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Florida

Stuart T. Gravatt

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Florida

by Stuart T. Gravatt

Her accent makes the needle
soft as she pushes it in to draw
the blood. I admire her dark
hand steady on the syringe. *Where were you
before?* I expect the nurse to name
some doc-in-a-box down the street.
New York, she says. *Before that,
Africa . . . Burundi*, and I suck
air through my teeth, watch the tube
filling. The war, her family? Half here,
half there, she says, unfolding
her story. A sister already here
brought her, her young son, to this Southern
backwater—*some family is better
than none*, I say, wondering
if it is true, and we both
laugh. She pulls the needle, presses
gauze on the wound, gives it to me
to hold. Her son in a Catholic
school, doing well. She is not
a nurse but a doctor, learned
her medicine in
French. She studies now to take
the Boards. *You did
good*, I say, as she tapes on
a Band-Aid, labels the tube. All day,
I say her name the way she did,
and wonder what it means
in Burundi.

