Just Breathe

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Cover Page Footnote

This poem is available in The Angle: https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol2002/iss3/10
"You have to suffer if you're ugly,"
Mother taunts day in and day out.
"Why not just lick the light switch
and do us all a favor?"
A classmate, a stranger even.
"You have to suffer, suffer, suffer."
They try to get her to
Teeter on the edge of that cliff,
One exhale from going over.
But, she's strong.

A voice whirs in her head:
It's her own, in her happy place
Where she is good, and pretty
And worthwhile.
The sun shines warm on her face here
And if she has to,
She can fly
Off that cliff
Into the setting sun.
She can shine as diamonds
On the water shine.
Beautiful reflections of the sun
And all that is good.
"Diamonds come from coal"
She tells herself.
She is hopeful, always
Hope filled within her heart
That she has a fighting chance.

Until the day that she realized
How soft diamonds really are.
They can be smashed down, stomped on,
Broken into pieces like jagged glass
Or the tiny seeds in blackberry jam.
What hope does she have now that she's broken?
Go ahead, suffer, suffer - she can fly -
Exhale.