

The Day Nixon Died

by Philip F. Clark

I was in the hospital
the day Nixon died.
I remember thinking, 'Good.'
I was filled with thin red tubes,
like the red licorice strings
of candy, as a child, I ate
nibbling like there was no
tomorrow.
I watched the television news
of his death: the face of a man
I never liked because of the war.
But I was now in a war, to survive.
The body is such a simple thing;
take care of it or die.
Nurses quietly crept in to ask,
"How do you feel?" I felt fine,
attended to, and for a while away
from anything but the urge in me
to get better. To get what was
inside me, out: an empyema,
having grown its hard liquid
in me like a stone.
And so my blood was infused;
cool medicines resided
in my veins, air-conditioning
my blood with something
without pain. The stone subsided
day by day. "How do you feel?"
"I feel fine."
Sleep was never constant;
someone in the other bed would moan,
or late attending guests of the dead

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would linger long past their time.
I watched nurses fret and doctors frown.
Day after day, the news droned.
"His legacy . . ." My legacy
had yet to be. Blood is thicker
than water they say. Not to me.
I rose one day, the stitch in my
side gone. The fever had crept
away. My sweat was dissipated,
and so I lifted out of the bed
and the sun was up. I watched
the last of the news. I felt fine.

