The Shallows

Debora Greger
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Rolling pants’ legs, bundling skirts,  
they have come down the shore with gunnysacks, 
birdcages, dresses knotted together—  
tonight not the moon but a run of smelt  
silvers the shallows, night water’s deep opacity.  
Gray gone black, the wet sand chills, floor-hard  
as long as, like those boys, I don’t stand still.  
Coaching and taunting, a chorus of spring frogs,  
they leap the fish. Even the woman I’ve seen  
walking daily in the village is here, the one  
with her arm in a sling and a three-legged dog.  
Her slowed passage rippling the crowd,  
she’s the domestic tamely obscured  
by the raucous dark. Down from this inlet,  
a basket of lights lists where the family living  
on the grounded freighter finishes another  
tilted day. Finally, I think, that canted home  
would seem no longer maddening or novel  
but cramped like any other. Out in its vast  
and watery front yard, below the level of all this,  
a cold current tunnels unremittingly north.