

In honor of Augusto Pinochet Ugarte, Senator-for-Life,
on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the establishment
of democracy in the Republic of Chile

pinochet

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The rumor skipping from ear to ear
Through phone lines and street encounters' claims
With every day, your breathes grow more labored,
Your joints increase in ache and your movements flex less;
You are hardening in soul crust.
One story says a few weeks ago you tried to pick up a cup of tea and,
Instead, you knocked it off the table. It shattered at your feet.
You did not have the strength to yell for your aide to come clean it up.
You waited.

Soon, your last leg will arrive.
I ask to make up for the ceremonies
I was not invited to during your reign,
To be present for your Day of Judgment, when your life
Starts to pass before your eyes: when crystal eyes take over;
When you pin yourself against what you have forgotten.

I want to watch
When your fever's peaking and you have no strength,
When the difference between equator heat and polar cold begins to blur.
I want to watch you view those scenes,
Watch you feel for the first time what you should have felt then,
Scenes from your illegitimate ascent to power you claimed
Necessary to prevent the same grip you squeezed;
Those scenes when we were clay and you were king.
When we looked into each other's eyes and saw only the stain of your violent fates,
When the sound of night footsteps was ominous pinpricks just shy of breaking skin;
When even thinking those thoughts deep inside cautioned someone might be listening;
When we looked at your world and doubted our own conclusions;
Those scenes you justify, or more likely deny, with words you deny from times
You now say you are too old to account for;

Times when you stalked the palace halls in the evening
And we feared we were in your thoughts.