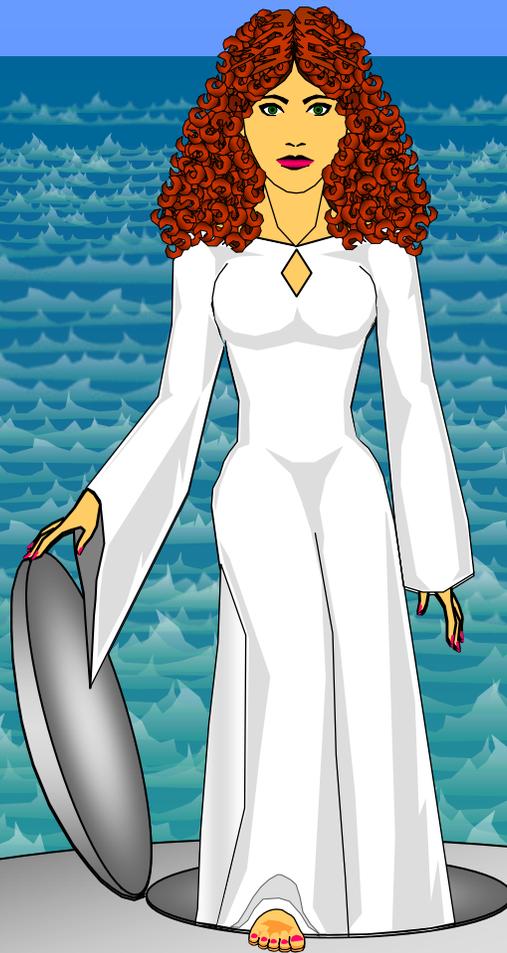


# PRESSURE

Written by Nancy Toner Weinberger



*Drawing by George Pittman*

In 2003 I was suddenly and unexpectedly admitted to the hospital to undergo a regime of five days of intravenous antibiotics. I could go into the whole story of my hospital stay, but that would bore those who've been through such experiences as well as those that haven't. What's significant is what happened to my blood pressure.

I have something doctors call, "white coat syndrome." My blood pressure is fine until I walk into the doctor's office and then it soars. I don't know why it does that and I can't feel it happening or control it. But I know it is true because I take my blood pressure at home— no problem— then walk through those office doors and it's like those carnival machines where you hit the pad with a big mallet and if you hit it hard enough the ball rises up to ding the bell at the top of a tall metal column.

So guess what happened to my blood pressure at the hospital? Right-o. Sky high. The whole five days. I resisted the attending physician's anxious urgings to take medication as I'd had a previous bout with high blood pressure in my life when I went through menopause and it seemed each medication the doctor prescribed made me sicker, rather than better. I had side effects that left the doc with a look of suspicious disbelief on her face. Finally, menopause completed and all by itself my blood pressure returned to normal.

So naturally I just waved away the idea of taking blood pressure medication in the hospital. But what happened was my blood pressure got stuck. I came home and it didn't go down. It stayed up there around 180/100. Not good. I meditated. I cut out all salt and prepared foods. I took a couple of bottles of Chinese herbal caps for lowering BP. I bought a biofeedback machine called the Resperate® and used it every day. I got cranial sacral therapy and Trager® and energy work. I walked two miles every morning. I looked up high blood pressure in Louise Hay and worked on my family relations and my attitudes and beliefs and suppressed emotions. Nothing was getting through to the deep parts of my brain that regulated blood pressure. It firmly remained at 180/100 or thereabouts. I was getting desperate. I did NOT want to go through the misery of trying medication after medication, feeling sick and miserable and then forced forever to take a pill every day. Or else.

Finally, one night as I was getting ready for sleep, I felt so worn out with the whole situation, I was at the end of my rope. I'd asked for help before, but I asked again, "Higher Self, please help me." In my mind's eye my beautiful higher self brushed the hair from my forehead as if I were a small child being comforted before sleep. I let myself just rest in her love, held in her imaginary arms, as I drifted off. And there in that magical slumberland a dream began.

