Seahorses

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Grandma taught me where to find seahorses
Among shallow beds of seagrass:

I would look for them in the brackish water
And squeal in delight at the discovery

As she sat three dunes away,
Painting her impressions of the Mediterranean

And me.

Grandma taught me that painting
Was always done by memory:

I would watch as her eyes darted from horizon
To canvas, and lingered on the blank spaces in each

As she dabbed paint onto canvas,
Remembering colors the sky would soon

Forget.

Grandma taught me how to understand her
Depictions of blue sea and red sunset:

I would stand close and see dots, I would move
Away and squint at hazy outlines of things

As she whistled and gathered her paints,
Saying how beautiful it was when things were

Frayed.

The doctor taught me which pills to give her
And what to do if she wandered away:

I would sit with her on the beach and ask
If she wanted me to bring her easel

As she stared blankly at a bleeding horizon,
Learning again the contours of a sun falling into

The sea.

Grandma taught me how to be patient
When erosive waves crash against the mind:

I would paint for her memories of the beach
And ask her what she could recall of it

As she closed her eyes, recounting a hazy sunset
And a child's delight at finally discovering a little bed of
Seahorses.

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