

# Keep Breathing

*by* John Wentworth Chapin

While you sleep, I wait for you to die. These months, *all these months!* They wear on me. I don't want you to die — you must know that. I don't even fucking believe in God, but I pray *just in case*. I want the lifeguards and policemen and hall monitors to *really get it* when I say that I don't want you to die. When you do die, I don't want to be caught unawares. I don't dare expect it, but I can't help waiting for it.

That this *could* happen has been hideously clear since that first electric moment of *I'm pregnant* when I stopped in the hallway in my ragged tightie-whities with a “?” and she said “!” and I thought about all the reasons she might have to trap me — there are so many fucked-up untrue stories that it's hard to disbelieve *all* of them. True fact: since I was ten I wanted a kid more than a pony or a Mustang. When everyone else wanted to be a cowboy or fireman, I wanted to be a father.

*Keep breathing.*

You sleep, but you *must breathe*. Every time they smeared the ultrasound jelly above you, I knew you'd be stiff, unresponsive — but each time your heartbeat grew stronger. Now the gates threaten to close on your infancy. They mustn't close on the wrong side of you: for then I will die.

