The hardest skill – I find – is to recall

just enough to slake a question I predict

while auscultating fetal hearts at dawn:

“So, how was childbirth for you?”

My feet tread the same floors where you were born

four years ago today in a blood slick.

The hardest skill – I find – is to recall.

Their friendly question’s valued, but ignored,

instead discussing patterned baby kicks

while auscultating fetal hearts at dawn.

My now-annual zoetrope jaunts

memories of cords, drugs drawn, needle bricks,

lines, scribes, packets torn, algorithm scripts,

bimanual uterine massage tricks,

marinated towels, transfusion, constrict,

apologies fraudulent and authentic,

“Please, will you look up at me?”

The hardest skill – I find – is to recall

our near miss. Drapes on wards aren’t soundproof walls

and beats crescendo as fob watch ticks

while auscultating fetal hearts at dawn.

Their fundus tightens. They breathe deep, withdraw.

Supporting and needing support conflict.

The hardest skill – I find – is to recall

while auscultating fetal hearts at dawn

on your birthday: now you’re four.