank you, doctor!"

But the beak continued growing longer, and sharper, and soon the changing shape of his mouth began to affect Lucy's father's ability to speak. Other strange things began to happen to him as well. For one thing, he stayed outside more, not seeming to care or notice if it was raining or cold. Before long, he began compulsively collecting sticks and long grass. He couldn't explain why. He just liked it.

Maggie became increasingly quiet and withdrawn through this period. She began finding feathers around the house, in bed, or in Sherm's laundry. She wasn't sure, but it seemed that his

shirt collars were fitting looser and he was certainly losing weight. One day after seeing him eat a frog in the front yard, she cried into her pillow for forty-five minutes.

Lucy escaped to her creative sanctuary by the sea whenever she was able.

One day, sitting in the dull brown fluorescent hum of a half-lit history classroom, Lucy felt her chair suddenly begin to vibrate violently. Believing that her shifting continent had at last run aground on the Juan de Fuca plate, and everything human in her life would soon be shaken to dust and buried beneath the swell of the great grey Pacific, for a moment, living in the world of terror which she anticipated would sweep invincibly in from the ocean at any moment, Lucy screamed.

Her classmates raised their heads from their desks and looked at her briefly before returning to their own conversations. Red faced, Lucy turned and noticed a pair of large hands gripping the back of her chair, and then the grinning face to which they belonged.

“What do you want, Damon?” She still hadn’t caught her breath.

“Hey Honey.” He winked at her. “So I guess you’re into Men’s Fitness, huh?”

Lucy scowled at him, confused.

“You like those guys with the six pack abs?”

“What are you talking about?”

“I saw you reading it the other day at the doctor’s. You go to Doctor Toriyama?”

“No.” Lucy tried to turn away from him, but he followed her gaze, smiling. Lucy glanced to her teacher, Ms. Lois, who was legally blind and staring at a light bulb through the 20-inch reading lens that leaned on her desk, distantly mouthing the gauzy lines of a Latin romance.

Damon stretched his long thin arm to grip the edge of Lucy’s desk. His wide shirtsleeve hung in front of her face. “I had to go in for a physical.” He raised one eyebrow. “You know that Doctor Toriyama is one of those girl doctors.”

Lucy flared her nostrils. Damon’s body blocked the light from the windows.

“She said I had the biggest one she’d ever seen.”

“God.” Lucy tried again to turn away but found more of Damon wherever she looked.

“Would you shut up please?”

“Hey, do you got a boy doctor or a girl doctor?”

“I was just there waiting for my dad.” Lucy retreated into her shadow, feeling as though she was being enveloped slowly in the membranous wings of a massive bat as Damon went on asking about her medical history and offering his own professional services, until, overcome by a claustrophobic panic, she lashed out and bit his hand, still gripping the back of her chair, and squeezed with an unconscious and black fury until a thin fountain of blood erupted from a ruptured vessel between his first two knuckles. Damon shouted obscenities and ripped himself away, and as the red faded from her eyes Lucy saw her classmates staring, and Ms. Lois slowly turning and donning the half-inch thick spectacles that made her look like a turtle, deeply disappointed at being pulled away from her fantasies of silk shirts blowing in the warm winds of a tropical sea.

Lucy sobbed quietly all the way to the office where she stayed the rest of the day. She refused to take the bus, So Mrs. Olstadt, a warm, soft pink woman who loved kids, (having none of her own), and worked in the office as an administrator, made her call her parents for a ride.

When they never showed up, Mrs. Olstadt decided to take her. She apologized for her car, which was silver with black leather lining, and literally cleaner than any vehicle that Lucy had ever sat in. Lucy assumed she bought it because she didn't want to disappoint the salesman.

Mrs. Olstadt hummed a cheerful tune as she drove, as though it might somehow help Lucy forget why she was with her, going home at 4:30 instead of 2:30 like everyone else. That was the type of nice she was.

She stopped humming and unconsciously reached to turn down the radio. “Lucy...”

Lucy looked at her.

Mrs. Olstadt opened her mouth and breathed in a thought. “Is everything ok at home?”

“Yeah.” Lucy wasn't really looking at her. “Yeah it's alright.”

Mrs. Olstadt went on, “Because I heard...well. I just want you to know that if you need anything, or if you ever need a place to stay, my door is open.”

Lucy pointed out which house was hers. When she climbed out of the car she said, “You don’t have to worry about me or my family, Mrs. Olstadt. I just needed some time to cool off. You probably know as well as anyone. Sometimes it’s just hard to be a teenager.”

