

Cooking Supper While My Sister Dies

She takes her last meal of sugar water and oblivion,
the needle keen as a knife, a double-edged bridge

she must cross into the Unsayable. *Wait*, I say, *wait*—
but she will not, nor can I go with her, delay

in each grain of rice, exile in the onions I chop so fine
I am word blind, my face wet with the rain

that was her grief, and mine, that we did not love
each other long enough. Black olives, then zucchini

diced, swept into a pan from the wooden board,
a heave offering to the wine dark sea.

And I must . . . I can only . . . I am left with . . .
this tomato, sun-ripened and taut, tinged green

at the pock where it let go of the vine. Into hinged
wedges I cut it slowly. Slowly. Wanting

her to be like a flower that opens into a summer night
of stars, breath by breath.

Wondering, *Is it here? Is it yet? Is it now?*