

"Catching the Tide"

I didn't want to go,
because at thirteen,
there are more important things to do
than spend a day sliding over the slippery, low tide rocks at dawn
in the rain.
I wanted to go bowling with my new friend,
The blonde haired, blue eyed one,
whose petite frame made adolescent boys feel manly.
We liked to sit on the round stools at the drug store counter,
sipping cherry Cokes, swinging our skinny teenage-legs back and forth,
waiting impatiently for something wonderful to happen,
or the future to carry us forward
to a better age.
We talked of being sixteen,
and wearing nylon hose, hot pink lipstick, and deep blue eye shadow.

But mother insisted.
She said someday I'd "want to know where the special black seaweed grew,
and how it looked when it was ready to be picked,
and the best way to twist and pull it off the rocks."

We left in the dark;
the full silver moon lit a path across the still black water.
I sat cross legged on the prow of my uncle's seiner,
Alone, breathing the cool, salt air
tinged with the faint hint of diesel.
Soft voices and smells drifted forward from the galley behind me.
Bacon crackling, laughter, the smell of fresh coffee.
The steady hum of the engine, pulled me forward—
toward family, toward ancestors,
toward the soft, green kelp ahead.

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