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Red Tide

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I've lived on the coast all my life.
But this is the worst I've seen.
When my father's head rolls up on the beach
I try to smile, having learned the world
prefers it that way. He stinks—more so
when he was alive. A practicing
pedophile isn't a pretty sight: razors,
the deal dresser drawer
with its hidden stash
of plastic bags crammed
with trophies, memories
in each delicate, anonymous tuft
of purloined hair. How
do I dodge this stuff? Here
his Benson and Hedges 100s, there
his stained fingers, his Hanes boxers
marching leg over ghastly leg toward land
with the turbid sea in them,
shorts I still remember
gaping wide on the couch at night
because what's the point of hiding
what his daughters have already seen? Lord,
where do I draw the line? If sand
is required, then let me sign
right here, above the glittering fish heads
of Siesta Key, where the bloom this year is thickest.
I'd head south but they've got it
there too, everywhere, the detritus
we share in private, the cost
of living in paradise, this summer and the next.