

## All Went Well

A drainage hose snakes from the gaping hole  
in his neck. A nurse steers his gurney.  
Wincing, he waves, flashes a grin.  
Everybody's friend, always ready for a game,  
he loves puns and kids, he's liberal with clichés.  
Even on his back, he's combustible.  
He goes well into the maw of 50-  
50. I am unfazed: I have mastered  
my father's lessons in denial.

Hours trickle by.

Then the doctor's in the corridor,  
green scrub cap, surgical mask tendrilled  
onto his chest.

*All went well . . .  
we began to suture, but  
couldn't stop the bleeding,  
and we lost him.*

The floor gives way. Light dust mattes its waxy sheen.  
The doctor wears brown shoes. A broom bristles  
toward me. A custodian, smooth dancer  
on linoleum, keeps time pushing the push broom,  
which chants *and we lost him, and we lost him.*