

S Robertson and A Gremlin

Ebb tide

First I carefully let go
just as far as I can reach
the flotsam brought in on the flow: time to mark the beach.

Now I start to trickle back
over wet ground, under sky,
from marsh just covered in the slack: time to let it dry.

Now I cut new rivulets
to drain the chains of pools that lace the spreading sands and soft mudflats: time to
gather pace.

Now I rush on down the creek
bearing loose things left afloat.
Behind each moored boat runs a wake: time to gush full spate.

Now my headlong dash abates—where I once was, the waders team, rich foraging is
in their sights—time for a gentler stream.

Now I feel the flood's return
push against my trickle home,
to creep back in when I have gone. It's time: my end has come.

Note by the senior author: When my assistant first presented this poem, it was in fairly strict ballad form—four-line stanzas, three tetrameter and one trimeter, rhymed ABAB. How prosaic! My judicious removal of selected line breaks was universally acknowledged to be the making of this poem. — AG