

WHERE I WENT WHILE YOU WERE DYING

this poem is *(about when your mother  
collapses in front of you)*

the emergency plan you don't have  
when the emergency  
comes.  
not knowing your mother's or sister's or sis-  
ter's

blood type.  
medications.  
history.

is *(about your mother  
telling you she is  
dying and then \_\_\_\_\_)*

in lieu of health insurance.  
anxiety over social worker called  
height weight charts. or

is *(what your mother's  
face looked like  
without oxygen)*

the story of your mother  
saving your newborn life. or  
waiting to find out if you've returned the  
favor.

this poem *(is about prying your  
mother's teeth apart)*

wonders whether you did all you could.  
says it will let you know.

this poem is

*(this is not a poem.  
about her saying  
she was dying)*

hope that grinds you down.  
neither here nor there.  
cannot remain present.  
not a gift.  
will not firm no or yes.  
passes hours without blinking its eyes.  
without waking up.  
does not know how to leave.  
a horrible bedside manner.  
cold hands and bad breath.

this poem is

*(this is not a poem. about  
her pitching into your arms  
and \_\_\_\_\_)*

the stuff your mother is made of.  
nothing you recognize.  
what's under skin deep.