



1975

Untitled

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KATY NEWBERG

My grandfather's in a rest home.
That's what they call it.
I think it's death row.
Patients condemned there to die,
no dignity left.
Can't even decide what they'll have for lunch.
But I'm going to go visit him.
I hate going there.
Everyone stares at me when I walk in.
The lobby is filled with them:
Sitting there, watching each other.
He's been there 3 years,
ever since his wife died.
He's got kids, but they don't want him.
Too much trouble.
Every Christmas we all make the annual pilgrimage
to see him.
We do our duty and absolve our sins.
I went last time.
But he wrote me a letter.
He wants me to come see him.
I could tell it was him from the envelope.
The writing was all shaky.
Thursday after school I go see him.
I'm on his bed, and he sits in his chair by his dresser.
We talk about school and my parents,
but I'm just being polite and he knows it.
He looks so old.
Stuck in this box with a bed that's too short.
An off-white bedspread with green roses.
Stains in the carpet.
Smiling nurses walk the halls with supper trays.
I leave him, saying I'll be back next week.
I can't stay any longer.
Saturday night he died in his sleep.