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Survivors

This is for all those who fraternize,  
who joined the severed society  
where meetings come to order in lists  
of lost parents, husbands, children, wives.  
On a good day, we compare the pounds  
we've lost. On a bad, how long  
the black knives like rain will last.  
Coming out the other side, a woman says,  
is like passing slowly  
through the eye of a needle.

Too bright, someone complains.  
I wade to the window in this room,  
hoping there's a bottom to guilt: the day  
we didn't answer, didn't turn  
and touch her hand.  
I pull the shade on our night faces.

It could be three years, I offer,  
having read it somewhere.  
My mother always said I could be tactless.  
One old man stares, his eyes under  
an eyebrow thick as a bandage.  
"I've lost my life," he says.  
"Don't you mean 'wife'?" I murmur and he pounces,  
a big cat, coiled, teeth sharp,  
the whole soft part of his hands  
sharpened like claws.  
We face each other, my scent his scent,  
tongues twisted with sorrow.

"Two years?" I plead  
and the air between us breaks.  
We stagger together, one loss apart,  
our homeless eyes citizens  
of a country where grief is king.  
No other place will have us.