The next morning I awakened still in the dream. The dream was crystal clear, eerily real, and still continuing even though I was sitting on the edge of my bed, awake. Unlike other night dreams, this one did not fade from consciousness, but remained, like a movie paused and ready to play for my viewing pleasure should I so desire. Over the next nine days the dream continued to unfold. I might be sitting quietly and suddenly I would realize it had started up where it left off, as if I was being told a tale and the teller of the tale had stopped to go off and returned now to continue the telling. This amazing holographic tale was multi-sensual. I could vividly see; I could taste and touch and smell and feel deeply everything that was happening. I was living the dream, experiencing the vision, journeying in trance.

And this is the tale I now share with you.

### *The Bathysphere*

I leaned out, body poised with my waist pressed against the hard metal rim of the hatch, peering across the vast expanse of ocean. In every direction to every horizon there was choppy sea. The day was overcast, so the water looked gray with little spits of white froth on the tops of the chop. The dampness and sea spray caused pieces of my voluminous springy reddish-brown hair to stick to my milky-white forehead and flushed cheeks. I reached up to brush a plastered tightly-coiled strand from my eyes. Holding on tightly, I twisted and strained in my damp cumbersome robes to see a bit of land, a bird, a raft, anything other than sea, but knew in my heart it was useless— our earth was covered with water now; the floods had taken all the land, and there was no place to go.

The oversized bathysphere was slowly sinking and soon the hatch would need to be closed and sealed if my companions and I were to gain a few hours more of survival. The sphere was made of dense metal the color of pewter, with ribs of steel to reinforce the sides against the pressure of the deep. No cable attached to the ring of the hatch, which was of no consequence since no ship existed to which to attach it. The bathysphere floated alone in the visible vastness. We were doomed to sink to the bottom of the ocean.

Although the sphere would withstand the pressures of the deep, our air would only last so long. I eased down from the hatch and gazed at the eight women frenetically punching at computer keys, frowning at big screens of crisscrossed green trajectory lines, and performing all sorts of tasks, soft robes fluttering earnestly. The stools upon which they perched, erect and attentive, were elegantly shaped and colored in muted pastels. The curved inner wall of the bathysphere shone softly with a hint of iridescence. One of the white-robed women sat upon a pull-down round of glowing ivory playing the flute, gently swaying with the lilting music reminiscent of meadows and butterflies.

There was an air of harmony, as the women moved, familiar with each other in the way members of a dance troupe might fluidly perform on a small stage. The serene flute music played against the urgency in the air, the competent measured movement and muted conversation. Each lovely face remained open, despite the strain. A small wave splashed over the hatch rim and onto the slate floor. Theo and Athena simultaneously turned their blonde heads to face me. The courageous expression on their faces, belied by sad eyes, confirmed my fear, “It is almost time now, Chloe; go back to the hatch, dear one.”

I felt a tremor move through me. “No!” I thought, “She is with me. I will trust. Panic does not serve me. I must hear Her guidance which requires my resolve. Which requires my hope.” I returned to an insecure calm.

Athena spoke to me, “There is a chance.” She gestured at the screen of green blips and traces. “With the ocean drift and if we go under at the right moment, we may, Goddess Bless, land here,” and she indicated one of the blips on the bottom of the wall-mounted screen. She began to explain,

“This, we believe, is the site of the ancient city of Neptune, said to be an underwater fantasia of buildings of many-colored coral-like formations, lit by the luminescence of algae pulsing in the sea and clinging to the structures that define this habitat. Humans lived there once.” She paused. I thought of the myths of King Neptune with his crown and trident, mermaids and mermen, and the blending of humans with the fishes to create a kingdom at the bottom of the sea. Athena continued, “The algae also produce oxygen there on the bottom of the ocean. It seems that the human inhabitants were able to breathe the oxygen-saturated seawater and survive.” Ariel glanced up from her desktop covered with scattered oceanic charts and musical scores, in attentive anticipation, and Oriann paused, suspended in mid-breath upon the flute.

