

Triage

By Daniel Ginsburg

To lighten the
pall in Urgent Care,
you danced, your arms
swinging between hips,
faster than any possible
rhythm. Then you sat
awkwardly, waiting.
We didn't know
about your

C2 break

Now, in the ER, you lie
on a steel table, my son, age ten,
muscular yet fragile, shivering,
diminished in your briefs, encircled
by doctors in scrubs, washed-out
like my blue eyes. They squeeze
limbs, asking *Can you feel this?*
Their triage, a verdict hanging
in the draft that spills through
doors of the ambulance bay:
*Orthopedic? Neuro-
logical? Do you concur?*

A social worker talks to me,
her smile oddly knowing –
a line blurring joy and grief.
I picture your face smashing
into mulch. You fling yourself
as if earth will soften for you,
as if solid objects will yield.
I'm scared of the hardwiring
you've inherited. If you're
broken, then I'm broken.
If your body, then mine.

Daniel Ginsburg earned a Master of Fine Arts in creative writing from American University. His poetry has been published in *The Northern Virginia Review* (Vol. 34, Spring 2020) and *American Literary Magazine* (Spring 2017). His poem “Black Snake Coiled in My Black Leather Sofa” is forthcoming in the 2020 issue of *Gargoyle Magazine* (Vol. 73), while his poem “Multiplier” will appear in *The American Journal of Poetry* (Vol. 10) on New Year’s Day, 2021. His English translations of Hebrew poetry by Israeli poet Shira Stav were published in *Pleiades: Literature in Context* (Vol. 37, Issue 1, Winter 2016). He lives in Potomac, Maryland.

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