

# THE SKELETON PIER

DEVON MOORE

All this falling I saw in the Carolinas,  
the summer the eye of the hurricane let loose  
its calm, the red ants hunting for safety, biting  
my sandaled ankles, remains—the dirt is sand here,  
the house is still there, the pier is broken wood,  
we're always shifting—dark grey bone-hard chairs,  
the porch on which a bright green lizard froze.  
Do you know there are companies that rent the beds  
on which our fathers die? The metal frame and mattress  
have been aired out and sent to the home  
of a different dying man—

We were surprised then, at all this falling,  
even though it was the most certain thing—my father  
teetering over the threshold, my shock at beholding him,  
a skeleton pier, too tall and narrow to stand—  
and this was all before the tumors moved, hinged  
black masses on white spine and he would fall  
down to the ground every time he rose—

See the scene I replay, the restraints, beige  
and velcroed, the complicated straps used to  
hold him down when he wouldn't stop standing and falling—  
standing and falling—*This is for your own safety—*

Eyes wide, the same shade of coal as mine—  
see the terrified ocean animal in him crawl  
up to peer behind his eyelids, see it reach out  
its deliberate strength and peel back each strap  
trapping him down, see my chest bone cracking  
open to show this hurricane heart still  
circling hope—*please, don't die...*

Later, when the nurse came in and saw  
the disassembled straitjacket splayed out  
like flayed skin drying across a cannibal's hearth—  
she said to me, *if you're going to unstrap him, we won't be  
held responsible for his safety*—and when I tried  
to explain that it wasn't me, she said,  
*it's not possible, he's not strong enough*—

I should have said then that she had no idea  
how strong we can be—the animal of my father's life  
was heaving itself over the metal bed frame.

It wanted to stand.