Mouth wide. Drink this. Breathe in. Breathe out.
No work. Eat right. CAT scan. Chin up.
Breathe in. Breathe out. No air. No air.
Today? Tonight? It waits. For me.


One by One (1981)

They won't go when I go.

Stevie Wonder

Live bravely in the hurt of light.

C.H.R.

The children in the life:
Another telephone call. Another man gone.
How many pages are left in my diary?
Do I have enough pencils? Enough ink?
I count on my fingers and toes the past kisses,
the incubating years, the months ahead.

Thousands. Many thousands.
Thousands gone.

I have no use for numbers beyond this one
one man, one face, one torso
curled into mine for the ease of sleep.
We love without mercy.

We live bravely in the light.

Thousands. Many thousands.

Chile, I knew he was funny, one of the children,
a member of the church, a friend of Dorothy’s.
He knew the Websters pretty well, too.
Girlfriend, he was real.
Remember we used to sit up in my house
pouring tea, dropping beads,
dishing this one and that one?
You got any T-cells left?

The singularity of death. The mounting thousands.
It begins with one and grows by one
and one and one and one
until there’s no one left to count.