





# TRANSITION

**Yesterday** Mom and Dad came home with the new baby. I'd been standing in a sunspot in our kitchen when they entered the room. Dad placed the baby down on the breakfast table for me to see.

"Introduce yourself to your little sister," he said, waving me forward.

Meeting her made me nervous, 'cause meeting something new doesn't, like, come along every day, you know. I approached the tank and leaned in close. "Hi sis, sis," I said, rapping my fingers on the glass.

She twitched.

"Don't tap on the glass, Suzy," Mom scolded. "For her the sound is twice as loud."

"Is she in freshwater or saltwater?" I asked.

"Fresh," Dad answered, going over to the hearth where a small fire burned under an iron pan. "No one can breathe under salt water yet, but it won't be long before it's possible."

He placed an oven mitt over his webbed hand, slid the pan out, and poured the tuna soup into a cup.

Mom's cold, damp hand gently stroked my smooth head as she said, "Isn't she beautiful?"

I returned my attention to the tank.

She looked like a hairless albino monkey.

My sister had reached what scientists called *The Next Stage*. Mom and Dad were so proud.

She wasn't the only one to come this far, in fact, she's the third. The very first to cross the finish line over to the Next Stage was a boy born in Africa twenty-four years ago. His parents named him Chiratidzo, meaning 'a sign'. The second like him was his son, born a few years back. I learned about them this year in school.

Ever since we began changing hundreds of years ago, scientists predicted we'd reach this stage and would gradually continue transforming so long as we existed.

Dad took large gulps of the tuna soup that I made for them before they came home. Tuna soup is easy to make, it's just chopped up tuna in fish broth, served really hot. The hotter the better 'cause it, like, warms the blood, you know.

After draining his cup, Dad wiped his mouth with a cloth napkin and moved over toward the sunspot where I'd been standing. He warmed himself in the bright light that shone through the glass kitchen door like a water turtle sunbathing on a stone.

"We still need a name for her," he said.

"Would *you* like to give her one?" Mom asked me.

I pointed to myself. "Me? Really?"

"Sure," said Dad with a shrug. "We can't think of anything. Go for it."

For inspiration, I turned back to my sister, sleeping soundly in her plastic chair bolted to the bottom of her small tank. Her tiny mouth opened and closed, sucking in water and breathing it out

in tiny bubbles through the gills on either side of her neck. I slid my finger down my own neck. I have no gills. I still have a nose and my lungs need air, though I can stay underwater for, like, hours now. The doctors had warned my parents that my sister would not survive five minutes without being submerged.

Mom got up from her granite chair and dunked her entire body under the three feet of water that covers our whole community. The area had been flooded for a while now. My teacher said the water reached the midlands some seven hundred years ago. As our bodies accepted the changes needed to survive, we had started building homes and furniture out of stone and cement since most other materials won't last long in water. We've basically turned homes into what I call *Stylish Caves*. There's still warm-blooded air breathing people out there, living on high mountain peaks, but not many, and with water levels constantly rising, they'll be extinct soon. It's funny, 'cause years ago *we* were considered the freaks, and like all outcasts we were shunned by the majority that feared us. Now we dominate the planet two to one!

Dad was right, it won't be long before we adapt to saltwater. When that happens, everything we have left that makes us human will be, like, you know, gone. Funny, it took us millions of years to become humans; now it's only taken hundreds to return to our basics.

After a minute went by, Mom reappeared with a refreshed look on her pastel face.

"Dehydrated, dear?" Dad asked, as she sat back on her chair.

"Yeah. Having a baby takes the moisture right out of you."

Mom carried the baby in her womb and gave birth, but they say in time, females will lay eggs instead. YUCK! I don't want eggs plopping outta me. I believe that once we reach a certain stage many things will vanish, like friendships, material want, and just about anything that once separated us from animals. Eventually it'll be every man and woman for themselves. One day, surviving on a day to day basis will be the high priority. And instead of focusing on jobs, relationships, school, homework, or whatever, the new agenda will be finding food, hiding from predators, and breeding. Everything we own will become useless to us, even our *Stylish Caves*. I mean, what will we need 'em for, shelter from the rain?

That cold inevitability won't happen in my lifetime, or my children's, or my grandchildren's, but we're heading there, no doubt about it. As of now, we're still holding on to our species' traditions, like going to school, playing sports, and celebrating holidays. But many other things have disappeared like electricity, 'cause *dub* we're, like, surrounded by water!

My sister opened her eyes and looked at me; at least I think she did. Her eyeballs were like solid glass marbles in a variety of blues mixed with twirling lines of white. Mom and Dad's lipless mouths were shining with smiles. I could tell they were so thrilled about her; if they were capable, they'd have shed tears.

"The doctor said she'll need to eat raw foods," Dad said.

"That's disgusting!" I blurted.

Dad chuckled.

"Yeah," he agreed. "But I guess it'll be useful for her since it's getting harder to find dry wood for fires nowadays."

Two thousand years ago the rising temperatures could've killed us off if our bodies hadn't adapted. When dry land became scarce, most people were forced to settle in water. After a while their skin couldn't stay moist by itself anymore; they began depending on the wet conditions, like needing lotion for severe dry skin, I guess. In my first grade class last year, I learned about what's happening to us. It's called *Transition*. I think they're half right about that. I mean, we're changing, that's for sure, just not evolving. In order to evolve a species has to move forward. In my opinion it's more like we're moving backwards, y'know, changing back into the very thing we started from billions of years ago before crawling out from the sea and onto shore. Some of my friends have these fantasies that we're all gonna turn into merpeople, but I know better. We're heading back to the drawing board, and my sister is proof of it!

We should've known better when the glaciers began melting. When time was still available, people often talked about improving the environment and preventing global warming from happening, but, like, not enough action was taken. Then the hole in the ozone grew larger and before anyone had a chance to inflate a raft, the seas rose over their backyards.

I think the earth will be okay now. There are no more factories bellowing poisonous fumes into the air, and almost all of the carbon dioxide stopped when people couldn't, like, drive anymore. Maybe millions of years from now, if the sun still burns, the water might recede and we humans can start all over again. If so, I hope we use a little more common sense next time around.

"Have you decided on a name, yet?" Mom asked.

"Aglaia," I told her. "Her name is Aglaia."