



Letters from the sea & the land

Words from women learning to surf, write and live in Devon



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Phymath, 13 de Setembro de 2025

Vanda Louisa de Castro

Introduction from Helen Patuck

When I arrived in Plymouth on the 13th September, the skies had opened and rain was falling so heavily I thought I might have to cancel the workshop I had planned with four women meeting me at Plymouth harbour to catch the ferry to Kingsand. Yet when I arrived, and we boarded the boat, the clouds cleared and sunshine warmed us as we crossed the water.

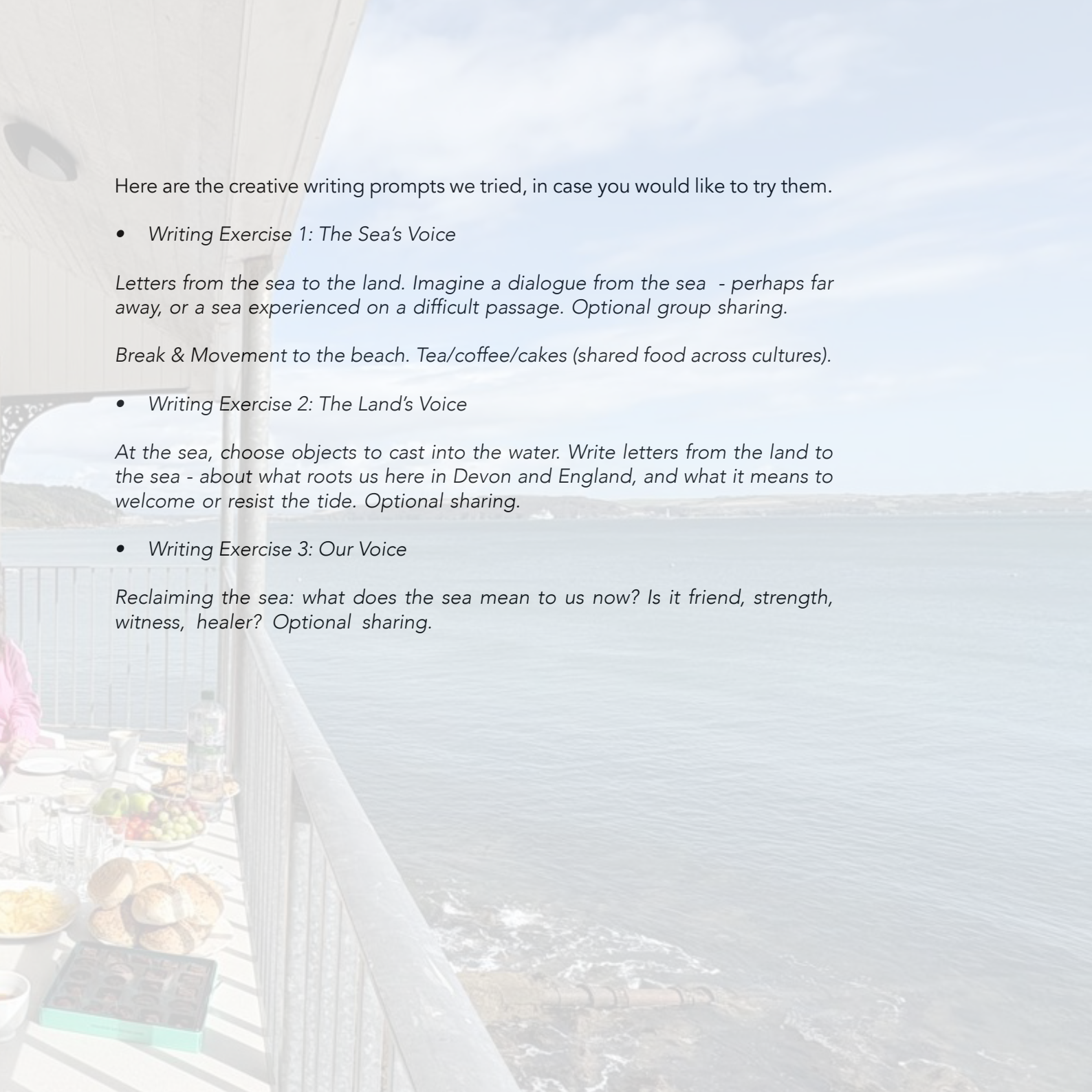
On arrival, we settled in to our beautiful home for the afternoon: the Maker and Rame Institute, set above a quiet cove. We shared some food and I introduced women from Ukraine and South America to a few writing exercises. We share a journey into what the sea means to each of us: what it's taken, what it's given, and how we might reclaim it as something safe, healing, and powerful. Here in Plymouth, the sea has always been more than scenery: it has been harbour, border, route of escape and return.

