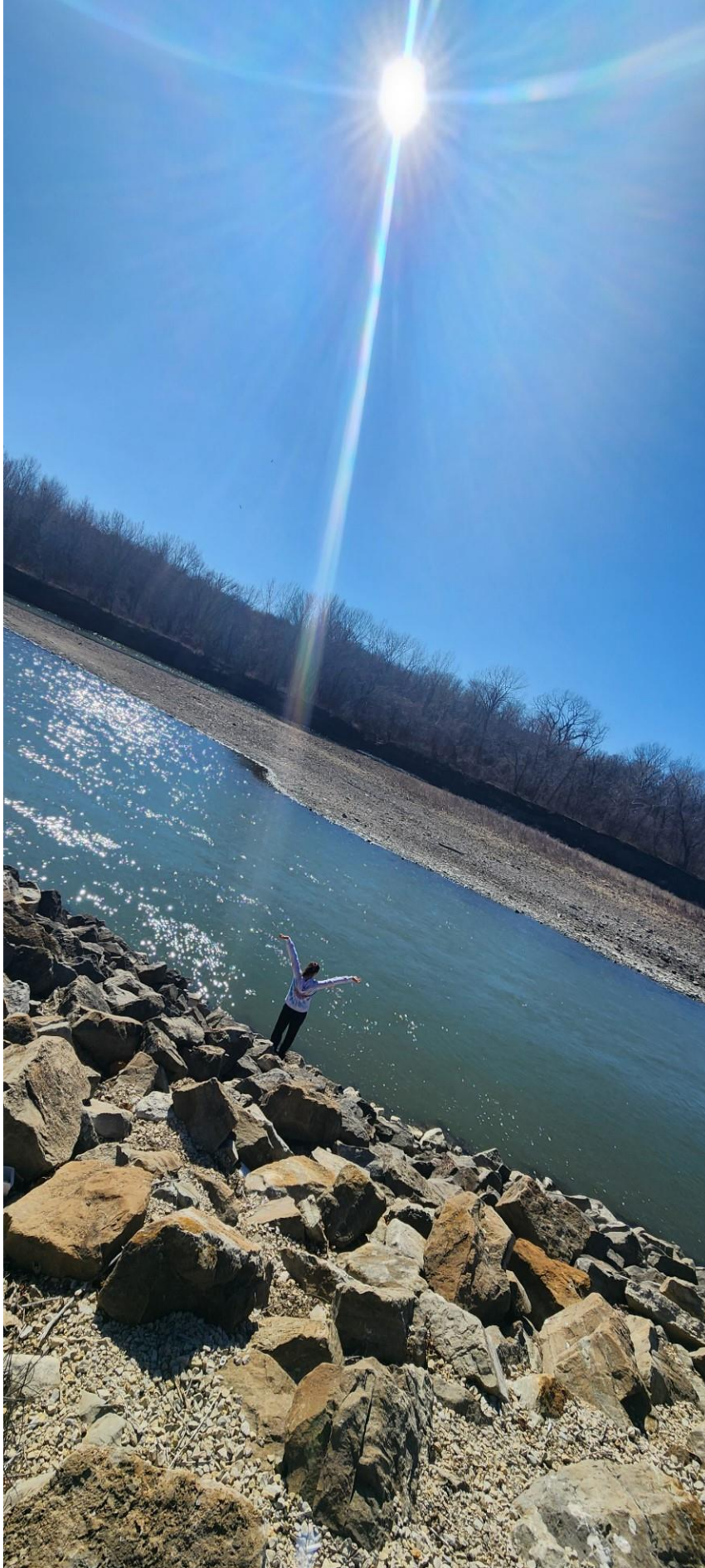


# Tranquility to Determination



By: Andrea

Saldaña - Valdez

Sometimes I can be cruel. But most of the time I am friendly. There have been times when I made some choices, and now regret them. I have taken the lives of many daughters and sons; but not without intention. I have snooped in on arguments, and personal issues. I am their mother, what else can I do? Sometimes when my children wander into my arms, I hug them too tight, causing them to fall lifeless into my tears. But other times I can whisper in their ear, and they take my advice. I help them thrive and grow... My own children are stabbing me with knives. They are killing me. One day they'll realize that, when I'm *gone*.