Mrs. Olstadt smiled sweetly with her mouth closed.

“...But really, I’m alright.”

“Ok, honey.”

“Well, so long.” Lucy said reassuringly. “I’ll see you at the school.”

“Ok honey. Take care.”

Lucy closed the door and watched Mrs. Olstadt drive half-heartedly away.

Then she turned to her house, walked up to the door, and pulled it open, and there she stood, in the open doorway, trying to figure out what it was that felt strange.

The unwashed dishes were certainly not unusual, nor was the lamp, still on, leaning against the wall, or the chairs all scattered away from the table. Frankly, Lucy wasn’t surprised either to see her brother squatting shirtless on the dining room table eating Cheerios without a spoon.

Stranger was the noise coming from upstairs, a sound like heavy breathing and like something hard grinding against a wall. She heard her mother cry out, “Sherm! Oh God Sherm. Stop!” There was a sound like a jar of change falling and then the slap of bare feet walking across the floor and starting down the stairs.

The stairway was situated such that, as her father descended, Lucy saw first his bare feet and calves through the rails. She was soon shocked to find that he had forgotten to dress himself. Leo looked on from the table in quiet interest. Before her father’s shoulders passed into her line of sight, Lucy’s mother grabbed him by the arm tried to yank him back up the stairs.

“For God’s sake Sherm! The children are here! Ow! Stop that! Ow!”

Sherm broke free of his wife and she fell backward onto the stairs. He took another step down and Lucy expected his head to appear, but instead there was at least a foot of extra neck, arching in a delicate curve, feathered in gray. He continued down the stairs and Lucy saw that the change had spread over the entirety of his head, and was now continuing further down. He briefly directed his small black eyes toward his daughter with animal indifference before proceeding to the kitchen. Leo hopped off the table and walked toward Lucy, eyeing his father cautiously.

“I’m so sorry,” Maggie said, in tears, walking toward Lucy in the open doorway. Lucy noticed that her mother was wearing oven mitts. She raised one up to stem the heavy flow of tears streaming from her eyes. Both oven mitts were dripping wet.

Sherm was trying to open the refrigerator, stabbing his long sharp beak into the magnetic seal, hands tucked under his ribs.

“Mom...” Lucy believed her mother had been crying constantly since she saw her last that morning. A deposit of salt was beginning to crystalize on her face.

“It’s ok honey.” Maggie moved still closer to her daughter, hands outstretched and heavy.

Sherm looked at Lucy, or rather, past her, through the open door and began to run. “Stop him!” Maggie shrieked. “Don’t let him get outside!” Leo leapt onto the couch in excitement.

Lucy jumped back onto the porch, pulling the door closed behind her. She heard the sound of her father’s beak scratching against the door, and tapping at the knob.

She walked without looking or thinking, gripping the straps of her backpack with white knuckles, westward down the road that led to the beach.

She kicked through the water that led to her sanctuary, hidden in the cliff face, disregarding the position of the moon and the incoming tide. Alone, she screamed until she was red in the face. She walked in circles, pulled her hair, hyperventilated, and shook her hands so

hard her fingernails grew a quarter of an inch. She kicked the water out of a tide pool, which was satisfying, but it soon filtered back in. She clutched a sculpture she had made that looked like a man and threw it down to drown it in a shallow pool where it landed heavily and turned the water a cloudy brown.

Breathing through her nostrils, she looked down at her creation, and her wrath was slowly replaced with sympathy. She leaned over the doll, bent and dissolving little by little in the water. She reached both hands delicately down and touched the soft surface of her sculpture with the tips of her fingers, carefully lifting it out of the pool. She cradled it in her hands and smoothed over the cracks that had formed.

Lucy became so engrossed in this activity that she didn't notice the water coming into her sanctuary until a wave reached up to where she sat and soaked the seat of her shorts. She noticed then how cold she was, and how dark it had grown. Out in the waves, in the moonlight, she saw a whale breach and blow water into the sky. She replaced her repaired sculpture back against the cliff wall with the others where it would hopefully be able to dry and marched through the now waist-high waves toward her home, resolved to be more helpful.

But when she got there, she found that her mother had already managed to get her father into a robe. There was a pile of clean dishes drying on the counter and soup warming on the stove. Her mother smiled tiredly at her. "I made an appointment for tomorrow for Dad. I know it's a school day, but I think that you should come with us."

Lucy smiled back at her mother with her mouth closed. Her mother had taken off the oven mitts, and Lucy noticed that her hands up through her wrists had turned entirely to stone.

