

Ageless

The Bright Red I had only seen before
When climbing the rafters in the abandoned shrine
To find the doves' nests Sean Gilliam said were there
I brought the sleeve to my nose and pulled away
Red streaks, brilliant and terrible
I never found out if Sean was a liar

We stared at it on his gown, the same Bright Red
The two of us, looking at it, wondering
Could it please just go away on its own
I wouldn't tell Nurse Bynum that I ever saw it
And I don't think Granpa would have either
Except it stretched like red calligraphy

We sat in the yard in twin wicker chairs
The red clay brick baking in August
The bottoms of my feet grew hot through my shoes
He told me of Hawaii and pulled a nickel from my ear
Time stalled somewhere near the birdbath
Between where the hummingbirds came and we always sat

He named his wheelchair Sweet Betty Lou
For luck, he told me, and to make Mamaw jealous
I sat by his makeshift bed in the living room
But I was too old to have nickels in my ear
Ms. Cody came by every Wednesday afternoon
To bring casserole and fresh weiswurst

With Mamaw gone, he went to Park Shadows
So many faces, but I picked him out
"It's rocket fuel for Sweet Betty Lou"
He tapped the green canister and winked
Or tried to, but he saw I knew, like when
Dad told me his gray hairs were glints from the sun

And don't worry about me I have bridge every day
And remember to listen to your father
And are you earning high marks in school now
And you probably want to be going soon
But all I wanted was the red brick
Where my feet were hot and time was near the birdbath

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