ONE DAY a lion met a salamander at the crossroads. He nodded to it, saying “How are you, Stranger?” And it answered: “As an amphibian, I live both on land and in water.” This intrigued the lion, because he had often dreamed of the depths. So he asked, “What is the watery life like?” It responded, “I feel the flow there . . . and I gather that you want to meet a feminine fish.” Now this startled the lion, who had to agree: “Will you lead me to such a one?” “I will do better than to rejoin you with your childhood dream,” it
mused, “if you’ll follow the impulse I give.” “And do what?” he exclaimed. “You’ll see,” it retorted, “if you look down.”

By this time the lion had no choice but to accept the challenge. Thus he forgot his fears and proudly followed his guide. Soon they happened upon a deep reflecting pool. Shyly, the lion looked at his own image, and the mirrory surface opened onto the sky behind him. Then, suddenly, he saw a silvery face below, and recognized her as a fish. He made a move in her direction, but she darted down just as quickly out of sight.
“Can you swim?” the salamander interjected. “Yes, but I can’t breathe underwater.” “Very true,” it returned sagely, “you are a land-dweller, so I must mediate between you two.” No sooner said than did the amphibian plunge into the darkness below. Now while the lion waited unaware on the surface, communication was going on beneath, to the effect that they meant her no harm, and that new friendship awaited her, if she were willing.

She did not answer, but joined the salamander in swimming up towards
the sunlight. Then, the lion and the fish stared into one another's eyes. This made the lion feel uncomfortably speechless. She offered, "Well, I hope you don't love me so much at first sight that you could eat me!" He laughed heartily, marvelling at her intuition into their new relationship. "I want to teach you telepathy," she suggested, "if you'll only listen. That's how we can really be together."

But the lion was saddened by his understanding that they couldn't stay united that way forever, even though it can be achieved for a few fleeting moments. "Just be aware of me," she stated, seeming to know his feelings, "then we'll always be in touch in our hearts." He gazed at her refracted image, wondering whether to trust the windows of his eyes. "What else can I do?" he resigned to himself, for her element was eternally different from his.
Struck for a moment, a light began to dawn in him. He turned to the amphibian, whose moist skin was sparkling in the sunshine. "With you as my companion, I'll always carry a part of her within my experience." "Yes," it rejoined, Sphynxlike, "for I am a man, a woman, both, and ultimately neither."

The lion breathed a deep sigh, and said, "Come, let us go." And finally, looking warmly down at the graceful figure below, he said, "I am grateful the universe created us out of itself, so we could meet here to share this." From her stillness, a voice rose to his consciousness . . . "Go with love."
With American Indian and Hawaiian friends in the 1970s when this short story was typeset by hand.

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