The veterinarian identified Lucy's father's head and neck as those of a blue heron. "I have seen a few other cases similar to this, lately, a red breasted robin, a crow, a few small mammals...but this is my first Heron!" She told them he seemed like a perfectly healthy bird, and recommended a diet of fish, and other small, amphibious wildlife. She told them where they

could get a large kennel to contain him when he got rambunctious and to call if they ran into any specific problems.

While Lucy was busy securing a harness around her father's torso to guide him home, Maggie spoke privately with the vet. Lucy couldn't hear what her mother said, but the vet replied, "I can't say for sure...If you like, I could refer you to a geologist."

After that day, Lucy's mother cried more and more, and it became increasingly difficult for her to move as the calcification spread through her arms and legs and into her body. Lucy's brother, Leo, of course, was no help. He was far too immature to grasp the gravity of the situation and seemed to be growing dumber every day.

Lucy feared to approach her father as she would fear a wild animal, but only she was capable of feeding him. She would swing a whole fish, delicately, from the end of its tail, touching as little of it as possible, through the bars of his cage. It never ceased to turn her stomach seeing her father open his mouth impossibly wide to swallow whole a fish twice the size of his own head. These moments of revulsion and horror, did, however, have the singular benefit of providing Lucy with a distraction from the visions of the rising sea that pulled at the edges of her bones at all other times.

After a full cycle of the moon had come and gone, one evening, Lucy heard a knock at the front door. She opened it to find a nervous looking Mrs. Olstadt.

"Lucy! Hi!"

"Hello Mrs. Olstadt."

"I just wanted to stop by because, well I haven't seen you at school, and I wanted to check in and make sure everything is ok. I hope you don't mind."

Lucy looked at her, tired.

"I was here earlier, but no one answered the door."

"I must have been down at the beach when you came by."

“Well do you mind if I step in for a moment?” she asked, poking her way in through the door. “Are your parents here?” But before the words left her lips, she knew it was a moot point.

The home was in shambles. Dirty and broken dishes, garbage, food scraps, and feathers piled up on the counters, tabletop, and floor. The air was heavy with the unmistakable odor of animal waste. At that moment, an almost unrecognizable Leo was removing the stuffing from a couch cushion. There were slashes across the wallpaper, and several light bulbs needed to be replaced. In the corner of the living room, she saw a cage housing a rather large, disheveled looking heron with the naked and disproportionately huge legs of an adult man. From upstairs, Mrs. Olstadt thought she heard moaning and the dragging of something rough and heavy across the floorboards; a steady stream of water cascaded down the stairs.

Mrs. Olstadt did her best to look positive. “Lucy, would you like to come over maybe for a little while? You can bring your brother too.” She looked again at Leo by the couch. “I mean, your dog.”

Lucy said, “Ok. Let me grab some things.”

She ran upstairs to her bedroom. Her vase of wildflowers had fallen once again, and when Lucy tried to right it, she found that the flowers had taken root in the carpet. She left them, indiscriminately stuffing clothes into her backpack before splashing swiftly out into the hallway and down the stairs. She didn’t want her mother to know she was leaving, although in her current state it seemed unlikely she would even notice. “Ok. I think I’m ready.”

“Do we need food for...” Mrs. Olstadt pointed at Leo.

“He’ll eat anything. Come on Leo!”

The last thing Lucy did before leaving her house was undo the clasp that held closed her father’s kennel.

Mrs. Olstadt lived in the same neighborhood as Lucy, and knew exactly how to get to her house, but for some reason, when she thought she was going the right way, she would find that the road led only to a stand of pines. “That’s strange,” she said. “Did I take a wrong turn?”

Eventually, through a circuitous route, which she didn't think she could repeat, Mrs. Olstadt was able to navigate to her driveway. "You know," she said, "I have never seen so many animals out and about." And indeed there had been many animals walking in the streets, between houses, through the trees: deer, rabbits, raccoons, opossums, frogs, blackbirds, robins, geese, a skunk, and a stellar jay, to name a few. They exited the car, and she led Lucy and Leo into her home.

Mrs. Olstadt's house was like her, clean and tidy, warm and inviting, and smelling strongly of cinnamon. Lucy was so relieved to be there; she wanted to take her shoes off and spread out on the soft, clean carpet. She thought she could sleep immediately. "Mrs. Olstadt, where should I put my things?"

