

POEM

Clouds

You spent most your life
with your head in the clouds
of smoke that billowed forth
from the O-shaped mouths
of the ones you love.

You never smoked
so much as one cigarette
in all your cloudy days
spent in places you came
to call bittersweet home.

Your parents and husband
fought for breath and coughed
blood before dying one by one,
leaving you and your
dear daughter all alone.

You lived on as a widow
who sold bright bouquets to
people who knew you by a
smoker's cough, a cheeky smile, and
photos of your granddaughter.

When the time came for you
to fight for breath and cough blood,
you felt a poignant love
for the grand one who shaved
her tiny head for your cure.

The chemo made you
bald like your granddaughter
and vomit like your daughter
yet kept you alive for
the birth of your grandson.

All winter, your oncologist
wore the crochet scarf
that you made especially for her
just before moving out
of your bittersweet home.

Your family often visited
your spacious hospice room
to be there with you as
you faded like the old
flowers in your closed shop.

You spent your last days
with your head in the clouds
of soothing words that flowed forth
from the inverting, U-shaped mouths
of the ones you love.

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