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Accident Report

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Accident Report

For my son, who fell in foreign mountains

The weak rock broke. He tumbled hard. He lay,
broken himself, for I don't know how long,
gasping, alone, blood pooling in his lung.
Who found him there? Who called for help? Did they
wait with him, as darkness dimmed the day?
And did he speak? Or was the only sound his tongue
could toll an inarticulate song
of pain? He couldn't—still can't—say.

I couldn't even ask—his ICU
an intercontinental flight away, his bed
unreachable. I only know what I went through:
terrifying voids, my head
howling for a tube like the one in his chest, to drain
the scenes that spread and pooled inside my brain.

Eric Colburn

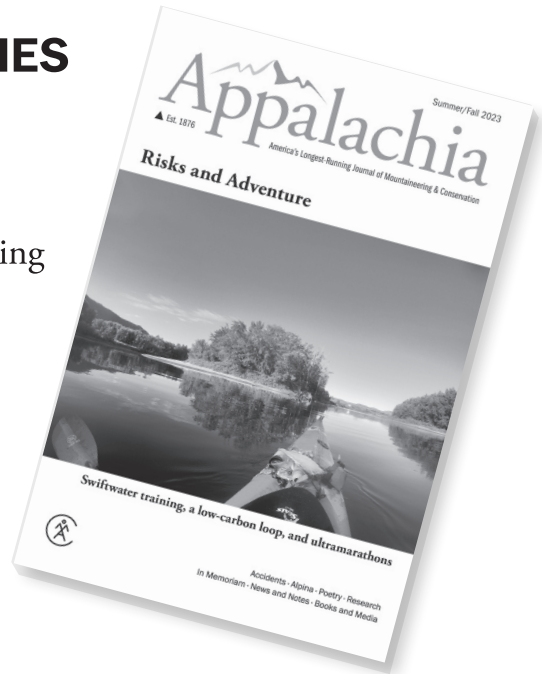
ERIC COLBURN lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with his wife and children. He is a longtime reader of *Appalachia*, especially *Accidents*, which helped inform many winter camping trips in the White Mountains and on Katahdin, as well as a one-day Presidential Range traverse in 2018 with his teenage son, Gabriel. Gabriel fell while hiking in Europe in October 2022. Getting so little information about what had happened was difficult. Fortunately, Gabriel is healing well from his four broken ribs and punctured lung.

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