Athena did not look down, though I could feel the pull of her wanting to. “We may survive. If we land there exactly. If the oxygen content is still good. If the myths are true. I can’t say how long we might last...” I could feel a wave of hope filling the spherical interior of our craft. In that suspended moment of mutual pondering, I could feel the shift, from waiting for death, to the nurturing and turning over of this possibility of survival.

Oriann contemplated, “How will I play the flute underwater?”

Theo, our engineer, looked grim, her mouth a tight line. Finally looking away, Athena said, “Without air, we won’t be able to speak either.” Almost as an afterthought she added, “Communication may be a...challenge.”

Lilith, queen of sensuality, was thinking that there would be no one else there but us, how lonely, and how the longing would never end, and of the wrinkles and pallid complexions, and what would it be like with our hair drifting about like seaweed in the currents.

Diana, the provider, was thinking about hunting fish (can one “hunt” fish?) and would we be able to leave the immediate area, and what would we drink? Or would we even need to drink? And how weird it would be to never run again.

I thought only about keeping down my panic, my fears of being trapped, of opening the hatch and all of us drowning in a flailing of arms and legs and floating white robes and tangled hair and big eyes and silent screams. Athena thought, too, of survival. Our eyes met, and I gave her a tremulous smile of support, “Let me know when it is time to close the hatch, Athena.” She nodded, as Hortense took charge of the preparations for our next to impossible venture and I headed back up the ladder to the rim.

### *The Descent*

Overwhelmed with a sensory thirst the depths of which I’d never known before, I let my eyes drink in the space of sky and sea, I inhaled the smells, absorbed the sounds of wind and sea, breathed deeply of the fresh air, and then spoke aloud to the earth I passionately loved. I let the clear ringing tones of my poet’s voice pour out the appreciation and love I felt for the elemental earth and the living earth- humankind, the animals that had roamed, the flowers and bees that made earth a home. It was an epic poem of homage to the history and beauty of our planet and our races. The cadence rose and fell, shimmering, laying upon the water and the air a poignant and glorious goodbye. As I was ending the verse the water lapped dangerously close to the edge of the rim, and without instruction, I knew it was time. I reached over and with all my strength pulled the heavy hatch up until the weight was tilted towards me and then scrambled down the ladder as with a resonant clang, the lid fell closed. To my right was the spoked metal wheel that hand over hand I turned, sealing us in to what I hoped and prayed would not be our tomb.

We could not control our trajectory; the bathysphere was at the mercy of the currents. The sparse preparations we were able to make had already been made. Waterproof packs had been secured to the inner walls of the bathysphere containing markers we hoped would work underwater for recording, and various poems, writings, drawings, musical scores and musical instruments were secured for posterity should they ever be found. Before we hit bottom (would we even land with the hatch facing away from the ocean floor?) we would eat some small honey cakes and drink a little fresh water and talk and sing, listen to music, pray together, hug and hold each other, and speak of our love for each other, speak words of encouragement. As we sank, we could see upon

the screen the blip of our progress overlaid upon the long arc of our projected journey- it was a journey of some hours, in which we would clear some underwater mountains and then sink down into a deep valley. We would have enough air, but just.

Marked with a mild thud, the landing was surprisingly soft, and without a roll. The hatch was on top at about a 30-degree angle from the perpendicular, and the ocean floor had a barely noticeable slope away from the hatch cover. We had about 15 minutes of air left. Tatiana, our biologist and friend of all things animal and plant, reviewed again the special breathing technique we must use to expel all the air from our lungs before allowing the water to flow in. She and Theo had done some sort of pressure adjustments during our decent that were going to allow us to go through this transition without being crushed. The science gave me some comfort, which was disconcerting as the whole expectation of landing in an underwater city in which we would be able to breathe water mysteriously saturated with oxygen was laughable! And how long could our lungs and all the muscles and organs of our bodies realistically continue to function in such an alien environment? What would life be like even if it were to all miraculously work out? I shivered and shut down my imagination in favor of experiencing the moments of familiar human life I had left.