"You should call me Caroline. When we're here. At school probably still Mrs. Olstadt." She hadn't really answered Lucy's question, but turned immediately to the cupboard, taking down a loaf of white bread. She reached for a can of tuna fish at the top shelf, and in her skirt and heels, climbed up onto the counter to retrieve it.

"Mrs. Olstadt?" Lucy noticed that among the many decorations on the walls, there were no photos. "Is your husband home?"

But Mrs. Olstadt apparently didn't hear her. She was kneeling on the counter, trying to pry open the can of tuna fish with her hands, which were becoming every moment more and more like the paws of a bobcat.

Then Lucy understood, and, with sadness, guided her brother back out the front door and into the growing forest.

Lucy wanted to find her way down to the water to see if her sanctuary was intact. She hoped that there everything would feel more normal. But in the darkness, in a wild forest that she didn't recognize, she couldn't find her way. She and Leo eventually curled up together beneath the roots of a tree, and there, fell asleep.

That night as she slept on the forest floor, Lucy dreamed again of the moon. Through the trees, it came down to her, illuminating in blue and silver light every detail of the bark, of

every pine needle, leaf, and blade of grass. Lucy floated easily to her feet in the light. The moon was perfectly stationary before her in the air; the axis around which all motion occurred. She waited an indeterminable time for something to happen until tangibly in the silence she came to know that the moon was waiting for her to speak. And so with the disembodied voice of a dreamer she asked, "Why are these things happening? Why are you doing this to me?" But the moon ignored her pleas and circled behind her in silence. Lucy turned and was taken aback to see that the moon had become a beautiful young man with startling eyes, simultaneously tender and without mercy. His skin oscillated imperceptibly between the translucent glow of a pearl and an impenetrable velvet black. His hair floated about his head, radiating gently in all directions.

Even in her dream, Lucy was proud. "Why don't you fuck off and bother someone else?" she said. But the moon waved his arm and ten thousand fish like stars appeared from the darkness behind him and swept past Lucy in a torrent. It was then she realized that she and the entire forest were fully submerged in clear blue water. "Why do you antagonize me like this?" Lucy cried out, her tears dissolving into the water around her. "I don't understand."

And the moon, barely parting his lips, in a voice that was dry and ancient as solitude spoke the only words he was ever heard to say. "There is no understanding."

Somewhere in the underwater forest an owl shook its feathers. Frogs sang the songs of their love, and a nocturnal flower blossomed then died, eaten by larvae. Lucy pushed toward the moon for an answer, and although she could feel his cool breath across her neck, she failed to close any distance. A second time, she reached out in desperation, and though he seemed close enough to touch, her fingers fell short by miles. She abandoned her feet and leapt towards him, kicking lithely through the darkness, but the faster she swam, the further away he seemed, behind the black trees, beyond the surface of the water, replaced finally in a fixed position in the sky, and though he was beyond her reach she continued swimming faster and faster, compelled onward now, less by desperation and fury than by a growing fascination with the mechanics of her own locomotion. She swam effortlessly, turned toward the surface, and parting her lips

breached the upper boundary of the water to drink in 200 gallons of the cool light, inflating steadily and swiftly in comfort, she heard briefly the bracing frequencies of this upper atmosphere's harsh wash of waves and wind and crying gulls, before turning like a wheel forward, breaking the sensual glittering of the surface against her neck and the high ridge riding atop her back and down to the end of her tail, back toward the world of quietness and darkness, to the soft low rumble of the stronger, slower wind, to chase the silver racing salmon, rushing rapidly toward the realization of the power of her body.

Lucy awoke to the sound of a snap and shudder that ran through her hair and down the ends of her fingers and toes. The sun had not yet risen, but the portents of its coming were already beginning to cast their lights upon the eastern sky through the trees. Leo had wandered off, but Lucy was sure that he would be ok. He had been prepared for this world.

To the west, Lucy heard a sound like running water. Following it, through the trees, she soon found herself at the source of a spring. The water seemed to be pouring from the heart of an enormous boulder. On its top, a mass of sticks and twigs were arranged into a nest and sleeping inside, head tucked under a wing, a great blue heron.

Brilliant light of many colors radiated from the crystalline stream that poured out of the rock, and many salmon fry leapt flashing silver in the early morning. Lucy followed this westward stream of light, downhill and through the forest toward the soft blanket of darkness surrendering itself slowly to the vast Pacific. And no sooner had she set her eyes on the black horizon than the great change of the world from the present to the future came rolling in from the ocean, and all at once the sleeping forest came to life.