

TOUGH

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as iron spikes not for the train's rail but my body nailed
by rogue cells boring my colon's lining

not like wood-chewing wasps who spit out paper
nests lined with empty combs waiting

for new larvae my digestive aisles ulcerated
body could not keep up surgery

removed ascending descending
useless organ I do not grieve rare complications

lungs susceptible to infections *stay away from*
me *tough* the word so close to *touch* the night

one son had a cough I left
found a hotel rubbed the calluses on my fingers thought

of rock walls and the climbers
I communed with relived the pitted face

of El Cap ratcheting up ropes and spikes in cracks
hitched together ascending another pitch at the top

rare when I slipped the grip of the grey cloud that lingers
inside that time the last climb air

too thin needed to descend unhinge lungs needed
to hold my kids but not too close