It was time to let the seawater in. Ariel and Theo were to be the vanguards. The water would flow in at a measured pace and we would all float upwards, breathing to about 18 inches from the top of the container. Then take a deep breath and hold it as the last of the water came in. I would help Ariel and Theo to get the hatch door open; then the two of them would scout for the city of Neptune, if we weren't already right in it. Tatiana had explained that it was critical that we hold our breath until we were in oxygen-saturated water; if we were to breathe in the normal sea water, it would likely not be possible to fully expel it and thus we would drown, even if the breathable water was only arm's length away.

It began. Water up to my knees, we held hands. No singing so as not to waste air. Up to my waist, fighting panic. Up to my chest, surrender to the Goddess. To my chin, help! Deep breath and under. Rapid final water filling orchestrated by Theo. I was already reaching with Ariel for the hatch wheel. We turned as hard as we could, each on a side, focused. Theo had the latch at the top,

pushing. The wheel had gone as far as it could— we had to help Theo. Three of us pushing-swimming up. Focus. Intention. Together. Movement- Goddess Bless! Open! Goddess Bless!

Theo went first, grabbing one of the hastily thrown together strings of coins and stones and gems and pieces of electronic equipment we would never use again so she could control her swim and keep from floating upwards. From outside the hatch above the bathysphere opening, she gestured to come. We had to move quickly- we hadn't landed right in the city of Neptune, but it was very close. No time for awe, just swim as hard as we could for the boundary, before we were forced to expel the air we held. I swam towards the watery vision of gently pulsing light. Before me were clusters of strangely shaped structures that resembled tall buildings. The grainy pink, blue and green structures had plumes of colored light drifting off them at the edges. Brightly colored schools of fish disappeared into their oval windows and reappeared in unexpected locations. Behind me, my companions swam in a growing line of feminine bodies, ethereal in white robes, leading back to the bathysphere hatch. I saw Ariel lingering at the hatch and Hortense pulling on her forearm to get her to join the exodus.

I looked back to Neptune and there was Theo, suspended in the midst of the deserted faux-buildings. As I watched, she bent at the waist and bubbles rose from her as she began the full exhale. As I reached her I was feeling the pressure to breathe and, terrified, began my own exhale. The bubbles frothed around my face and through my hands and hair. I pressed as hard as I could till the bubbles stopped, and then spontaneously inhaled the sea water. Oh Goddess! The searing pain, the heaviness, the fear! But my body was adjusting! I was alive! I looked over at Theo. Was she moving voluntarily? Yes! Oh yes! Around me the others were pressing their exhale and breathing the sea in a great caldron of air bubbles rising around us.

As one by one we gained our equilibrium and the watery view cleared, we held hands in a circle suspended there in the middle of our new habitat. I counted: seven. Looking towards the bathysphere, Ariel floated, drowned at its mouth; she had been unable or unwilling to make the transition. And there was the body of Hortense, floating and turning in a macabre dance of death just outside the perimeter of the city. She didn't make it. Amongst we seven there was no

speaking, no crying— only anguished silence. Now and forever. I understood why Ariel chose death.

Thus began our life under the sea.

### *Neptune*

Each day was a silent dance as we explored the “buildings,” swimming in out of the oval openings and between columns of stone and compressed shell, skirting the ocean floor and the seaweed clusters and critters of the deep. The “city” perimeter, maybe ten acres, was quite clear. The light faded quickly there at the edges of our underwater prison and we saw strange dark shapes suggestive of big fish and other sea creatures that apparently were not able to venture into Neptune due to the light or the oxygen-rich atmosphere.

We communicated with gestures, and were able to call each other by finding two rocks and clacking them together. With our lungs filled with water, we needed very little weight to keep us down beneath the top of the soaring dome of light. Our writing and marking implements were pretty much useless. There was no surface suitable to write on and if we did find a place, the ink was nearly impossible to apply and if a word did get written, it was quickly erased by the swirling water and sand. Carving in the soft rock, some sort of limestone we guessed, was a waste of energy as it just eroded to an undecipherable blur in a few days’ time.

