

Water

by Debbie Ann Ice

The water rolls gently this evening, barely touching my toes before retreating. The tide has been going out for over an hour and already there are several victims — crustaceans, spider crabs, minnows.

I had looked in the mirror after dinner, trying to smile without producing a dozen crows' feet. I have no bangs to pull over my forehead creases, no make-up to hide sunken eyes, widened pores, parentheses that hug my smiles. I am what the mirror revealed — a bald, skinny woman.

The water slides away, taking bits of sand and shells, abandoning a few more victims who flop about in one last attempt to find the world that sustained them.

The seagulls send me their pleas. *Join me. Join me.* Their screeching, a sound similar to keening, rises from the depths, persistent, feral, agitated.

I took my medicine and decided to run, trotting towards the west end of the island. I was there in time to see the sun slip away, alone, a small glow left behind as a memory.

I watch the water creep away. Another hour and I will no longer be thinking of this water's beauty, but of nocturnal sounds — the cool night air, wet sand upon my pants. After it leaves, the water is only what it has touched, all that it has sustained, all that it has stranded.

I can barely hear the seagulls, or the trickling waves, or even my breath.

