

Introduction to “The Queen”

I am fortunate to work with a group of charming, interesting, highly personable and greatly professional teachers – all together in the same room, covering most subjects, and producing educational music like a pedagogic philharmonic orchestra. Between those I work with and those I teach, I wake up every morning with a large smile and I maintain that smile throughout the workday. (Okay, I’d better make this point: my wife is also tremendously responsible for my smile – but, ironically, she is one of the aforementioned teachers of our Study Center, so she gets double credit.)

There is another English teacher in the room. Her desk is adjacent to ours. She is also highly experienced ... and she brings to the table (literally and figuratively) some delightful (and a few scary) stories of her personal experiences. One day she regaled us (I’ve always wanted to use that word) with a tale of a seagull that had made a personal connection with her ear a beach area. This bird could actually recognize Kathleen (the teacher) and fly to her to be fed. The story affected me especially deeply because I had grown up with a succession of parakeets, one of whom, Tiny Tim, I loved and often played with, seemingly to the delight of both of us.

Kathleen’s story was so special that it set off my imagination, and as my mind filled with images of the closeness of this woman and this lone seagull, my desire to write a poem took form. Admittedly, I fictionalized the narrative, but I believe that I reproduced the flavor of her experience and the special relationship that existed. As an admirer of birds (sorry, Daphne du Maurier), I present my poem as a celebration of the world of nature, of which some of us are better members than others. Thank you, Kathleen, for having the gentleness of soul that the very wise seagull perceived even from the heavens.