Of course who knew what a day was? Here, it was all about the algae bloom. A big bloom would create more light, and then as the algae completed its life cycle the light would dim. These blooms affected our energy levels, too. As the light dimmed our oxygen levels would decrease and we would all feel tired and listless; as it increased we would forage for food— a bit of seaweed, a small raw fish should it venture into an area of confinement. There was nothing to drink, but oddly, we never thirsted.

We discarded our robes and swam naked. As we would pass each other or swim together, we would touch an arm, a hand, a back, a face, in order to know that this wasn't a dream, that we were actually alive. Sometimes we would gather together, arms linked and just float in a circle- so empty! So sad!

It was maybe two weeks before the first death. Tatiana was discovered midway up a tall structure, comparable to 20 stories high that gently curved from its own weight as it went up. A piece of her long black hair was caught on a bit of shell solidly embedded in the structure at one of the oval "windows." Tatiana had spent time each day exploring Neptune and would come and get one of us and show us some amazing piece of rock or plant or creature she had discovered, a small smile of excitement upon her face. Being obligated to smile back and share the wonder with our biologist kept us from drowning in our despair.

Once Tatiana was gone, Oriann died; Oriann could not survive without at least some small bit of joy in life. To be honest, I would have guessed that she would go first as music was her life as much as Ariel, the composer. A few "days" later Diana was missing; Diana had been experimenting with holding her breath and swimming past the perimeter. Even though she carried a sharp rock with her, what defense was that against a shark 10 times her size? We were sure she had died beyond the perimeter as a thorough search did not uncover her body.

It was just Theo, Athena, Lilith, and I, now. Without any way to express our emotions, the experience became more and more surrealistic. We came together as a group less and less, swimming amongst the colors of Neptune, under its spell, human fishes passing each other here and there, turning to follow the other for a bit and then drifting off again. Then Athena died right in the midst of one of our now rare gatherings- her eyes glazed over and the life was gone. We removed her weights and watched her body rise gently and slowly towards the surface, towards air and sky and sunlight. I looked at Lilith, who had once been dark of skin with pitch black curly hair and fiery eyes, skin now a sickly mottled brown, hair filled with bits of weed, shell, fishbone, eyes bulging slightly like fish eyes without expression. Theo, our rock, looked wan and tired, spun gold hair still beautiful filled with a trapped hatch of algae sparkling with light- she's next, I thought. But she wasn't— it was Lilith. I saw her swim away into the dark otherworld; she never returned.

Theo and I continued to forage and swim and stayed together constantly, two together living a hallucination at the bottom of the sea. I was terrified of losing her. And then I did. I held onto her dead body until revulsion overcame me due to the decomposition. Then I removed her belt of rocks, jewelry and corroded metal computer pieces, thinking she would rise as Athena had. But I had waited too long; her body sank and the crabs began to get at it. I swam away.

But I swam back, then away, then back again, enduring the horror, because my last tie with human sanity lay there on the ocean floor. My reverie began to break in jagged shocks of remembering as my dual existence as someone else tried to push through- someone not Chloe, someone who could somehow make it to the surface and leave this city of nightmares. Even if all that meant was one breath of air, one fleeting view of ocean surface and sky before I sank back beneath the waves and died, I didn't care. It was all that was left.

### *Journey to the surface*

Of course I knew it wasn't possible.

I closed my eyes, something I seldom did here, and in my remembered persona, the me that existed before Chloe— or after, or simultaneously, whatever— I recalled my Higher Self. So beautiful, so present and alive, standing proud, her skin an even African brown, big brown eyes, short 'fro. She wore her long-legged body well, the body of a woman who could run through the savannah for days tirelessly. Tall, she and I stood eye-to-eye in my life before the all-consuming dream that had captured me. Her arms were strong and well-shaped. Her gently rounded face had the broad nose that allowed her nostrils to express emotion when her passions arose, and her lips were full, sensuous, expressive.

She was far away, but I realized then that she had previously been very close, and remembered how she used to hold me and protect me, and love me completely, with tenderness in her eyes. It

was not a sexual love, closer to the love of a mother for her daughter, but so much more because of the spiritual depth her love held. She looked worried. Her thoughts spoke to me urgently, firmly, “You must leave now, before it is too late. You must leave now! Walk, dear one, walk out of the ocean. Walk along the ocean floor to the land. There is land now, and you must walk upwards, always upwards. Come, I will guide you.”

