

Guardians

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Chest flat against my board,
I pull my hands
down, back, over
again and again,
ceaselessly, through the warm bay water
Each breath is fire
in my lungs
Each pull electricity
shooting through my arms
I keep my head down
I don't look up
Each time I do,
the shore hasn't moved
It looked so much closer
from land
Now there's an
endless expanse
of soft, blue water,
stretching between me and safety
Waiting, patiently
to buoy me up to the surface
or pull me down to the depths
I can't keep going
I just know it
Whatever reserve of energy
I'd been holding onto until now

is completely exhausted
Suddenly, I catch something
in the corner of my eye
Something gray,
glistening from the salty water
is moving alongside me
Rising
from the depths
Then two, then three
more emerging from the water
with each second
A shot of fear
hits my stomach
My chest is tight
I hear ringing in my ears
I can't die here
I ignore the burning in my arms
Adrenaline pulses through me
I move,
faster and faster,
I move
but they stay right alongside me
I can feel something final
closing in around my heart
when one of these
beautiful, alien creatures
suddenly surfaces from the water
Rising as if an
invisible force
was pulling her forward
She arches over the water
Shining
with her gray, crescent body

and short bottle nose
A burst of joy
shoots through my fear
My body is light
My pain is gone
A bottomless ocean
of strength
I never knew I had
fuels me
as I glide across the bay
Chirping and clicking
echo around me
as the pod
pushes me towards the shore
Telling me
“Keep going
You’re almost there
You can do this
You are safe”