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## Simple Breath

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# A Simple Breath

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*Howard Schaap*

A simple breath is rather uneventful  
if silent.  
One only notices  
when there's a grate in the action,  
some gristle that the in-rush rasps against  
or phlegm that the out-rush causes  
to ripple in the ear.

Corroded sinuses,  
where the wind must seep  
through narrowed passages  
whistling  
and we say  
nuisance,  
mouth-breather,  
slack-jawed Darth Vader.

In smokers, though,  
it becomes death-sexiness.  
Take movie trailers:  
the throaty depth,  
the earthy resonance of tar-coated vocals  
says how scared we'll be  
come October,  
the voice  
speaking from out the very grave,  
unmistakeably sexy.

Newborns teach us better:  
"sleeps like a baby" is at best misnomer,  
the first days of the little fish  
spent in varied face contortions,  
round bellies pulsing erratically  
in this new breathing business,  
crib death,  
that inexplicable soul-grip  
lurking at the end of every long nap  
when silence prevails in the house  
and one enters the child's room,  
slightly tensed against oneself,

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to hear the slightest  
rhythmic click  
of beautiful air:

A simple breath is victory  
over desert sands  
whirled forever  
into different dunes  
with no one to whisper  
of their shifting shapes.