I was confused. How could I walk out of the ocean? How could I leave this place? I felt Chloe’s doubts and rising panic. “Who am I?” I thought. Higher Self insisted, “Begin the ascent. You must trust me.” “But Higher Self,” I mindspoke, “How can I? The moment I leave Neptune I will no longer be able to breathe and what of the creatures of the deep? And how will I see? It will be dark. I cannot do it.” In response, a frown of concentration. “Wait,” she commanded. I hovered, Chloe and I, I and I.

In the flip of a fish tail, Higher Self returned with help. I sensed her far above me in a sky I could not see, miles and miles above me, above the ocean, above the clouds, peering down. With her was Martha, a dear friend with whom I shared so many spiritual connections once upon a time, before all this. Martha, a writer with the imagination of an avatar, had brought with her a vitaratha, an amazing vehicle that could be described as a magical, pliable, completely impervious, clear bubble of protection. The vitaratha had once been shown to her by her Higher Self, Nova, and she had borrowed it to help my Higher Self rescue me. She and Higher Self lowered the vitaratha, carefully holding the end of a connected filament through which they could pass oxygen for my needs and also gently guide me out of Neptune. The almost invisible surface was pliant and would surround me in a rounded impenetrable space. All I needed to do was step into it. I stepped in.

I felt a tug as I did so, as if Chloe was dragging, undecided about staying behind, but the firmness of my resolve snapped her through. She was gradually becoming a memory, a story, someone I once knew and even cherished, but not me. I was returning as myself, and she would be returning as a figment of imagination, an aspect of me, a lingering knowing in my soul.

I can’t remember exactly when the interior of the vitaratha changed from oxygen-charged salt water to breathable air. Perhaps Martha and Higher Self made the change while I slept. I do recall

becoming joyously aware that the lightness of body that accompanies lungs filled with air had returned. I hoped the air in the vitaratha would dry out the soggy mess I had become.

The curious journey to the top of the sea took several weeks. Contained in the protective bubble, I walked the ocean floor. My bare feet, swathed in the material of the vitaratha, stepped on many surfaces, hard and porous and bumpy and squishy; I even stepped on a great squid which rose up and tumbled me to the side. But the reduced gravity in the vitaratha kept me from hurting myself in the fall, and once my heart stopped pounding I simply continued. Sharks and octopi and a huge-as-a-house unidentifiable fish-like creature with bulging eyes, all approached the light of the vitaratha, but each time, once they realized they could not get in, they swam away. I could only see a few feet ahead in the murk, and once almost stepped into a bottomless black crack in the ocean floor. But I stopped in time, and walked what seemed like miles out of the way to get around the ravine.

Higher Self and Martha lent encouragement and sent carefully selected food and water to me as I learned how to eat and drink again. At one point I begged Higher Self, “Why not just pull me up? Take that filament and tow me to land or to the surface of the ocean— why must I walk?” Higher Self was stern, “You must.” That was all she would say. Martha stayed out of it and concentrated on holding onto the end of the vitaratha filament. Her auburn-framed pale face close to Higher Self’s as they peered down at me, she would converse with Higher Self or with me from time to time. It was a shared journey, and we three talked of everything from the meaning of life to cooking recipes and poetry.

After walking for so long I could barely remember the city, Neptune, the sea seemed lighter. The ocean floor began to transform into a surface of abundant life. I began to be able to discern color. The water seemed clearer and there was more current, and patches of sand, and even coral. I could hardly contain my excitement; I could feel the relief flooding all of us; it looked like I had made it! I walked over a patch of coral onto a patch of sand lit from the sun above the surface of the water, which I could see about 30 feet above me. “Take a big breath and step out of the vitaratha, Ruby Jewel. Swim to the surface and then to the beach,” instructed Higher Self.

