

**Editor's Note:** *The author writes, "The poem began sometime in 2004 with the emotion of the last line and the doctor alone in his house. It took some years to write the story of what brought him to this retirement villa, how he felt, who still was alive in his family, and what he might do about it." G. H. Mosson is the author of two books of poetry. He lives in Maryland with his family, practices law, and writes.*

## Ghost Villa

I retired to the villa of our blueprinted dream  
on a roadless isle in the Gulf of Mexico, Florida's coast just beyond  
sight, except on clearest days. Today, workmen have finished the stonewall  
that rims the four acres my surgeon's hands have earned:  
grounds and pond I call my own—artifact in the making. As they walk off  
toward the ferry dock, I play *Love Supreme*, and its horn waking up  
fills the living room and investigates the sunset.  
Of sweetheart trinkets stored in a wooden drawer,  
and heirloom knick-knacks, I'm the sole map.  
Even the best island detective could not  
unpuzzle that the Mayan rug tacked-up  
above the beige sofa where I now lounge  
is the sole relic from our thirty-year's marriage  
when I sold the house after Mara died.  
I think of the twin willows on our street, shading  
out the news with shadowy hues. I watch them  
in my mind again, like a controlled explosion  
glimpsed from a gin-and-tonic bunker,  
fortified with a nightcap of vermouth.

Well, these ailments are routine. I walk at will  
in a wave-combed sun. I could've been sentenced  
to some planned community, wearing a provisional nametag.  
The nursing home is out there like a shark  
that has swallowed so many of my patients one by one.  
My jazz goes *tum-tee-ta, tee-ta-tum*,  
like Thelonious Monk taking a phrase lighter  
than dropped pennies across a piano to groan  
with veteran's moans. I have been wandering  
the house again, talking  
to my reflection in the living room window.

Enough ... a postcard on the foyer's writing desk,  
beneath the medieval monk paperweight  
from my son John—'his knee is doing well'—  
beacons for a response in the room's aglow bubble.  
(Well, how can I ditch this retiree's crown,  
even if *would* sours to *wasn't* in my hands?  
I used to tell patients: Confide to heal. Then  
maybe I should dash back home to slow dance  
in good old Clearwater to those hard-to-hear torch songs?)

Especially on nights of soliloquies to glass,  
I need the sympathy of astronauts to fall asleep.

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