It's the water that carried trade, colonial expansion, and migration - with both pride and pain entwined. For my own family, the sea was service: my mum's dad, my grandfather, served in the British navy, part of Britain's proud maritime identity. When he was sixteen, he went to fight in the Second World War, on a big warship. He left this harbour and crossed that sea to fight against fascism. But that same sea also carried Britain's own exploitation, conquest, and European colonial project.

British ships also carried slave and stolen goods. My other grandfather, my father's father, crossed that sea to England with his parents from India, and his great grandparents had crossed from Iran, where they were forced to flee and rebuild their lives elsewhere. My mother's father, my grandfather who was English, did not accept my father, who was from a different country. He didn't want my mother to have a strange sounding surname. Here in Plymouth he said those words and I am here today, in spite of that, the child of two cultures, two lands, two seas.

We acknowledge all of this: that the sea can be joy and nourishment, but also fear, displacement, and grief. It transports us and moves us. But at the same time it separates us and swallows us. Reclaim The Sea (the Plymouth-based project that inspires us today) works with refugees, asylum seekers, and people who have known trauma at sea.

Their work reminds us that reclaiming means we choose our own stories of the sea: we can transform it into refuge, strength, and belonging. In this workshop, we'll write with three voices: the sea's, the land's, and our own. We'll let the tide of memory, imagination, and desire guide us. Together, we'll reclaim not just the sea, but the right to speak about what it means for us - with honesty, dignity, and care.



Here are the creative writing prompts we tried, in case you would like to try them.

- *Writing Exercise 1: The Sea's Voice*

Letters from the sea to the land. Imagine a dialogue from the sea - perhaps far away, or a sea experienced on a difficult passage. Optional group sharing.

Break & Movement to the beach. Tea/coffee/cakes (shared food across cultures).

- *Writing Exercise 2: The Land's Voice*

At the sea, choose objects to cast into the water. Write letters from the land to the sea - about what roots us here in Devon and England, and what it means to welcome or resist the tide. Optional sharing.

- *Writing Exercise 3: Our Voice*

Reclaiming the sea: what does the sea mean to us now? Is it friend, strength, witness, healer? Optional sharing.



The Letter from the Land

I hope you feel me like your home. Even if not, I am just happy you came here.

I witnessed your harshest days, your darkest moments during your asylum journey.

And I am truly glad you could find something pleasant and soothing in what I could offer you.

I know that you enjoy your everyday walks along the embankment, that you stop at nearly every flower to sniff it, that you contemplate almost every sunrise and every sunset.

And every time I saw you do that – I take it on my own account. And I am really pleased.

Sometimes you looked preoccupied with something, brooding about some sad things, and in that case you cannot notice simple enjoyable beautiful things I have to offer you.

And then I feel that I should actually help you at that very moment.


But I do not worry much, as I do know that there is something that will definitely help you.

And this, is the sea, which is always present and available.

No, I am not being jealous at all! I just know that the sea and me are the dream team in supporting and reassuring you.

There has never been anyone like you on this island. That is why I am so happy to see you here.

Olga
Lovely September 2025





Letter from the Land | Лист від землі

Я даю життя, їжу, стабільність, кров. Я багата, я зберігаю енергію предків та їх останки.

Я свідок багатьох історичних подій, які впливали на життя цілих людей, а також на життя окремих людей. За мене ведуть війни та вбивають моїх дітей, усе живе, тому що земля – основа життя всіх живих істот. Діти використовують дітей, щоб володіти мною. Вони не володіють мною повністю, але я можу дати кров та їжу всім своїм дітям.

I give life, food, stability, blood. I am rich; I preserve the energy of ancestors and their remains.

I am a witness to many historical events that influenced the lives of whole peoples, and also the lives of individual people. Wars are fought over me and my children are killed, all living things, because the earth is the foundation of life for all living beings. Children use children in order to possess me. They do not fully possess me, but I can give blood and food to all my children.

Olha
Plymouth 2025



Letter from the Sea | Лист від моря

Вітаю тебе водою.

Я катаю на тобі через роки ідеї.

Я равіру туман, пору.

Запам'ятай мене, якщо ти губишся в печалі.

Твої кроки упиняє і безпечні.

Мені подобається орлячі крики, які приглушають мою пісню.

Ти чуєш мій голос, я кличу тебе додому.

Я підказую, я направляю, я люблю і я караю.

Ми сила разом. Якщо тобі не вистачає мужності чи сил, сміливо, я дам тобі все і більше.

Все мало статися так, як сталося.

Я берегу твій шепіт. Запам'ятуй, слухай, відчувай.

