

Black for the People

The man I am with is black,
we are with nothing but white men.
He's caught, he says
they're going to shock him or burn him.
I say I'll be there.

But I'm not him.
He has to go into a machine where
two white men put him. The machine
saws loud into his back, three,
four inches, into his back.
Then they let him go. Not
wanting him alive, not wanting him dead.
Their knees grind over the sea
and make malice. What is love? What does love do?

—Jean Valentine