

BARBARA BLOOM

Falling

Crows are playing in the thermals,
that's how my friend puts it, as we sit on a bench
on cliffs overlooking the Pacific.
Odd to see birds swooping below us—not above—
and otherwise just empty space
between us and the breaking waves
a hundred feet or so down,
and the ocean stretching out to the horizon line,
broken only by the jagged smudge of the Farallones.

A girl of maybe five or six
walks by, crying, *Hold me!*
I'm going to fall! And two men—
I'm guessing her father and his friend—
reach out their hands, as if they've practiced this,
and she swings happily between them,
her fears forgotten.

I pull out my notebook
and write the names of the flowers we've passed,
plants my mother taught me years ago
when I'd walk with her, a child as young as the one
who's gone on ahead now—only when I was scared
I never asked her to keep me from falling.
I had to pretend to be brave.

Still, she gave me the names of the flowers—
Indian paintbrush, lupine, California poppy—
which I hold to now, on the cliff's edge, writing this.

Barbara Bloom lived for forty some years in Santa Cruz, California, and taught composition and creative writing at Cabrillo College until her recent retirement and move to Bellingham, Washington. She has published two collections of poetry—*Pulling Down the Heavens* (2017) and *On the Water Meridian* (2007)—and her work has appeared in various small magazines, including *Phren-Z*, *Monterey Poetry Review*, and *Porter Gulch Review*.

HALLIE COHEN

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Watercolor on Yupo paper, 11 x 14 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST
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