

Graybeard – a Series

by Gary Hardaway

Graybeard on the Dance Floor

He dances, despite
not knowing how,
with no apparent
sense of rhythm,
graceless as a
pickup truck
on ice but much
less dangerous,
injuring no one
but dignity,
mindless of bulk,
mindful only
of the body's
physical joy
in music moving
through the muscled bones.

Graybeard Watches the Playoffs

They're a good excuse
to start the beer at noon,
he notes.

Graybeard Foresees the Future

Already they're taking away his books and replacing them with
Nooks and Kindles. Next, they'll take his post office, his letters,
cards and neatly printed paper statements. Then, they'll take his

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personal checks and cash and force him to use their digital traps.
When they finally take his coffee, cigarettes, and booze and replace
them with electromagnetic zaps to the brain, he'll have to pack it in
and pack up all his sensory spurs and palpable residue of real
thought and time and let them deal with his stinking corpse. "I'm
sure they'll have an app for that," he croaks.

Graybeard Rescues a Kitten

He lights a cigarette on the porch.
The rain gives way to hail
like automatic weapons fire.
"Meow." He hears a small-voiced
panic in between the flash and clap.
"Meow, meow," he says
and sees the little silhouette approach
with caution through the fallen leaves and shrubs.
"Meow, meow, meow," it says
and there she is, smoke-dark with rain,
the skinny, skinny, blue-eyed cat
who'd found her respite.
"Look what I found," he says, inside,
showing the shivering bounty
of his bad habit to his wife.

Remembering Ronald Reagan, Graybeard Figures Out How We Could Feed the World

Drawers across America
fill with ketchup packets.
Collected, they could serve
Third World populations

daily vegetables for years.

Graybeard Takes Inventory

The abundances of age
are of commodities
no known demographic values:
hair at ear, nose, and throat-
evasive, course and dark;
spots and fatty deposits
on public skin;
cracked and faded photographs
of pets and people under earth;
instruction books and warranties
for small and large appliances
now corrupting land and water;
spurts of wisdom come too late
that sound like little more
than plaintive graybeard crankiness.