I remember when *my* mother **disappeared**. It was gusty and thundery that day. My mother kept on warning me not to go too close to the harbor boats. I continued to tell her I knew. But a big wave engulfed me. I got caught in a *plastic bag*. I got rammed under the boat. The boat tipped. Oil shrieked, and then the next thing I knew she was streaming out from where she had hit my good friend, Rock. I was in shock. By then, Oil was a fraction of an inch away from the tip of my nose. Then, before I could even blink an eye, my mother pushed me out of the way. I heard a wail, and then she was gone. Oil had killed her. From that day on, I was not the same. I know how dangerous all these pollutants are. They are affecting *my life* even. The humans are going to end up killing themselves. Because **with me gone, they'd disappear**. But they don't realize all the damage they are and have been doing. They won't, until it's *too late*. Which is why...I have a **plan**.

On my birthday, which happens to be April 22<sup>nd</sup>, I am going to hide in the deepest cracks in the pavement. I am going to evaporate into the air. I am going to freeze into blocks. I am not going to give them my love for a whole day. It'll be like I'm the one who's polluting and destroying them. I want them to experience what I go through every day...

It's the day. I slink into the cracks; I drift into the clouds. Then I hear my children panicking and shouting. They don't understand why they have *no power*: I hear roars of anger and pain. They ponder over why I'd suddenly disappear. Then they *begin to realize and take the blame*. They realize that every McDonald's cup they threw out their car windows on a hot afternoon had led to this. They realize that every cigarette they stashed in my hair on Saturday morning ended up scorching me. They now realize that all their mistakes have led to this very day. They all knew it would happen one day. What they didn't know was that it'd be this very soon. I very quietly tune into their thoughts and discussions. I listen to see if they are going to do anything different. While listening I drift off and begin to dream.

I dream that I am clean and pure and that I don't have to worry about my home. I dream that I could be seen as special, as important. I am with a girl named Andrea. I see that she has a mind like no other. Her mind is creative, and thoughtful. I see that she has a very kind and beautiful heart. All she wants is for a better place. She wants to help and give. She wants to save my newborn turtles, and sharks. She wants to protect the fish of my seas. She wants to help solve this pollution crisis. I allow myself to drift into her mind and peek...

This girl has lived nowhere near a beach, for her entire life, yet she cares so much about it. She is truly embarrassed that her people are constantly using plastic and not cleaning up after themselves. I realize that this girl came down to my south shores not too long ago. She tickled me with her toes. She dove into my arms and smiled with happiness. I knew that she was living the moment when I poured down on her with my tears. These weren't just any tears... they were happy ones. I was promised that when she grows up, she'll come back. She'll live on my beaches and tidy up my home. I was very happy to know that she wanted to help. So, I allowed her to help one of my newborn baby crabs. Luu washed up on the shore and Andrea found her. Luu was

scared but she told me when she got back home, that in Andrea's hands she felt safe and happy too. I had many conversations with Andrea and learned that she wants to go to college someplace near home and then move closer to me. She wants to head over to my southern shores and love me with all her heart. I'll be waiting for her kind soul. I'll be waiting *until finally* she can dive into my arms and be welcomed home.

My daughter, Andrea, is a very extraordinary character. She has passion. She remarkably worries for my Grandmother Pacific. For she knows that Grandmother is deeply troubled with The Great Garbage Patch. I found that I am inspired by Andrea. I am determined to never change because of my own selfishness. I know how much I am needed *and can't just disappear*.

I am the Spirit of Water; I know that I made mistakes. But Andrea has taught me that with *mistakes we grow*. Without mistakes you can never leap onto the next skipping stone. I know mother would be proud of me. Proud that I am learning and becoming stronger for me and her both every day.