

MATTHEW KENNEDY

## Some Days the Heart Marches

My grandfather, mid forties, weekly  
bather at the *Arts & Culture Centre*,  
George Street, Corner Brook, would sit deep-breathing,  
hands on knees, at the edge of the pool—  
then dive and swim the length of it and  
back, underwater. So he tells me—  
we're treading water now, in the deep end,  
and he continues, between trips to  
the bottom retrieving multicoloured rings  
braceleted round his wrists: one day he told  
the lifeguard, a young woman, about his  
adventures in free diving. You are  
hyperventilating, she informed him,  
and you might just pass out down there you know.  
You might just pass out down there,  
*beneath all the dangling feet*, I think.

Me—I have these same genes in me!—and  
all through the third grade's compulsory  
swimming lessons I feigned sick and sat it out  
at the edge of the pool, bathing-capped,  
deep-breathing like my pop. The next summer,  
when he told me this story, the two of us  
were raising Cain on the diving board and  
rope swing, all cannon balls and pencil dives.

Ah, some days the heart marches!

And some days the lungs swell up, balloon-sized,  
in a delirious buoyancy—hybris, pneumaticus.  
It's those days I play at barrel-chested,  
keen, self-sufficient, disinterested,  
but other days I falter, heave, and press  
my hand hard against my breast, worried sick.  
Some days the heart marches; other days  
it swoons and hesitates, and you're lucky  
just to be alive.

