

*Hope Coulter  
Runner-up*

Giving Music

It sounded like something you'd find in a greeting card—  
"Music is a gift one person gives to another,"  
Someone said—and I thought, such a claim is banal, and hard  
To dispute. It's so lame. Then I remembered my brother.

Music is a gift one person gives to another.  
He'd make me listen to albums that got him excited.  
We'd dispute what was lame. I always remember my brother  
Turning the volume up. Whenever I was invited

Or made to listen to albums that got him excited,  
I'd feel so human. Like I mattered. He cared,  
Turning the volume up. Whenever I was invited  
I'd sit on his couch, in his truck. I was scared

I'd seem inhuman, like... It mattered he cared;  
He treated me like I was cool. Was it music he gave  
When I'd sit on his couch, in his truck? I was scared  
In ICU, but for him I tried to be brave,

Since he'd treated me like I was cool.

*The music you gave  
Has been with me the rest of my life—in my lungs, in my heart,  
Songs for wherever I see you, not crying, brave,  
Old songs for the dark road home. I did my part*

*While you fought for the rest of your life, for your lungs and your heart.  
I sang you back the best of the music you gave.  
Old songs lull the dark way home. I did my part—  
Sang you to sleep, and sang you into your grave.*

Someone said—and I thought, such a claim is banal, and hard.  
It sounded like something you'd find in a sympathy card.