

Four Poems for the Living

**Little House on the Prairie**

Death's entry waits for silence.  
 Her heaving chest sucks at air,  
 conscious still of the sound.  
 Breath's undertone  
 hooks her presence here.  
 Listening is the last to go.

Carts clatter in the hallway. Friends  
 croon some old tunes for old times' sake  
*If you only knew, dear, my entire yesteryear.*  
 Music reverberates through every cell,  
 a relief when silently exhausted.  
 Free too, the clock's incessant itch.

Lay hush finally,  
 the struggle to receive.  
 Turn the dial low, beyond off,  
 through the os, and be reborn  
 an amplified instrument,  
 expansive base-note set... On

The story read aloud echoes deep:  
 the girl blazes across an open field  
 of rustling prairie grasses  
 ears deafened with wind,  
 blown from a limitless horizon,  
 toil clamoring just beyond the rise.

Ploughs furrow creases in time,  
 the din of measured work,  
 Pa's calloused hands pounds  
 that heart beat in her chest, Death's  
 resolute rap-tap-rapping on the roof  
 sheds shingles to the wind.

Pack-up the covered wagon,  
 hitch-up the horses,  
 leave the old house behind.  
 Turn, and keep looking back,  
 wave goodbye  
 until you can't see the barn... Off

## Peach Death

Puckered and soft  
 cling yet to the branch,  
 its rose blush plump,  
 in the sigh sway  
 of summer's heat.  
 The warm delight  
 of an afternoon's play  
 upon its surface,  
 dangling just  
 for sweetness, say,  
 this moment, alive.

Luxuriating too  
 in loosening skin,  
 in gravity's tease  
 at its grip. The moment  
 a blessed breeze,  
 unhinges the —  
*pok*

an easy release  
 and free fall,  
 trusting the rest  
 to its seed.

## Variations on the Word Breathe

The bookmarked page left  
 beside your bed, like a secret  
 guide to your mind's last enchantment,  
 held Atwood's dreamy whispers

and likely drew you fully under  
 to the pit of your suffocation fear,  
 with no one there to whisper  
 a word of protection: breathe.

Beside me, your body lay lifeless.  
 Yet, you-in-the-room entered me  
 timeless, and I breathed for you,  
 to allay all those straining years.

Breaths of such gentle sweetness,  
ins and outs bearing no distinction  
of beginning or end;  
taken only for the peace in it.

Mine, a gift of effortless breath  
while all-that-was-you filled me in and out.  
Yours, the small white flower you left  
suspended as pure beauty, to save me.

(Reference Margaret Atwood's *Variations on the Word Sleep*)

### **What an Insult Time Is**

What an insult  
time is.  
Cruel even,  
ticking away  
on and on  
following life.

No pause  
for death's  
arresting nature,  
just more *now*,  
the gap between  
lengthening  
like shadows  
at sun's fall.