Russell Buzby

Statement

They take it from you while he's still warm,
the constable with the clipboard and the careful voice,
asking you to start from when you first arrived.
You start from when you first arrived.

You leave out the smell. There's no field for the smell.
You give them time, and direction, and the colour of the light,
the position of the vehicles, and what you did with your hands.

You leave out the sound. There's no field for the sound.
You give them the names of your crew, the names of the witnesses,
where you found them, and what you did with your tools.

You're good at this. You've done this before.

What you don't say, because they never ask:
that you held the door shut on the worst of it
so the ones still standing on the gravel
could keep the last clean version of a face.

That you spoke to him the whole way down.
That you used his name once you found it on his licence,
the way you'd call a man up out of sleep,
though you knew, though by then you both knew.

You carried his name to the back of the fire truck
and wrote it down, and now it lives in a folder
marked with a date, in a building
where the dead are tidied into findings.

The coroner wants the facts and you will give them.
For the record. For the file. For the mother
who will read it one day looking for the part
where her son was not alone, and will not find it,

because there is no field for that either,
because the form does not believe in company,
only in times and distances and the names of streets.

He was not alone. I was there.
I am the field they left off the form.