

Drip

by Hannah Rovska-Strider

Shells and debris *crunch* beneath your feet while you wade deeper and deeper into the still ocean that surrounds your entire being. Does it ever worry you how the water doesn't stir until your feet can no longer touch the bottom, how the waves are melancholic and drowsy until you lose the support of the ground below you, and then they become harsh and fiery in their movement? They wait with bated breath until their prey comes into their line of target and then, with the raw incontinence of a yawning hippopotamus' jaw, they are undulant and swallow their target.

Once under, you flail your limbs wildly. You are a hen who cannot be held, but there's no use fighting your farmer. You have reverted to your original self. The tree of your life has been reduced to its roots. You are small. Modest. Unbecoming. Meek. The water takes to your limp body as the womb's liquid does to a fetus. There is no need to breathe. The core of your soul has become a furnace. The beat of your heart, a frenzied metronome. The creatures in the sea all smile at you with hand-crafted veneers. They ask why you are withholding yourself from them. Let the seafoam develop above your outline. We are nothing but still bags of flesh and tissue, demand that your vessel be mummified in kelp at the wake.

The creases on your hands' many appendages make them look like freeze-dried apricots. You lay at the bottom of the water, still and quiet. Its occupants gaze at you with hungry eyes, they are not withholding with their deep breathes as they wait for the tide to whisk you away. The waves are withdrawn in size when they escort you out of their home, they are a tired relative who can no longer stand talk of your politics. To lay on the shore is to reject your teachings, but the water understands and leaves as a jilted cook who was told her food was overdone.