All This

Richard Solly*

*Iowa State University

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After a year of rain, four months of lying in the hospital, after shedding forty pounds, after weeks of wakening to a stranger tapping a vein in my arm to draw blood and snapping the rubber tourniquet, after a horde of nurses with needles, stethoscopes and thermometers introducing themselves, Terry, Shannon, Pat, each shift, each day of the week, after my abdomen, soft as a pear, is sliced open, stapled shut, then reopened again, four different times, until finally an open wound is left, large enough to lay my hand down inside, after my friends file one by one into my room before each surgery whispering to me, kissing my cheek and mouth, Jeanette humming lullabies to me, Roseann holding my hand for days, Jim crying, after tubes plunge down into my throat
to my stomach, up my nose,
in my penis,
through holes
the surgeons drill,
after months of holding
a pillow
against my abdomen
so it doesn’t spill
out onto the floor
when I walk
around the station,
after listening
to my dead father
say: *if you cross over,
we’ll meet you*
and alongside him
my sister in her yellow nightgown
at the foot of my bed,
after pain
becomes my only prayer,
my body moaning for God,
not caring who hears me,
after hypnotic drugs
convince me I am wounded
in the Civil War,
pleading that they
not amputate,
after five operations,
shaved, then scrubbed
with washcloths,
and waking up, soaking
with urine, delirious
and haunted, not knowing
whether it is winter or spring,
after all this,
the maple tree,
the red outside my window,
leaves me stunned.