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## Near-Life Experiences

John Grey

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# NEAR-LIFE EXPERIENCES

*John Grey*

Someone is always telling me  
how they almost died.  
Laura sinks out of conversation  
into the sofa,  
shedding the almost  
for a light nap.  
"I thought the ice was solid,"  
he continues, "but I crunched  
through, sunk to my waist before  
a deeper crust held me up."  
Laura's breathing  
is not loud  
but I can hear it  
over the rattle of coffee cups,  
the snug memory of  
near-death experiences.  
His face fell ten stories,  
white as the landscape,  
thoughts speed-reading  
his life's newsreel  
as the end  
leaped up out of the glacier  
like an alligator  
to almost crush him in its jaws.  
Laura's life  
is less dramatic,  
breath giggling from her lips,  
walking on ahead of her  
like a child.

Taking his cue for a moment,  
I imagine her falling from an airplane,  
thrown from a car,  
tumbling off the deck of a liner.  
But her death never really takes hold,  
her life always returning  
to this starting out point,  
gentle as my listening to her breathe,  
on the smooth pink surface of her face,  
the best there is  
the perfect buffer  
to the worst that could happen.