

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Timothy Liu: Two Poems

Timothy Liu · Tuesday, February 3rd, 2026

Hide and Seek

My father lies in a hospital bed
at supper time, and no one knows
where he has gone, if he has taken

his last breath. My phone now
strangely silent. Was I mistaken
not to hop on a plane right after

the family Zoom when we decided
to pull the IV, his infected lungs
drowning in fluids the nurses

were pumping in, he'll never eat
or drink again, that much we know,
his cranium filled with blood

pooling in the wrong places—
CAT scan slices on the monitor
taking the place of calendar days

torn off the wall, his bathroom fall
looking more fatal by the hour
after he took his final piss

on his own, *good job Dad!, you did
just fine, now come back to bed
like a good ole boy and lie down*

once and for all. But the call
doesn't come. All I know
is I'm not there in room 356

three thousand miles away.
Did they move his body overnight

from the ICU to the hospice

ward where he's been promised
comfort and care, this man
who can no longer speak, his wife

at his side, sleepless, responsible
for the bathroom fall she says
when trying to change him

out of his vest, no A/C under house
arrest in a brownout run a riot
in a worsening drought, *there, there,*

let me cool you down, his body
slipping from her grasp, the weight
of him substantial for such a

gulping fish, a fracture
spider cracking from his right
eye socket, black and red, two types

of blood mixing on the linoleum
on a paint-by-numbers day
the 911 paramedics could paint

with their eyes closed, my dad
on a stretcher, in a hospital bed
held up on a phone in my brother's

hand, best to say your goodbyes
before it comes to this, better
to plan ahead, and I still don't know,

and no one's telling me, my phone
deadly silent, and I am hiding
in a cul de sac at the very end

of a suburban block underneath
some bushes, no one calling out
olly olly oxen free, and you know

I've found such a perfect spot
that no one's ever going to find me
when they've all gone in for supper.

*

The Inheritance

My father's Omega Seamaster
runs slow. He was the one
who taught me: *time*

is uneven. Ever wait up late
for a father to finally
come home only to never

show up until you've fallen
sound asleep in a room
with only a TV to keep you

company? There, there,
he said, carrying me upstairs
to my bed, When he dies, I will

only inherit this: a watch
my mother had engraved
after landing her first job out

from grad school and spending
an entire paycheck on a man
I also loved in those years

before I was born. I want you
to have this, he says a few
years after his stroke,

something he kept hidden
from the woman who took
the place of my mother.

For some reason, I don't
bother asking what exactly
my mother had engraved

when I take a Jaxa wrench
to the waterproof back
only to discover what was

never there. My father
must have never bothered
to open it, nor did my mother.

The jeweler must have
forgotten whatever words
my mother had intended—

space is not empty, distance
is malleable—and in all

those decades that intervened—

they both simply believed.

(Featured image from [Pexels](#))

This entry was posted on Tuesday, February 3rd, 2026 at 7:20 pm and is filed under [Poetry](#).
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