

Downstream from the Hospital

The boy glides through the water,
Swimming past his life on land.
His struggles—his grandma
In Room 4, his mom questioning
How many days we'll have left
With her—each thought
Disintegrating into bubbles.
He belonged gliding through the water,
Or so he thought.
Opening his eyes in a stormy sea,
The water now does not flow with him.
Instead, he's propelled towards
The finish: the hospital,
A polished white obelisk surrounded
By tents And RVs,
Which lays untouched beyond
The sanded lip of approaching beach,
As waves of people seeking care
Pour through the doors
Of the building where
Peeling paint scales the walls
And each hospital bed is separated
By a single curtain
On the hospital's only floor.
The floorboards creak as
The lone doctor scurries
To help multiple patients,
Embers clinging to life,
Surrounded by pouring rain.
Hundreds of people wait
In a line outside of the hospital.
Meanwhile, his grandma overlooks
The same ocean the boy just glided
Through, deciding which medication
To buy this month. She's unsure
Whether to treat her long COVID
Or her diabetes. She makes her
Choice, waits for the boy to return
With comfort.