



2020-2021

Article

8-24-2021

Breathe

Tori Thomas
Butler University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/the-mall>

Recommended Citation

Thomas, Tori (2021) "Breathe," *The Mall*: Vol. 5 , Article 2.

Retrieved from: <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/the-mall/vol5/iss1/2>

This Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the Undergraduate Scholarship at Digital Commons @ Butler University. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Mall by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Butler University. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@butler.edu.

Breathe

Tori Thomas

I greet the ocean around me with open arms. Her water fills my lungs and encompasses my body into a shrill, shivering coldness. I close my eyes and try not to continue swallowing more and more gulps of saltwater as I feel my body sink further and further into Her depths. I can see the sun of daylight through my eyelids as I just lie down and accept my fate. I am free falling at a forever going pace, and just for a second, I open my eyes, and greet my assailant.

There is a school of fish. Infinitely massive as thousands, no, millions of fish swim frantically around me, being careful not to disturb my flesh in its descent.

It's like I'm staring straight up the spiral of a tornado, and I catch the glimmer of the sun that has now gotten so far from where I've been falling. I get so lost in Her beauty that I almost forget that I'm drowning. But eventually the vastness and never-ending complexities of the ocean can no longer oppress the deep burning I feel in my lungs; the ache I feel to take a breath.

No.

This cannot be how I go. To die and leave my body to be fish food. To never see or experience such beauty ever again just for an exchange of blackness and peace.

So, I swim.

The burning in my chest intensifies every time I move a muscle. And despite my eyes being wide open, staring at the surface, willing myself to get there quicker, I see the dots in my vision. The fish are now behind me, and I desperately continue to claw my way to the top, clawing my way to survival.

Every single moment of my life has led me to this moment. Every smile, every kiss, every bittersweet goodbye, every tear has led me to this exact moment where She decides if I live or die. Death will welcome me with a peaceful sleep, but life; life will jostle me around, continue to challenge me in ways that I feel are unfair and cruel. But such is life, and with every breath I promise to cherish it if I could just break the surface and cheat death.

My fingertips felt it first; the warmth of the sun as it greets me back into life. Then my hands, followed by my wrists and arms until finally the top of my

head makes it out. And then the one thing I've been yearning for ever since I jumped finally greets me: sweet, sweet oxygen.

Sigh.

That first breath of victory is what it felt like to love myself.