

# Aunts and Their Likenesses

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When It Happens Our Limbs Will Be Cool. She Will Lie On Top of Me And I Will Strain My Neck to Get At Her.

On a cold day the smell of haybale is soft

it is everywhere

and we forget it.

Soft as my ancestors' idea of hay.

And it is wet as morning out there. Nothing burns.

Sufficient Conditions I

CHAPTER II.

THE HIDEOUS APPEARANCE OF A SOUL IN MORTAL SIN  
REVEALED BY SELF-  
KNOWLEDGE:

ATTENTION. AN EXPLANATION OF THE MANSIONS.

*1. Effects of mortal sin. 2. It prevents the soul's gaining merit. 3. The soul compared to a tree. 4. Disorder of the in mortal sin. 5. Vision of a sinful soul. 6. Profit of realizing these lessons. 7. Prayer. 8. Beauty 9. Self-knowledge 10. perfections. 11. 12. Christ should be our 13. The devil entraps beginners. 14. Our strength must God. 15. blinds the soul. 16. Worldliness. 17. The world in the cloister. 18. Assaults of the devil. 19. Examples of the devil's arts. 20. Perfection consists in 21. Indiscreet zeal. 22. Danger of detraction.*

1  
this magnificent consider  
beside the waters of life which symbolize pearl planted  
the  
sun in the centre of the soul  
eclipsed, fit to  
reflect

2. the soul is in mortal sin

The soul separated  
in His eyes, committing to God, it  
prefers  
blackness I knew

her desirous to  
grasp this truth, I beg you, my daughters, to  
live in blindness and do deeds of darkness.

Cups designed like little hands

It will be bitter and  
swiftly drunk. It will  
be bitter  
bitter it will be swiftly  
drunk. The  
workings such  
as you might  
involve  
a non-arthritic  
knuckle to get  
the lower  
half good  
and dry, tamped  
in, clean. This isn't  
the last pot  
she used  
in the house.  
In good  
condition, and mine  
now: decades-old  
residue  
of decades of  
her mornings.  
She'll be  
so swift and  
heraldic  
again in me. If  
she should know, she  
already does: the most  
interesting thing  
left about me, among  
eclectic  
and shamefacedly young  
aluminum utensils. All night  
all nights, she'll invite  
me to sit  
with her: one  
lamp on, and  
slate beneath  
the table. The water will  
boil unbitten  
and my vision  
will widen until she  
is a wondrous  
narrow

thing in my expansive  
sights, offering  
it to me: dense,  
and white,  
in the whole limited  
and comprehensive  
as china —“you  
take it  
strong?” She’ll watch  
me watch the dregs  
grow fine  
and skim across the  
bottom “I  
remembered” of  
the cup. “Black  
beautiful” someone  
will hum where  
no one  
should see the other  
blush. Waiting for  
her in the black tang  
to begin  
my story the great-  
great-  
great-grandmother  
brewing at the morning  
and the cup  
was riding safe  
between her  
palms into—into—how  
did it end? Still  
more night, or  
flight  
into bitten  
morning? “Take it  
strong,”  
to set  
your mouth around her  
voice  
in the window  
her voice unlike  
the cloud shadow  
alighting, whim  
over everything.

Lois Ann

They moved her to the memory ward this week. It wasn't  
much: she and her blankets, the Shakespeare  
she holds between her palms between her

legs. I'm not useful for the lifting so I walked  
in front of the wheelchair so she could  
see me and I could look over

my shoulder at her and the nurse would  
smile at me when Lois  
didn't. Grant had been by, she said. Smiled that. He doesn't

return my voicemails about the spare key and  
my garage full of his mother's  
books, which people keep returning to every

place that seems convenient but my hands.  
I don't think he's going to ask about the  
journals. He seems

patient enough: he hasn't watched a woman unlearn  
to read before. She doesn't look  
my way. Her ready tongue. Her hours.

## Thornless Common Honeylocust

Smell the woods, keep  
quiet, sleep like it's all beginning again. At last –no,  
it's not begun again; at last that doesn't do

you pain. It does no pain –it does no  
pain to think of her finger  
pacing your insides. You dream like a sailor. I dream

like a journalist. Sit under the tree  
like the flickering end of a chrysanthemum  
firework. She'll come, she'll take you to climb that tetanus

nightmare of a snail, laugh at the pigwolves  
in the clouds, the elfhorses under pine trees, to look  
at each other one at a time. You may only remember

letting the silence pass through you going home  
in the dark, how she pressed herself into the hug, but I  
was watching. Smell the woods, keep quiet, sleep.

