

" Across the Sea "

A tiny turtle head emerged from the center of a wet brown egg, heaped among countless others on warm sand. Minute cracks spread along the surface of the creature's confines as she feebly pecked an escape route, her weak turtle-eyes drinking in the world that waited beyond. Summoning one final shred of energy, she tumbled onto the dark beach, the grainy texture of sand greeting her flippers for the first time. Pale moonlight leaked slowly into her vision, leaving her to lurch frantically across the foreign terrain. A parade of tiny shells borne on scaly legs skittered across the sand beside her, a magnetic pull drawing her and countless siblings towards the sea. She struggled against the shifting topography, pointed unswervingly, inexorably, towards the rushing waves.

A winged beast swept suddenly down upon the marching reptiles, flapping white wings as it snatched up a brother or sister. The baby turtle scampered ahead, the desire to survive welling up in a searing flash. Just before her, the shore met the sea. The howl of ocean and stench of brine assaulted her infantile senses, halting her progression for an instant before instinct leapt up, propelling her forward. Kicking, swimming at last, she floated helplessly out into the water, freed from the seagull's shadow as she whirled down beneath the surface. Wiggling into deeper water, the murk of spiraling sand faded to reveal indigo blue as she kicked ceaselessly out to open ocean. Daylight filtered in slowly with dawn, spreading watercolor rays of cerulean and sapphire across the endless liquid expanse. The turtle marveled at crabs scuttling nervously beneath her, at broad schools of jewel-bright fish swerving in unison, at soft, tangled strands of seaweed waving lazily in the current. She and her companions swam onward, surveying new

sights in passing, never pondering their route but carrying it within, encoded in sacred strands of DNA.

The peace of their advance ended as ominous shadows loomed once more. The baby turtle caught sight of a great eye staring from rubber flesh, swinging to and fro above the traveling brood, deliberating the victims of its pending strike. The monster attacked in a violent fury, catching up a cluster of voyagers in its great rows of sparkling teeth. The necessity of flight hurling her onward once more, the baby turtle swam desperately for concealment, weaving through forests of seaweed, hovering behind twisted leaves. Time passed, promising safety, and she journeyed on alone.

Without warning, a fierce current seized her flippers, sweeping the turtle further into the infinite deep. She flailed despondently against the crushing force, wearied limbs eventually succumbing to its invincible direction. Acting on its arcane whim, the current deposited her in another grove of seaweed. Suspended for a moment in still water, the turtle peered across the aquatic horizon. A familiar entity stirred nearby. Shafts of light pierced the water and fell upon the creature's worn brown shell, illuminated the web of scales upon its blue-green flippers. The baby turtle recognized an elder and swam forward, realizing in a blaze of genetic intuition that she had reached her ultimate destination. From the swimming swarm of her generation, the cloud of turtles venturing across the sea, she alone had arrived. She alone reached home.