

Start

*A breath.*

- M. I wish I had life of my own to report, but I've given you all the happy bits in texts. Give me some hope. And Anna and William.
- S. I would try to oblige Max by giving him news of water gun fights and kindergarten dramas. Or theatrical gossip – or ideas for plays – and he would say –
- M. I would watch the shit out of that, Sarah –
- S. And finally, Max had good news of his own. Milkweed editions would publish his book of poetry. They were rushing it to press.

*A gesture of joy from M.*

He was determined to hold the book in his hands.

*He holds the galleys in his hands.*

Max revised his book galleys from his zero gravity chair, his oxygen tank following him around.

On a bad day he would just text me:

- M. Pain.
- S. Or:
- M. Coughing up blood.
- S. On a good day he would get expansive –
- M. I walked outside for the first time today. It was so hot I felt like I was Moses in the desert. And I walked up a hill just like Moses.
- S. On a middling day, I'd say, "How are you?" And he'd say:
- M. Upright.
- S. Sometimes Max would complain. Max was not a saint; he was an artist. He had a series of revenge poems to an ex-'s new lover. He would say:

It became harder and harder for Max to talk; his lungs filled with blood. One tumor was wrapped around his aorta. He had a terrible barking cough, and it was hard to catch his breath.

He complained that the more he couldn't talk, the more questions people would ask him.

- M. They're like: how does the wall work, how does paint dry, what is happening in this tv show?
- S. And you want to be quiet?
- M. I do but I also want to talk/because it's how I love people/And it's also how I live/I love the sound of my own voice.

*S lets go of M's foot.*

- S. *(To the audience.)* His texts got more fragmented. And then he wrote:
- M. Death doesn't seem soon/It seems now/like I'm actively scribbling out the last pages/and while this is scary it also brings home how little I have to figure out/God's an editor and he's gonna take this draft/the book is written/that's the part that actually means life happened.

End

*A long silence.*

*Three days of silence, in fact.*

*A shift.*

- S. Max died that summer holding the hands of his wife and his mother.

He was twenty-five.

The day before he died, he pulled his mother aside and said:

- M. "That's it. I can't write anymore."