



Water - 2nd Place

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An opaque silicone tube
punctures her belly.
Secured with gauze.
Connected to life
trickling down from an IV pole.
Food, medicine, hydration.

All that she needs.

My hand over hers,
I ask if she is comfortable.
Her brow furrows
above eyes squeezed tight.
“Water,” she begs.

Dry mouth and cracked lips.
I offer a wet sponge.
She grimaces.
I apologize, eyes downcast.
She cannot swallow.

I am doing everything I can.
I am doing absolutely

nothing.

We both breathe shallowly.
I look around the room
but hospital windows do not open.

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Poets have said
they find room to breathe
in the clean, white space between stanzas.

I breathe deeply into these pages.

The frenzy inside dissipates
through the vast blank space.
I feel the relief
I so desperately want to give to her.

I long to bear more for her
than just

witness.

Is there a ventilator setting
that would give her
room to breathe?

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