



The Old Man

Wesley Hauwei Chou¹

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I have five years, he said,
Not long after greeting us at the door.
He recites this as an axiom:
Sun shines, birds fly, the tiresome lot.

Strong hands, wiry legs, he flies from the chair.
This is not the face of death I dreamt
Written in a man's face and stoop.
I see him leading every procession of
Canes and walkers
Gathered for a meal.

Do you feel your needs fulfilled, we ask.
Though what we really mean is,
What do you even need?

I walk for my groceries, he said.
Sometimes I stop by the senior center
Not very often.
I don't think it's for me.

What about the rug, I ask.
He brushes over my fear of those tassels
Streaming across that hardwood floor,
Speaking of Tibetan mystics and patterns.

✉ Wesley Hauwei Chou
Wesley_Chou@hms.harvard.edu

¹ Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA, USA

We interrupt:
What made you decide to come here?
I have five years, he repeated.
I have some sum of money
And I hope to die with
None left in the bank.

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