

the boy stood restless

the boy stood restless before a broad bisecting mirror in borrowed reading glasses
squinting
pursing
trying to picture himself as an old man
as old as his father
or perhaps even older

as an aid he drew with grease pencil
unsteady lines
across his forehead
And beside his eyes
but
he found the illusion unconvincing

it was wrong
all of it
the makeup and too-big lenses accented his youngness
rather than masking it
and he wiped at his face
leaving smears in hatched patterns

more frustrating even than his inability to look old
was
his inability to feel old
even in grease and spectacles he was very consciously
a boy
playing games

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he could no more imagine his older self
than a flame can imagine ashes

.

it was many years before he thought to be grateful for this memory.