

The Waves Were Low

MY NEIGHBOR CHARTERED out his boat, catching shark in his net. Days before, he'd taken out my husband.

Now the neighbor's boys sat at the pier with rods and us women sat on benches. The fisherman's sisters and his oldest girl had babies, and so did I. Children ran on the boat and my neighbor told them easy. One woman spoke about delivery and I gave my baby to another, held my stomach, and I tried not to remember my husband on the way to the hospital, his constant scent, the smell of whiskey. Now he was on top of the boat, drinking beer and grilling with the men, and some were lighting sparklers.

It was a long time until dark. The night before, I'd run to the neighbor's with my shirt ripped. Barefoot, and my stitches weren't closed up yet. My baby cried and the fisherman's wife said hush. Hush, as if she were the mother to us all. I had curled over, and my husband banged the door, saying let me in now, and the fisherman neighbor got up and stood there in the doorway. He was big, taking all the door frame.

Now a dog ran in an Elizabethan collar. The waves were low. The men drank more and I heard them laughing. I had no other family. Finally the men came, bringing down the brats and all the corn dogs. My husband sat next to me and I sat rocking.