

My dearest Sea,

Perhaps you'll remember me. I have lived near you my entire life. Do you remember each of us, those who have lived near you, and on you, and under you, maybe even those who have only visited you once in a lifetime? You seem vast enough to be able to do that, the remembering

for the first four years of my life, I lived in Key West, Florida, USA, where my father, a Navy deep sea diver was stationed. Key West is at that point where the Atlantic meets the Caribbean.

Where we lived then was in Navy housing, on a crushed coral landfill, and our backyard was the sea, you. My father and older brother would wade into the shallows and catch our dinner, longooster and conch.

Then we moved to San Jose, California, USA, on the western shore of the continent, where other parts of our family had lived for three generations. Though San Jose is thirty miles from the sea, we were never far from you, driving over the mountains to Santa Cruz to swim and splash and breathe you in deeply. Even back in San Jose, we felt you, when every morning what we called "overcast" covered

our valley like a pan lid. I breathe you in every morning. Overcast, of course, was the marine layer you create and which blankets the coast of California. fog, if you will.

Even now, in San Francisco, where I've lived for forty years, you are only three miles from my home. A straight line takes me to Ocean Beach (a perfect name for a beach, don't you think?), a miles-long strand of beach that directly faces the Pacific. If I could see far enough, the next land would be Japan — nearly one-third of the world covers this expanse.

My wife and daughter and I have spent many hours at Ocean Beach, wading and watching (it's far too cold to swim at this part of the coast). We have watched storms roll in, we have enjoyed placid, sunny days. And though I don't visit as often as I should, you are a part of every house & every day. The prevailing winds carry your scent, the real taste of this city. And the marine layer — fog! — swaddles our streets many mornings, and afternoons and evenings. Sometimes the fog is so thick, running like a strong current down our avenues, that I feel as if I'm swimming in you.

I depend on you; you are essential to me.

red tide that day, a great flowering of your abundance. The sky, ~~and~~ overcast, and the sea were both the same pink color, muted and soft, and the sky and sea were one. I was enveloped, held softly and securely, returned once again to where I belonged.

In gratitude,
Lewis Burbee