

Listing to Port

Shira Richman

Seven days until summer
and over half of accidents
happen within five miles
of home.

In my Bronx
classroom, in the last
twenty minutes before winter,
four hands tightened
to fists.

I thought we were all
laughing—at definitions
made up
for inconceivable words—
and then Chris
fastened Martin to a desk
with his arm—
a spindle,
knuckle needle
up and down
making durable seams.

Seven days until summer
and this school year we've talked so little
I wonder if it's been
your worst
since sobriety moved in,
dumped your needles, bottles, and pills.
Ever since I heard your lumbago's back
and Papa gave you his surplus
OxyContin, all I can think of
is OxyContin, and I keep thinking of you
with OxyContin.

Seven days until summer
and my head's a mess
of neighborhood crashes,
fistfights pounding with
Christmas. I'll tell you this:
I don't want
any more years without you.