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Final Form

Ellen M. Slatkin

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Final Form

*Ellen M. Slatkin**

When he died
I ripped the metal from my face.

In the mirror, I extended pliers on a pocketknife,
Clamped their tips around my shock

Wrenched it free
And it dangled midair

My horror is the least important—
His father's, cell-walled.
His mother's alone, deafening.†

*Ellen M. Slatkin is a 2025 J.D. Candidate at University of California College of the Law, San Francisco. She was a professional dancer before law school, and her poetry has appeared in *The North* - 68.

† I wrote this poem when I learned a young boy I worked with in the criminal justice system was killed. His father is incarcerated. His mother is left with several young children.
