

Needle stick at 4:45 p.m.

A risk.

An accepted one in this profession.

My chocolate-skinned student with
the lovely smile and purple head scarf
watches me, her eyes much older than mine.

She says she will pray for me
to her God, my God, our God
to deliver me from the bonds
of hepatitis, of HIV.

I sweat, sigh, offer up my arm
as the phlebotomist expertly siphons
payment in blood.

My elderly patient chooses
not to be annoyed at my ineptitude
and graciously gives his own
recompense for my sin.

It is doubtful he has any dreaded
disease that will kill me.

He knows this as I do
but we both bow
to the god of protocol.

I see only forgiveness in all their eyes.

—Lynette Lamp, MD

Illustration by Steve Derrick



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