

Everything Every Time

BY BRIAN RUSSELL

in a different version of this I'm the one
sitting up in bed while the nurse says
deep breaths listens to my lungs through
the cold antenna of her stethoscope you're
the one
sitting in a chair in the corner
with a half hearted smile plastered to your
face

in a different version of this
we're both in bed hunched over
while two nurses sisters actually listen
to our lungs your husband and my wife
sit in the corners of the room
both of them completely useless

in a different version of this I'm in a chair
in the corner while my sister sits up
in bed you're the nurse who listens
to my sister breathing you glance at me for
an instant and return my uncertain smile

in a different version of this I sit up
abruptly in bed I'm breathing deeply you
put your hand on my back and say
go back to sleep you're fine everything is
fine



Brian Russell's first book of poetry is *The Year of What Now* (Graywolf, 2013), which won the Bakeless Poetry Prize. Russell earned an MFA from the University of Houston, where he served as poetry editor for *Gulf Coast*. His poems have appeared in *Bat City Review*, the *Cincinnati Review*, *Epoch*, *Mid-American Review*, and *Verse Daily*. He lives in Chicago.