



# Changing TIDES

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While living in Japan, often I would find myself gazing out of the large windows of my tiny three-room apartment that faced the China Sea. Below these windows was a narrow, traffic-congested, one lane alley that separated me from the concrete stone seawall that surrounded the island. The seawall was to protect the island's roads and building from the storm surges and the tides of the China Sea. Every day a vast sea of water would rise and fall fifteen to twenty feet with each of the rising tides in an endless rhythm that played like a methodical drum beat. Living on the second floor of the apartment building enabled me to see more than only cars, small trucks, bicycles, and the daunting cement wall. I had the good fortune to look out onto the extraordinary horizon of the continuously changing sea.

Some days the sea was peaceful and tranquil. On one such day, a light rain had been falling intermittently. In this late afternoon, vehicles made swishing sounds as they drove through the numerous puddles. The air was warm and heavy, and a slight fishy odor mixed with the smell of rain. By this time the rain had ceased, allowing the sunset to break through the billowy clouds with long fingers of orange and yellow rays. Each cloud made dark purple and blue shadows, looking as if huge bottles of ink had been poured into the turquoise sea.

In a distance, a couple of fishermen stood knee high in the water. With dexterity and ease they flung their nets out as far as they could stretch, and then quickly gathered the nets in filled with fish. The fishermen placed the fish into a basket strapped to their waists, repeating the task until their baskets were overflowing.

The clouds and the waves peacefully rolled to shore over the jagged volcanic rocks of the shoreline as the men of the sea gracefully did their work, but the China Sea could change in appearance from one moment to the next. It was always immense, colorful, and enchanting, even on days when it heaved angrily from storms. During the monstrous typhoons, the high waves driven by winds of over two hundred miles per hour, would crash against and sometimes over the heavy solid sea wall. No one would be able to harness the sea's power, for it was able to sweep over the man made concrete walls with ease. At these times the howling and whistling wind, along with the battering sea played a wild symphony of sound that reached siren intensity, which left me begging for a silence. The deafening noises could last for days, and they wearied the mind with its destructive possibilities.

Occasionally, a gust would throw fringes of the waves against my windows, sounding like stones pelting the glass. Both wind and sea would seem to assert that they could easily crush all man-made shelters from their might and fury. In the past many occupants of dwellings along the sea wall have found their belongings jettisoned out into the sea during these storms. Several times while living in this neighborhood, I saw the evidence that a wave of stormy water had crashed through someone's windows. The sea would reach in like the arm of a thief, stealing people's possessions, and sometimes taking their lives out to the depths of the turbulent waters. Of course, this danger was not known to me at the time of signing my lease.

To my amazement, experiencing these storms was simultaneously wonderful and scary. The powerful and terrifying energy unleashed during a typhoon was breathtaking. Nature shouted her proclamation that she was not to be controlled by mere mortals with their walls of safety. At those times, I wanted to beseech Mother Nature with a cry of, "Yes, let it be... whatever you want! It is yours to have and take. Even my life is in your hands!"

After the storms passed and the winds died, the sea would once again rest. Occasionally fish jumped, creating ripples that slapped against the exposed rocks at low tide. The swells lulled themselves into a state of tranquility. I would find myself uttering grateful prayers after the storms, for the sea and the wind had been merciful to me. One could not help but feel humble after witnessing the power demonstrated in these storms. In quieter times, I would recall how this same view had terrified me with its heaving strength. I regarded the placid sea with deep respect, for nature will not back away from being the 'I AM' that is within her to be.

There is something that cries out within me, affirming that I too have the same beauty as the sea and the wind. Like nature, I also have the 'I AM' within me; the force that holds the Eternal Beauty of yesterday, today, and tomorrow, and is manifested in our impermanent forms. I am a part of that Beauty, even in the rage of my passionate storms of life, and when I'm frighteningly powerful, and recklessly spontaneous in love and life.

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