

Death Pronouncement

On the elevator to the 8th floor
*an easy diagnosis,*¹
it's like this:

Breathing & lung sounds

I am here to not bury you alive
one breath at a time
once, we held a small mirror
watching for
today, the mirror is clear
family perched on their seats
scribbling our contours

lack of pulse, breath sounds,
tongue slaked as if to say
see how much I've held,
not one more glass.

I read
if you've ever waited

*will be absent.*¹

to do this right
the sallow cheeks, waxy face

the kiss of a cloud
the day a fat yellow yolk
soft music tinkling
against the wall my shadow fumbles
uneasy soothsayer
*[absent] heartbeat will usually suffice.*²
see how much I drank,

no, not one more drop, I couldn't.

Death is usually
for a chest to rise,
then it doesn't.
Explain your purpose.
the way you did death
—you're perfect—
against parted lips

on the windowsill
dim lights
a stethoscope,
If death is uncertain,
her mouth agape
as if to say,

I sink to my knees.

1. Marchand, Lucille R., et al. "Death Pronouncement: Survival Tips for Residents." American Family Physician, 1 July 1998, <https://www.aafp.org/afp/1998/0701/p284.html>.

2. "Death Pronouncement." Palliative Care: Education & Training, 15 Apr. 2014, <https://palliative.stanford.edu/transition-to-death/death-pronouncement/#:~:text=Death%20pronouncement%20is%20a%20solemn,may%20wish%20to%20do%20so>.