

Low Tide

by Jessie Campbell

Her whole life was lived between high tide and low tide, moments of giggling grandeur and moments of sheer emptiness. She stood in the shell-pocked sand that would normally be underwater and looked across the sound to the island. There, at the island, people laughed. There, a man touched a woman's arm, his glove whispering across her sleeve, whole books of communication in the touch, almost obscured by the wind. There, a girl tugged the sleeve of her mother, and the woman's hazel eyes fell with a smile on the face of her daughter. There was where people belonged.

She was barefoot; her toes slipped on the fungus that blanketed the shells like moss. How many creatures was she killing just by existing, by standing on the shore? A seagull alighted on the sand just out of the water and began to search for food. It was merely a silhouette in the gloaming. Was that all she was, just a being in search of sustenance? But no, seagulls culled the population of their prey, didn't they, served a purpose. She had no purpose, except to stand on the shore and wonder about the people on the faraway island.

She stretched her arms wide. Her loneliness could not be contained in the gesture. She shut her eyes as tight as they could close. She screamed silently, her mouth agape in a perfect O.

