

The Farewell Generation

Mike Irving

The hospital blanket

Knit of wires and vacuum sealed to his body

Puckered up to his skeletal form in tight folds

The skin of an asshole encircling the anus

he wiped a tear as he laughed

his laughter grew silent as it grew more intense
the volume picked up by my family as they joined

Grandmother admonishing

tutting her tongue as only grandmothers can

A steady familiar rhythm

The monitoring machine crashing out its single tone

the song of robots excreting drugs

his ragged breath ruining the metronome

With organic imperfection

Lines that should have been straight

followed the lines drawn by the grain

The wood fell away as he guided my hand

The threat of the blade's bite distant under his thick aroma

Cigar smoke and aftershave

The white stubble of his chin

Almost disappearing in an insipid pale sea

His lips lost, sagging flaccid into his mouth

dry and dark

His teeth were lost during the last scan

He popped them back in

His grin took on its old form once again

he stood and walked out of the room triumphant

His favorite trick

Brought out only for special occasions

continue...



At an unyielding speed by Beatriz Alegria Fernandes

Our voices joined in song
hospital hushed, soaked in sadness
His knee rising from the bed knob-topped.
Rail thin, an exquisite rictus

This is the last time I'll see him.