

Emily Dickinson

I heard a Fly buzz—when I died—

I heard a Fly buzz—when I died—
The Stillness in the Room
Was like the Stillness in the Air—
Between the Heaves of Storm—

The Eyes around—had wrung them dry—
And Breaths were gathering firm
For that last Onset—when the King
Be witnessed—in the Room—

I willed my Keepsakes—Signed away
What portion of me be
Assignable—and then it was
There interposed a Fly—

With Blue—uncertain stumbling Buzz—
Between the light—and me—
And then the Windows failed—and then
I could not see to see—

Stefanie Wortman 1/19/2016 3:34 PM

Comment [1]: The first stanza locates this poem in the eye of a storm. While the subject of death raises many tumultuous emotions, Dickinson sets her lyric poem in a brief moment of quiet reflection.

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Comment [2]: This poem, like many others Dickinson wrote, is in common meter. The form uses iambic rhythm and alternates between four-beat (tetrameter) and three-beat (trimeter) lines. For Dickinson, one important source of this rhythm was the hymns she heard at her family's Congregational Church.

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Comment [3]: Dickinson artfully mutes this strong rhythm with enjambed phrases like "Signed away / What portion of me be / Assignable." The syntax draws the reader on to the next line, even as the line break creates a slight pause.

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