

“Chemotherapy” by [Sophie Cabot Black](#)

My friend is going through the fire on his knees,
His hands, crossing the entire field of it;
Once in a while he calls out, bewildered,

The other side unclear, wanting to just
Lie down and wait among the scattered stones.
Unimaginable heat: he pants, lost in the light

Of what keeps happening—think water, think water,
And he manages to make out one nurse
Up against the bright and it takes everything

To tell her what he needs, as if he had come upon
The one tree still standing, and understood
She promises nothing, who in her uniform

Was all that was ever asked for and who
Could hold him as he has never been held.