

## Helping the Starfish

by Lola Georg

I know you've heard the story  
about a person walking on the beach  
who noticed all the starfish washed upon the shore

this person started picking up starfish  
tossing them back into the ocean

after awhile, a stranger comes along  
"what are you doing?" the stranger asks

"helping the starfish" was the reply

the stranger looked about and saw thousands  
upon thousands of starfish  
stranded on the beach

"you can't possibly save them all  
your efforts are fruitless", the stranger replied  
"what difference can you possibly make?"

"I've made a difference to that one"  
the beach walker noted  
tossing yet another starfish back into the ocean

now this is where the story often ends  
with a moral of helping where one can  
against the backdrop of futility

(as if the act of 'helping where one can'  
is enough)

but suppose, just imagine  
the story continues

the stranger considers our beach walker's words  
and follows suit, doubling their efforts

after awhile, the stranger becomes a friend  
helping the starfish

imagine then, that someone else comes along  
with similar questions, and upon hearing similar replies  
decides to join in  
helping the starfish

and so it goes, people wander by,  
word spreads, the curious arrive  
(along with the naysayers)  
all drawn by the message to  
help the starfish

and before long  
there are no more starfish to toss  
there are none stranded on the beach

imagine what happens next

an older person gives their starfish  
to a younger person saying  
“Here, you help the starfish”

or,  
perhaps

someone who has picked up too many starfish  
says to those with none  
“here, take some, let us together  
help the starfish”

and thus, after awhile,  
helping the starfish becomes  
we the people  
help the starfish

and, imagine once more that  
we the people learn the patterns  
of starfish strandings  
of oceans, of tides  
of the moon  
and we the people  
start to prepare for a day  
when the starfish may get stranded

and *then* imagine, with much joy  
(because we breathe in joy)  
songs and dances,  
music and poetry  
praises and gratitudes  
blessings and celebration for

we the people  
help the starfish

and, in so doing,  
the starfish help we the people