

CHEN CHEN

Second Thoughts on a Winter Afternoon

Your mother is sick & all I can think of is how sick's
also a word for cool, like ill, though maybe ill

is becoming outdated, & sick too, & actually it's a lie
I can only think of that, I can also think of my mother,

how your mother's pancreatic cancer doesn't sound
as pretty as the problem my mother has with her heart,

heartbeat, & I can even think my mother has it tougher,
though it isn't cancer, & of course I'd think that, she's mom,

mommy, though of course this woman is mom, mommy
to you, & mommy is very sick, & actually I hate how words

get outdated or we outgrow them, & think you do, too,
saying things like *poochie* & *good gravy*, & maybe that's why I

call you sweetie pie & you call me sweet baby, & how can we
make things stay? how can I, when my brain is all wind, drift—

while you're on the phone with thoughtful relatives, I try to
sit, think nothing, but then notice dust swirling in a beam

of bright, so think, as I've thought since mom once told me,
that the light made the dust rise, dance, beautiful—

when on second thought, I can see the dust was just there,
just dirt, & the light only made it visible.