

*Chain-Smoking Mavericks
at the Crestview Center for
Health and Rehabilitation*

BRENT TAYLOR

It's strange how there are some things
about yourself you'll never know
until that thing changes—for instance,
a man's leg below the kneecap
might weigh the ten pounds
his doctor told him he needed to lose.

I'm starting to think the world measures things
on a different scale than a man,
and that's why sometimes things are added
where they hardly seem needed,
and others are subtracted
that you thought you couldn't live without—

maybe that's how a man survives
a massive heart attack and a triple bypass
only to go blind from cataracts
and wind up sleeping at the Atlanta Union Mission.
Maybe that's why when he can see again
(or when he thinks he can),
he sees an infection in his toenail
as trivial—there ought to be a reason, right?
A reason the world kills some men quick,
takes others a piece at a time.

There's a word for it
when you can feel your foot
like you still have both feet
flat on the floor—I've been sitting here
trying to remember it. All I know is
whether you know it or not,
you can live with it the rest of your life.