Hospice Valediction

by Mathew Paust

From a high branch among cranberry-red leaves of the dogwood across the street a mockingbird trills his virtuoso appreciation to the dawn sun's chromatic whimsy in the stratus layers floating placidly far above while nearer the unmarked columned portico, its autumn flag aflutter in a chilling breeze, youthful willow oaks grant solemn attention to the aluminum gurney

bearing a black-wrapped figure as it rolls in silence to the plain van at the curb.

In a moment the lone attendant secures the gurneyed figure and without a word drives it away.