Все тут, все твоє, все чекає на твій добрий прийом.

Я вічний. Я був тут і буду після всіх.

Я добрий. Я віддаю. Я справедливий.

Я забираю.

Запитуй, укавай, довіряй, приймай, не сумнівайся. Я тут. Я поруч. Я — це ти. Будь собі.

I greet you with water.

I carry you across years of ideas.

I dissolve fog, time.

Remember me if you get lost in sorrow.

Your steps I halt and make safe.

I love the cries of eagles that muffle my song.

You hear my voice — I call you home.

I guide you, I direct you, I love and I punish.

We are strong together. If you lack courage or strength, I will give you everything and more.

Everything had to happen as it did.

I keep your whisper. Remember, listen, feel.

Everything is here, everything is yours, everything awaits your kind acceptance.

I am eternal. I was here and will be after all.

I am kind. I give. I am just.

I take away.

Ask, trust, believe, accept, do not doubt. I am here. I am near. I am you. Be yourself.

Plymouth, 2025

Oksana



The Letter from the Land to the Sea

Vivo feliz em Plymouth U.K.

Eu agradeço todos os dias pela localização da minha casa, atualmente resido em um bairro central onde estou beneficiada por um ótimo comércio local, escolas, farmácias, fast food, supermercados, salões de beleza, GP, o hospital fica a 30 minutos de ônibus da minha casa. Aqui na cidade de Plymouth vivo tranquila por perceber que tenho segurança e qualidade de vida, me permitindo ter uma vida de alguém comum.

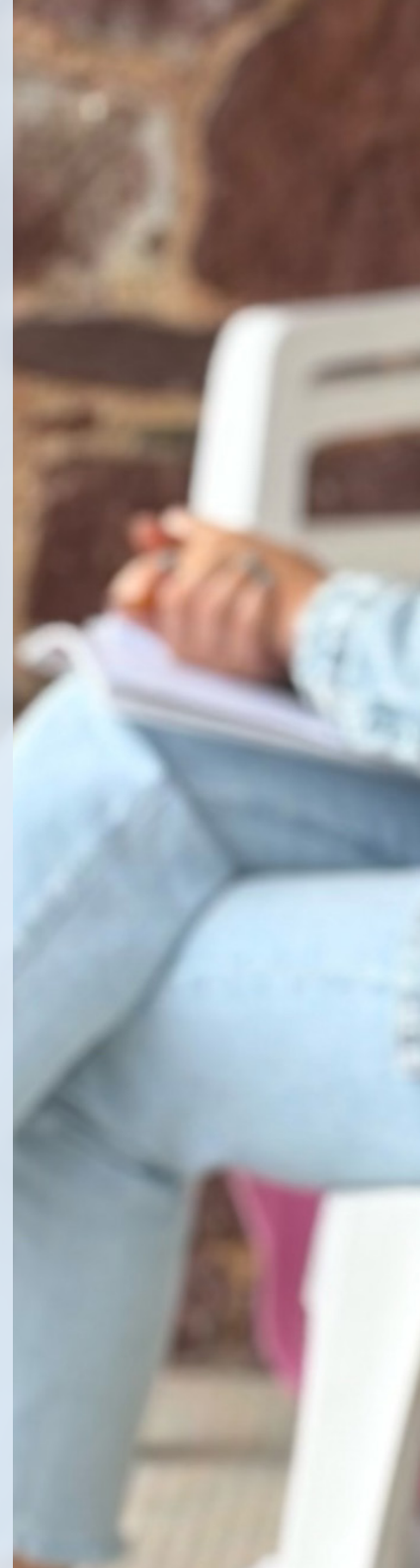
Atualmente no UK, me encontro no processo de audiência e espero que o mesmo seja concluído positivamente para que eu possa de alguma forma retribuir para a Inglaterra, o suporte que eu tenho recebido nesse período que aguardo o meu visto de residência. Amo a Inglaterra e quero muito continuar vivendo aqui.

I live happily in Plymouth, U.K.

I am grateful every day for the location of my home. I currently live in a central neighborhood where I benefit from excellent local shops, schools, pharmacies, fast food, supermarkets, beauty salons, a GP, and the hospital is only 30 minutes away by bus from my house. Here in the city of Plymouth, I live peacefully because I feel that I have safety and quality of life, allowing me to live like an ordinary person.

Currently, in the U.K., I am in the process of a hearing and I hope it will be concluded positively so that I can, in some way, give back to England the support I have received during this period while I await my residence visa. I love England and I very much want to continue living here.

