An infinite fraction

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Pressure in the vessels of his lungs—
A push, an incessant crush, a river rising.
Vacuuming becomes a luxurious
Pastime, past time and a moment somewhere
Else, anywhere but here.
I can smell him, he says. *My father—*
When he was sick and dying he had this scent.
I smell it on me, he weeps. He feels what
Approaches. His wife caresses his back,
A palmed sanctuary to sweep away the knowing.
A sky full of air and facile strength are memorialized
Only a short breath ago, only yesterday.
He cannot stop grasping the air, but to catch it
Is far less easy with what he's got.
And then there is a mind, still
Unmercifully awake to face each bare day,
Each measured inhalation and exhalation
To feed a heart and crowded, unwanted thoughts.
He pushes the vacuum cleaner like it's going to
inhale the future and all the millimeters
Of mercury flying high in those lungs.
I want to tell him that life has a limited allotment
Of terror and grief. *Look closely*, I want to say. *Look at her.*
In the absence of dread, in the seconds of
An easy sigh, I see it. An infinite fraction
Of peace.

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