

JEAN SHECKLER BEEBE

The Boy Next Door, 2010
acrylic on canvas, 48 x 36 in.



photo: r.r. jones

MARGARET ELYSIA GARCIA

The Last Song

It's been two weeks since
my grandfather has said a word
without a tinge
of bewilderment.

Did I break the law? he asks.
What did I do that they should lock me away here?

Now he says nothing at all.
The breath is slight and difficult
blood pressure fifty over nothing, failing
but he has a literally undying heart.

He stares up at white hospice ceiling,
of brochure-ready, comfortable surroundings
that condemn: this is where we send you to die.

*(down in the west texas town of el paso...
eydie gorme sings personalidad
the mariachis line up to welcome him
gold buttons on brown suits
the next player will soon arrive)*

Those that knew him wanted to know
what was behind that sweet, wrinkled face,
a whisper of life, not fully realized.

Last night I played my guitar:
it was his guitar: an old Sears *Silvertone*,
not special, not rare,
but a stubborn sweetness in the body,
a solid 50s suburban sound—like him.
The greatness of the instrument,
in its endurance: its willingness
to play the same notes, the same songs.
Not trying anything too complicated.

Go on and go beyond
the wailing walls and womenfolk
standing around, waiting.
Tune it out, tune it up, go on—
put that tension in the strings;
there are beautiful songs to play still.

Margaret Elysia Garcia writes poetry, fiction, and memoir. "The Last Song" is part of her new series of poems *The Alzheimer's Cul de Sac*. Other poems from the collection have been published in *Huizache Journal*, *Spiracle Journal*, *The Egg*, and *Random Accessed Poetics*.