*Plymouth, September 13, 2025
Vanda Lúcia de Castro*





The Letter from the Land to the Sea

*Не пам'ятаю, хто з'явився першим.
Це має значення лише в співіснуванні.
Ти безмежне... але встановлено тебе мене.
Ти сильний, але я стійка і м'яка.
Я знаю свою силу, я знаю свою ціну.
Я тримаю життя.
Я вдячна за твою силу, за нашу співпрацю, за парад.
Лиш у злагоді повернеться до мене і принесе всіх.
Ви мої діти.
Я їх люблю.*

I don't remember who appeared first.
It only matters in coexistence.
You are boundless... but grounded by me.
You are strong, but I am resilient and gentle.
I know my strength, I know my worth.
I hold life.
I am grateful for your power, for our cooperation, for the harmony.
Only in concord will all return to me and bring everyone.
You are my children.
I love them.

Plymouth, 2025
Oksana







Letter from the Sea

Quando cheguei em U/K mesmo sendo uma ilha não conseguia imaginar a proximidade que teria com o mar, sendo que vim de um país que tem muitas praias, aqui que tive a oportunidade de uma experiência mais constante com o mar ou seja fazer esportes no mar, como natação, surf, stand up e canoagem. Também contemplar a imensidão do mar ouvindo o barulho das ondas em um passeio pela orla, andar de boat para divisar ilhas e sentindo o resfriar das águas acalmar a minha alma me deixando simplesmente feliz com a plenitude que o mar tem, impactando de forma positiva as nossas vidas!

When I arrived in the U.K., even though it is an island, I couldn't imagine the closeness I would have with the sea. Coming from a country with many beaches, here I had the opportunity for a more constant experience with the sea — that is, doing water sports such as swimming, surfing, stand-up paddleboarding, and canoeing. Also, contemplating the immensity of the sea by listening to the sound of the waves on a walk along the shore, taking a boat trip to see islands, and feeling the coolness of the waters calm my soul, leaving me simply happy with the fullness the sea has, positively impacting our lives!

Plymouth, September 13, 2025
Vanda Lúcia de Castro





The Letter from the sea

I do not know who I am for you.

I can be anyone or anything you would like me to be for you.

I have been here forever, I know so many stories, have seen so many people's tears, emotions, laughs.

But at the same time I never repeat myself. Every day, even every hour I am different. If you feel frustrated, bored, lost in the monotony of your everyday life, you can come to me and I will show you that your life is like me: always changing and moving, because I know that you and me are the same. You may not feel like that, but we are of the same creation.

If you, like a human being, feel that there is too much on your shoulders from life, I can show you that this is just a human experience, at your basic core you are very calm, balanced, strong, genuine and wonderful. You are supposed to be flowing, moving, with no limits and borders, with no fixating on something in your life, especially on something bad.

Time and calendars do not exist for me, but I know that it matters for you.

Olga
Plymouth, 13th September 2025

Letter from the Sea | Лист від моря

Я – цілий всесвіт. Я – різне, то спокійне і безтурботне, то штормове, похмуре, загрозливе, таке, з яким краще не жартувати. Я є на Землі мільйони років і буду ще, завжди. Ти можеш насолоджуватися моїми дарами, брати з мене життя, але ти ніколи не можеш володіти мною, як і я не можу володіти тобою.

Я змушую тебе почувати маленькою людиною, надихаю відчувати свою присутність. Я вчу тебе водночас довіряти своїм силам та приймати свою безпомічність перед лютим космічного всесвіту морської стихії. Відпускай контроль та довіряй життю та самому життю.

Я можу забрати твої тривоги та стрес. Я можу дати натхнення...

I am a whole universe. I am changeable: sometimes calm and carefree, sometimes stormy, gloomy, threatening, the kind one should not joke with. I have been on Earth for millions of years and I will be, always.

You can enjoy my gifts, take life from me, but you can never own me, just as I cannot own you.

I make you feel small, inspire you to sense my presence. I teach you both to trust in your own strength and to accept your helplessness before the furious cosmic universe of the sea's element. Let go of control and trust life and life itself.

I can take away your worries and stress. I can give you inspiration...

Olha
Plymouth 2025







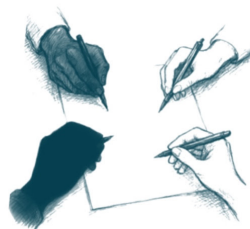
Letters from the land, Letters to the sea

Saturday 13th of September, 2025
Maker and Rame Institute, Kingsand

What does it mean to revisit and rewrite the sea after a long journey? Participants of Reclaim the Sea's swim, surf and outdoor beach grounding sessions are invited to come together to write letters to the sea, and explore all it has meant to them, from the land they now call home in Plymouth, Devon.



With Helen Patuck,
writer and illustrator



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