

The Facts of This Life as Its End Approaches

by Gary Hardaway

The knees remind you: you are old,
and broken, and unlikely to improve
at anything the world and you
find valuable. The mirror tells you how
much uglier you are. The growths
that proliferate because the immune
system fails, the grotesque displacements
of the abdomen, the fatty deposits,
the abdication of hair to strange locations
hair has not before thought necessary.

Avoid the mirror. Avoid the websites
that speak to your afflictions
and diminished expectations.
The brain, of course, tells you
you are still nineteen and invulnerable.
The brain knows nothing and lies
to you each day, striving to avoid
its death by suicide by factions
the brain cannot control.

The struggle continues, augmented by
the strict routines the still stern mind
imposes: pee first, then slip on the house shoes;
brush the diminished teeth and rinse
with store brand mouthwash; comb
the night's tangles out of silver and
thinning hair; set the morning pot

of coffee to brew; smoke the day's
first cigarette on the small patio
and watch for cottontails and squirrels
and the occasional outdoor cat;
put away yesterday's dishes, pans,
and glasses, automatically washed and dried.

Drink the two small glasses of water
the body craves to rid itself of waste.
Enjoy the day's first cup of sugared coffee
as you read your Facebook feeds.
Minutia make the man and keep
him focused on the many more
that make the day bearable for the next.

