

To sit with, Brian Zhao, Second Place

To sit with

They couldn't get a clean cut, that
space between abdomen and
gut-feeling. A year to live
or four—they cannot say.
You are incandescent
with unknowing. How hard
it is to be human
in the thrown shadow.
Like everyone else,
you once dreamed of falling asleep
forever. But even this peace
eludes you now.
What can I do
but sit with you.

Uncle, at night you
had no teeth. Your tongue
stuck out like a parched nub
of sunflower. What did we talk
about during those hours, when there
was only my crisp American and your gum
sounds and the soft slur of electricity.
Perhaps at the end you knew enough,
my touch unfelt against your swollen fingers
when I asked you to wake up
and the machine cried out.