

## **I will leave behind**

by George Burns

so many selves like snakeskins:  
a blue baby jumper with a sailboat on its chest,  
beached and left on the floor when I stood up,  
slapped my thigh and cantered  
through the chaparral canyons  
like a miniature Gene Autry,

whose cap guns I, in turn,  
traded for an M1 and fatigues,  
which were shed for tailored shirts  
that showed off my muscles,  
then the wedding suit—now covered with dust  
and half-slipped from its hanger in the closet.

Even my skin hangs loose. My wife  
says I look fine, but I know looks fade.  
These are the last miles. These old telomeres,  
like bald tires, won't go much further.  
What do I do with what's left?

Just yesterday, these shinbones  
climbed Cerro San Luis, strode the Cuesta Ridge.  
After the walker, the wheelchair, the box  
how do I thank them?  
Stand them out by the young elm,  
let them be wrapped in bougainvillea?

When Jack Kennedy got America  
into track suits and running,  
my thighs, with a million others, ran too.  
When I was six, these feet ran so fast  
they forgot to touch the ground.

Didn't these hip and pelvic bones  
love to gallop across the meadows of my day?  
Don't they still answer when they hear  
your soft whinny from across the room?

I know what I'll do with this grief:  
bury it beneath a papaya tree.  
Two hundred years from now,  
it will be wrapped into the roots,  
turned to sweetness.

I will this worshipful tongue—  
still learning to pray—  
to the river, the delta  
where it touches the sea.

These eyes, (how hungry they've been,)  
in love with skies and faces, flips of hair,  
the curves of a woman's body,  
where can I put them?  
My skull? My clouds of wondering?

I'll tell my wife  
to leave them on the porch railing,  
toward the sun slipping into the Santa Lucia,  
oh simple mountain range,  
oh patron saint of the blind.

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