The Old Man (The End)
by William Morris

The dark staircase creaked as he crept down to the basement. The even whoosh-whoosh of the washing machine was comforting to him. He reached for the light as he entered the room. A dim bulb blinked on above him. There was a small table across the room from the washer-dryer combo. It was his work station. Many hours of his life had he spent there on various projects.

Upon reaching the desk he flipped a switch and flooded the table with greenish light. In the center of the table was a small wooden box, mahogany. A small latch hung on the front held shut by a tiny lock.

The old man removed the key from a leather strap that he kept around his neck and placed it next to the box on the table. Then he noticed his hands had begun to shake, trembling ever so gently. Outside the night was cold and the wind was blowing. If not for the steady whoosh-whoosh of the washer, he could hear it howling, almost calling his name.

 The box on the table seemed to be staring at him, waiting patiently. He picked up the key. The washer stopped shaking and the room was silent for a moment. The old man put the key inside the lock and opened it. He pulled the small lock off and unhinged the latch. His hands were still shaking. He opened the box. A purple velvet cloth filled the inside and folded over the top of it's contents. His hands were shaking harder now and he reached down into the box.

His wife had gone years ago. Cancer had taken her. His only son had died two days earlier in a car accident. He had no living family or friends. No reason to go on at all. He was old and lonely and ready for it to be over. From beneath the velvet cloth, he pulled the .35. He put it in his mouth and thought of his wife and son. Then he pulled the trigger. The washer clicked off the spin cycle and the only sound left in the room was the wind, calling his name.