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Reprise

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Reprise

His hip replaced. Four valves
bypassed. Now this. The tremors
shake his spoon as he
lifts it to mouth, lets
the potatoes slip down his throat.
Tabling the spoon, he reaches
for the towel bibbed
around shoulders and chest,
and sweeps his lips. Blinking,
he looks to my wife, to me,
says, *The roof's got a leak.*
His shoulders fall against
the high-backed chair
as he fingers the plastic tray
holding his meal, looks down:
Just one more thing
to add to the list. I trace the years
on his face: *Well, Someone*
must think your shoulders
are pretty broad. He laughs. Or
sighs. *I'm sure we can get it fixed,*
my wife says, wrapping herself
around his shiver. *You've got*
plenty of able bodies around.
He rises, then sinks in his chair,
and traces the bowl of lukewarm stew:
Maybe we'll just have to wait.
She looks to me, then says, *No.*
We'll come fix it before winter hits.
He swallows her words slowly and,
looks up:
It won't be a bad winter though.
He steadies his fainting hand
and reaches for his pills.

—Tyler Chadwick