

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.

