

Calling the Nurse

by Mark Waldrop

The coffee cup was still full.

Black hot steaming
smoke signals climbed toward the
ceiling, like blowing soot
out of dirty bagpipe lungs.

The mug exhaled constant and slow
like the Fall,
until room temperature
crept from the handle around
white ceramic ghost and
met itself on the other side.

My father coughed smokeless rings of
pure tobacco in his paper lined
bed. The kind we used to make out of
tissue boxes to bury the birds.

I watched my reflection try to
work it's way out of his face
like plastic tubing trying to escape.
And somehow I knew I should drink it
before calling the nurse.

