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The First Time I Saw the Ocean

Robin McCall

Ft. Lauderdale for Christmas.
A child of snow and lakes, I felt the salt water
Draw me like the soft air, the tips of the palm trees in the sky.
A canal lapped at my grandfather's back yard.
I stared at the liquid patterns for hours,
The holiday gathering muted in the house.

As for the waves, I ran to meet them, plunged.
The Atlantic slapping me with joy, depths unexplored.
We saw no dolphins but swam with their innocence,
My sister and brother and I; my mother and father
Watched from the sand, their hands touching.
All alive and as one.

After the sun began to float and redden,
My mother called to me with what must have been an aching.
Lips blue, I shook the curly head she loved, the drops flying.
Her obedient child simply refused to emerge from the waves.
I knew about Aphrodite.
At ten years, it was the first time I would find it hard to forgive
The one who tore me away from the sea.