

**PQRST**  
**EMILIJA SAGAITYTE**

*P* is for pulse

Pounding against her fingers, fading  
To a subtle knock against skin, interrupting  
The shared moment that was her whole lifetime  
His lifetime now departing, his hand holding hers tight—  
The hand that traced letters of the alphabet, as she learned the lines

His fingers taught her to tell time,  
Tapping along to the hands  
Ticking on his silver watch, always far too heavy on his wrist  
Seconds you use to count the pulse,  
But time stops at this bedside

*Q* is for questions

For the round of ghosts judging from the door  
Today a blue coat hugs her shoulders, yesterday she was in white,  
Before, her a wielder of CABG, today a heart is two lopsided  
Cs drawn with him on her childhood floor

The surgeon gives the speech, she shivers,  
The young minds scribble—his potassium, they know  
Not his Sunday morning bananas over the bowl  
Of cereal he made her, no time to try

*R* is for respect

Without any tears, eyes exude empathy learned  
To sorrow she cannot unlearn  
She weeps into words she, for the first time,  
Cannot say

The young eyes attune, still full of hope  
His eyes open, for a moment hers mirror,  
She remembers the numbers, and it streams into the  
Pupillary abyss—the hope, almost gone

*S* is for stress

A heart arrested somewhere on a table  
Handcuffs tear into her skin—only crime is  
Shared pilfered memories—she bleeds  
Fear from her shaking hands into the makings of a hole-filled scarf  
She knits, the loops of sutures in another surgeon's command

*T* is for time,  
Not enough – they prep to close  
The door, it shuts, she sits beside him  
Worth a try, he says, they turn down the lights  
Still glistening for a moment, then go out the eyes