

The Act of Breathing

It began on a snowy day in January.
It lingered in the passing days for months to follow.
But it does not define the moments that came after the resolve.
The act of breathing is now a reflex
No longer a strain.
I can finally let myself live.

When I first struggled to breathe, I lost myself in the false courage of summer
Convincing myself that faking it was better than falling apart.
I stood on a pedestal that was slowly crumbling
Expecting the memories to fall away gracefully
But I found I could not stitch myself together when it came crashing below.
How pathetic I was in longing for that opportunity so soon, without trying.
I fell asleep to a coping mechanism of projection as the blood spilled.
You do not remember to struggle in your dreams.

As the struggle became a concern, I longed for the bare minimum.
Longing for a reconnection to convince myself I was worthy.
To stop despising myself in a lack of clinginess.
And so I recreated a cycle of attachment
Until I was told to stop suffocating myself.
When you spend months hardening your ego
You do not realize that struggle is your own doing.

It was not until the end of the year I realized why I struggled to breathe.
Why the barbed wire around my neck left punctures in my throat
A noose I was never even aware of until I saw my reflection in dirty water
I told myself it was easier to not think, to not breathe
Although it takes more effort to ignore a natural behavior
Than to keep up with the act of lightheadedness, denial
Euphoria that had become so exhausting
I needed to remember how to breathe.

I still can recall the day I forced myself to let go.
I snapped open the steel encasing my throat with my bare hands
And as the crimson ran wild down my chest
I gasped at the dirty water:
BREATHE. JUST BREATHE.
DON'T LET THIS WORLD TAKE THE SIMPLEST WAY TO LIVE FROM YOU.
JUST. BREATHE.
And slowly but surely I felt the air reenter my lungs.

The clarity of reality flooded me.

Then it all set in.

The time I had wasted did not even matter.

Because I relearned to do the simplest action.

Breathing.

Sobbing and thrashing could come later.

All I needed to do was breathe.

I can sit and reminisce, and regret all I could have done.

I should have leapt farther, ran faster.

I should not have slipped up enough to choke for months in the first place.

But sometimes all one can do is obtain the courage to pull open the wires

To stay standing in a pool of your own wounds' excess

And force yourself to breathe again.

I am breathing now.

And breathing is always the first step to living.