Which is exactly what I did. Oh! The explosive burst of my head and shoulders breaking the surface of the water! The blinding brightness, the freedom, the gasp of delicious long-forsaken fresh air, the great symphony of sound entering my head as I shook the water from my ears, the sensation of the breeze touching my face- home- home in the deepest way imaginable. I felt Higher Self and Martha dancing a jig and yippee-ing up above the clouds. Following the gently rolling surf, I made my way to land.

### *The Return*

I lay on the beach, a sea creature washed ashore, feeling the sun upon my skin and the sand beneath me, half in and half out of the water. I didn't have the strength to stand or even to sit, the difference in gravity was so great compared to what I had lived floating in water and then in the vitaratha. The sun was so bright it was hard to see anything, but squinting, I saw brown and green and blue shapes. A seagull walked past me within arm's length and I began to cry- tears of relief, tears of release for the ordeal I had been through, tears of joy and gratitude, and finally, great heaving sobs of both loss and survival.

As the sun dropped lower in the sky, my vision gradually acclimated to the light and I could see I was on the beach of a very small tropical island with a few palm trees and some green undergrowth, mostly just sandy beach. From where I lay, having by now dragged myself out of the water, I could see this was the last island in an archipelago of what looked like about eight or ten islands leading to some sort of mainland, or perhaps just a much larger island.

It took a few days to regain enough strength to stand and then walk. I ate fish and drank rainwater. Higher Self stayed with me; Martha had headed home after congratulations and virtual hugs. Speaking was a challenge—I could only croak at first. I even had the beginnings of webs between toes and fingers. I had a feeling those would take a long time to completely go away.

One night I glimpsed a campfire on the mainland, and wanted to go there right away, but Higher Self said no, I must wait until I had my strength back. The next day I chanced upon a puddle and

the light was such that I saw my reflection. I looked a fright; my eyes bulged, my hair was tangled and snarled with bits of decaying plant and Piscean matter, my skin was mottled and puffy, and I was alarmingly thin. I didn't look human! So I waited, ate what I could find that was edible and worked on my hair with my fingers, and in nine days' time, Higher Self said I was ready and could go.

How I longed for human contact, to speak, to touch, to sing. Yet I was also afraid. What had happened to the world? Where was I? Who were these people on the mainland? Would they welcome me or harm me? Perhaps they were thugs. What was the state of things? I departed in the morning and swam to the next island, then walked across to the other side of the island, and swam again. In two days traveling thus, I had made it to the mainland, where I awaited nightfall. What if they didn't come? They weren't there every night, I knew that. But what if they never came back? I calmed myself, reminding myself they'd returned repeatedly to this place over the last days, and they would show up if I was just patient. I hid in a loose thicket of bushes facing a burned out fire pit, nursing my anxiety.

Night fell, and I waited, praying. A twig snapped, then another, and then the beloved sounds of the approach of humans were in my ear's range. They came, a colorful troupe of talking, laughing, mostly dark-haired, light-skinned people, of many ages, even babies, dressed in skins and tattered cloth. They lit the fire, singing and calling to each other; cooking implements came out of packs and men brought forth strings of fish. Pots of bread were placed in the fire. Jugs of fresh water appeared. Satisfied there would be welcome here, my eyes brimming with tears, I rose from my crouch and walked towards the fire. Higher Self beamed.

### *Back to Reality*

That was the end of the dream. My blood pressure was normal, and has remained so to this day, six years later. I am sure a shrink would have a field-day with the symbolism in the dream. But I've only lightly explored that. I looked up the nine muses and their traditional names and roles are quite different from Chloe and her companions. The similarity apparently stopped at the white

flowing robes. I am sure the “pressure” of the deep and the ascent to a normal pressure on land ties in with the restoration of normal blood pressure, but how or why the dream came to me, I cannot say, other than to say “Thank You” to my higher self and to my friend, Martha. It is a most peculiar experience to sit down and suddenly start dreaming while you are awake, and to have a dream that continues, like a soap opera on TV. It was an experience that reminds me that life is still a mystery, and adventure always awaits, even if we never leave our armchair.

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*The End*