Anemoia

by Gerald Smith

Under this century of weight,

I feel empty.

You, who lived it all, how much are we akin

To the elusive snow fox

Who hides under the blankets of blizzards?

Who can only run from the sight of a gun?

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I miss you grandfather, old bear, Rugged bourgeois Russian from nowhere, No nationality man, not French, never Dutch, Un-American; I see you with a broad face And a laugh at anything but the past.

I've heard you were a swimmer
In Monaco at the Villa. On bright mornings,
You swam the coastlines and loved to go out on a boat
And scare little Tante Sasha and Rosita
Out in the middle of the blue
"Misha" they'd cry in black and white
"Where are you, Misha? Why'd you leave
Us?" You, puzzle made fuzzy by time,
Were always ethereal
If that simply means enigmatic
And silent. Mom hated it. Love
Never leapt from your tongue and
You always had a garden for affection.

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Anyway. How was cancer? I suppose
I should prepare. How'd you and Oma
Prepare? How did the fissure
Between your minds begin? Did it
Burrow in through little mistaken words
Cracking confidences or did every gesture
Carry too much sensitivity, and
So masks might've been salves to truth's burns

After this quarter life crisis, I wonder
When did you learn we lost? Was it the Caucuses'
Chill as you beside a cart with your mother,
Three sisters huddled and the youngest
Clinging to your father's
Out-of-use coat?

Could it have been when the little Frenchies Jeered that the Russian bear couldn't swim? Or when mom mentioned she'd met An American Man?

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Grandfather, Dedushka, I want to hear
A dry joke, something about Napoleon's men in the snow
And their dissolving buttons,
Or anything about Oma's proper Dutch face
When she saw you with two oranges
Under your shirt.

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Nichevo strasnovo, indeed, when We both have become stones smoothed Under wind and snow.