HONORABLE MENTION

Elegy in a Stairwell

RDB 1906–1985

It wasn't my regular day,
but when I arrived he lay
on the landing in jacket and tie
dressed for the occasion.

Step by step
his discoverers left.

"The staff think he slipped,"
the young officer said.
"They called right away.
Where he was going . . .
Or why . . ."

The jacket and tie he would wear
the rest of my life,
the mask of good-bye.

". . . I said, 'In the interests of time,
would you mind pronouncing
your father dead?'"

More sons have killed their fathers
than done so, I thought,
drawing my stethoscope.

Or is it the same, one myth
twisting in the brain,
one nightmare
of estrangement?

Listening,
I became another doctor.

DANIEL C. BRYANT, MD
Cape Elizabeth, Me.