

brother

You can hold a laundry basket now, I hear.

I remember not knowing what to do
when Dad called and instead of the usual,
No need to call back! I'm just checking in!
his voice on the phone said, You need to come home.

So I did when I could. I came back to see you
and your arm hanging limp in a sling
chapped with atrophy, the skin around your pec
a shrunken mess, the whites of your eyes
stained perpetual pink from the weed:
the only thing that could calm the lightning
splitting down your arm long enough to hold
a conversation, long enough to tell me
to stop making you laugh 'cause it hurt too much,
while doctors floundered to figure you out.
Nerves, they droned, are tricky.

Sign posts on backroads are tricky.
Motorcycles are tricky. Curves in the night
come up out of nowhere.

But you can hold a laundry basket now.
I oughta send you a roll of quarters.

Benjamin Watts
Brooklyn, NY