He's Gone

Ted Bennett
HE'S GONE

A slow realization,
cold syrup drooling from a bottle.
I walk closer.
My grandpa.
Sunken eyes and cold hands like pieces of white ice.
Wrapped in pure lace frosting and
stiff wood
and brass handles.
His favorite harmonica in my hand,
the antique one from Germany.
Dry tongue, bland face.
Strangling collar and tie.
Hot sweat turns my hair dark at the edge of my face.
Grandma with a drawn look—
taxy being stretched or silly putty.
Her crooked plastic smile.
All these people interrupt.
Shiny black shoes with thin, waxed string laces.
Pressed tan pants.
Navy blue suit coats, pink dresses.
"He was a fine man,
I'll always remember that time when he..."
"Such a shame. Oh, they did a good job on him, though."
There's a lion roaring in my head. I'm whirling.
Don't talk to me, don't pat me on the back.
I just want to be here with
my grandpa.
A hand is choking me, I can't breathe.
Heads turn—
I'm a circus act.
The bathroom.
Alone,
and I'm playing that
old harmonica and crying.

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