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## The Plural of Grief

My mother is the needle  
of a thready pulse, a hand always  
divining fever. At her job, in a room  
for emergencies she held a dying  
teenager, stabbed for 75 cents.

A nurse dotes on death and comforts  
toward life. Because she held  
my labored leg as my son  
first flared, when moment  
mutates to monument.

Later, after his emergency,  
she says, pinch his chest,  
watch for obedience,  
a response to pain stimuli—  
the fine tripwire of consciousness.

As though anything could lapse  
as a wave toward shore, shawl  
from shoulder, consciousness  
so refined it's a biblical village carved  
on an olive pit, a tourist's name  
on a grain of rice. A tiny  
body once passed through me  
to an all-the-time almost emergency.  
This world to whatever's next,  
where a boy fills his chest wound  
with quarters, a mother suspends  
another mother's gravity.