

Mouth wide. Drink this.  
Breathe in. Breathe out.

No air. Breathe in.  
Breathe in. No air.

Black out. White rooms.  
Head hot. Feet cold.

No work. Eat right.  
CAT scan. Chin up.

Breathe in. Breathe out.  
No air. No air.

Thin blood. Sore lungs.  
Mouth dry. Mind gone.

Six months? Three weeks?  
Can't eat. No air.

Today? Tonight?  
It waits. For me.

Sweet heart. Don't stop.  
Breathe in. Breathe out.

■

Melvik  
Dixon

O n e b y O n e (1989)

*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.*  
*Many 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.

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