

Breath

by Adam Byatt

Michael lay on his back and counted his breaths, measuring their depth of inhalation and release. He tried to hold his breath for as long as he could, wondering when his allocated portion would expire. He remembered being a young boy, turning blue in defiance while holding out for a demanded packet of chips, while his mother calmly waited for necessity to take over. When he had leaned in to kiss Stephanie back in high school, his breath caught as her lips pressed against his. Palms pressed down against the grass he felt its warmth and moisture. He mused on the paradox wherein earth brought forth life, but it required the breath of life to make it live.

