

This Will Hurt

by John Woodington

He is tubes

tethered to a totem
of toxins and suction
His mother weeps
against the window
already gushed with rain
He cannot eat until
his body realigns
Already the ID bracelet
slides freely
from wrist to elbow

These are broken:
five ribs, pelvis
lung—collapsed
spleen—ruptured, removed
He tears up at the thought
of ever driving again
He says the medic held a needle
said, “This will hurt,”
and pierced his lung
When I ask if it hurt
he looks left
and clicks the morphine button
strung down over his chest

