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February 8, 2000

[STORYVOICE]

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We need a better story to explain what happened to the girl—and that boy too. The one about harpies bursting out of the ocean to harm loose women and eat disobedient children won't do anymore. It was an unappetizing tale anyway, but it emerged in the fifties fully formed and without source when a couple of "see, what'd I tell you?" events took place at the shore. Like that Up Beach woman who made love in the sand with her neighbor's husband and suffered a stroke right then and there. And she wasn't but 24 at the time. Or that other woman—she was from Harmony and wouldn't have anything to do with Up Beach people—who hid some letters and a purchase deed under her mother-in-law's porch only to have mud turtles dig them up. A few days later the greedy daughter-in-law broke her hip trying to keep the breezes and the neighbors away from the papers that damned her.