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## After the Storm

Maurya Simon

Downwind, beneath the darkly swelling tides,  
where unseen mermen hide their curved flanks  
and tail-fins beneath the barnacled pier's shadow,  
I glimpse their kelp-entwined hair rising, sinking—

I'm on the cusp of my own becoming, stepping past  
twisted sea dragons of driftwood littering my path,  
and sand crabs scuttling away from me, a tiny battalion  
gone haywire en masse. A hovering gull shrieks

her noontide whistle as the fog nudges my body  
into its vaporous arms. I want to plunge deep into  
some unknown skin—male and redolent of salt—  
submerge myself into a virile carapace, be it

cuttlefish or some sailor's bulk, because my girl-  
spawned zoftig self feels lonely as an empty boat.  
My footprints efface themselves like my voice;  
the sunset's blush seeps down from the sky

into my open face. Fourteen, I'm myself and no one  
else, despite my tender, rudderless yearnings—  
and this newfound knowledge, solid as desire,  
helps me to hoist my invisible sails.

### Bio:

I'm a Southern California poet and prose writer who's published ten volumes of poetry, including my recent book, "The Wilderness, New and Selected Poems." This book was awarded the 2019 Gold Medal in Poetry from the Benjamin Franklin Independent Booksellers Association. Recent poems of mine have appeared in *The Hudson Review*, *Poetry*, *The Michigan Quarterly Review*, *American Literary Review*, *The Georgia Review*, and *The Manhattanville Review*. My book reviews, travel articles, and essays have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Westways* magazine, *The Press-Enterprise Group*, and in other periodicals.

I'm a Professor Emerita at the University of California, Riverside, and I live on Mt. Baldy, in the Angeles National Forest in the San Gabriel Mountains. (My friend and colleague, Henri Cole, thought you might enjoy my work.) Again, thank you for considering these poems.