

HOW TO HOLD YOUR BREATH

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Once a man said to me in a poem, *this is the happiest I've ever been*.
Now blue-black birds gather at my feet and watch me, their yellow

eyes unblinking, spilled birdseed from Shoprite on the paving stones,
the new fence shuddering in the wind. Above, the belly of a 747

reflects fading light, my favorite color—pink. The plane is so slow
I believe time has stopped. A pregnant squirrel appearing, disappearing

in the unmown grass. The plane makes a sound like a fish being
sucked down a hole. I am not in enough pain for this to matter today.

Why didn't either of us have kids. *This is the happiest I'll ever be*,
I thought, sitting at the bottom of your swimming pool when you

lived next door. I was nine, you were seven: always alone in that house,
the sauna, the jacuzzi, the tennis courts, the dusty wooden Tibetan

horses like stiff great Danes. I've never been sure I could raise anything
but an obedient animal. That sun through the chemical water, those

wavering gold angles, the blue tile under my legs. I spun and spun with-
out breathing. Then a great excitement, yanked by my elbows into

the freezing sky. Your mother, crying again. While it lasted, it was fun.