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FALLING INTO THE SEA IN BITS AND PIECES: SAN DIEGO, 1989 FOR MILLIE

by Scott Elgin Calhoun



On the board walk in Mission Beach
a drug deal goes down
between the palms
of two surfers
while I sit on the balcony with my Grandma

the wooden roller coaster at Belmont Park is falling
into the sea in bits and pieces

Grandma is eating bagels and strawberries
and dying. When I was twelve she would
swim out into the surf with me if I held her
hand. She would go out not fearing
the jellyfish or seaweed
sharks or riptides.

She would run into the ocean now
if I would let her, but we are making
our own deal. If she will hold still
I will tape the packet of nitro glycerin
to her arm
that will take the small dynamite
through her skin to her heart
it is enough to make her desire the waves
it is enough to keep her from them.

I N S C A P E

I have a picture of her taken in 1923
wearing the maroon jersey
of the first Arizona State
women's basketball team
with the wet hair and green eyes
of a swimmer, denying that her name
is Mildred
that same year the Crystal Pier
dance hall crashed into the sea
full of girls and sailors.