## We Have Nothing to Fear But Your Fears

No one opened their windows  
to hear someone out there

no ceiling fan fallen, fingers  
fractioned on the neck passed over  
by the shirt wadded offering

thrown back on uncaged blades  
your blood who've gone  
now and for ever a man  
will pour cold water  
and the hearts of small-  
hearted animals (chicken,  
field mice, platypi) over  
and over and onto my wooden

bedroom floors. I have craned  
to the better part of a moon

learned in what you were in the night.

When I did not say love

From outside myself I saw  
my torso, (not  
beyond) nude,

symmetrical, ending  
in two purple scars pursed  
want

on my shoulders. The arms  
grew back, lost  
over and over. They did not belong

on this body, though I had imagined  
otherwise. But how sad

to regrow part of a wrist and have it disappear

so many times. Where were my arms? How,  
how could I bury them now?

## Ghosts I: Montage

Recalled  
your  
smile six  
times

before  
lunch  
Now I

add  
a looped  
clip First

you  
smile and  
I

stay away  
stay away

kiss you  
o-  
ver and  
o-

stay away

ver and  
you're  
so

gentle  
please

stay away

don't leave  
me  
again.

Why I Did Not Tell You I Had Been Raped the Previous Autumn

You had wanted to see

horses, dry land in  
miniature.

What I like about this memory

is that so few of the details will surprise you. Wesley  
was the brat you know him still to be. You can already imagine  
the whole thing, "Cape Lookout," that day.

I was amazed. That's why I was silent  
in the fishing boat. The ordinary color,  
its slowness, the vertical drama of our path proof  
we were all going to die—

I'd not been farther  
than I could swim  
before.

Last week you sent  
me a message,  
*I hope your  
week is going  
well. Thanks for  
calling on our  
anniversary,  
your daddy  
originally forgot,  
I miss my  
daddy*

You have my attention.

I thought of my own secrets. He  
gripped the silver rail  
and breathed through his nose. You may  
not miss him this way, but I believe  
that nose is still there. In the memory  
and in our own times. The medicine stayed  
down. *Please*

the pale red stripe  
in the shell falling into the warm  
high tide

*do not cremate my body*

you asked me, *please try  
to smile*. I promise you: it was a fine day,  
and you could not have done better.

## A Shot

and a minute later the man was out of the driver's  
seat with his flannel off, shouting *does anyone*  
*have a first aid kit can somebody*

*help please* and someone called an ambulance while  
the man's friend sat with the shirt wrapped like a mistake is

wrapped over the hand and she wouldn't keep it above her head kept  
putting it between her legs on the bench and unclenching

her jaw and the man knelt beside her looking  
into the busted passenger side window how it just *went off*

*It just went off it just* and left the glass intact  
with a wrecked cobweb threaded in the frame no

shards, no cuts by the brow pulled blinking  
from the Honda out into the dog park we were wailing

and flashing as all the animals stood up  
and the woman counted each of them.



songs

6. The time spent in reading or writing

give us grace

7.

our Constitutions oblige us to pray so many hours a day

I am ignorant

For You, D.P.

I do not trust their word. I trust the word, which is swift  
and astounding as butterfly migration. I don't know whom

you raped, which is testament to the discipline and aptitude  
of the believers. In case you considered yourself innocent

until proven guilty, I am here to instill in you  
the fear of God, staring you down in the street, walking  
as if through you and your untuned ukulele. Have you heard

a voice whisper *fucker* when you come up for air  
ten laps into your breaststroke? Mine. And I am not

alone. Our work is unfinished until you cease to walk  
with your head up.

## I Wish I Weren't Alive In This Decade

But there is nowhere for me to go. Only the very wealthy  
are able to travel into the future. We live in the same town

after all those months I called Blount Street  
the corridor to your house. Now

you are the beech tree and the way I hang  
by the pits of my knees from its shrug branches  
and all I see from its cracked shrug branches.

Now you are in my hammock, literally: where you might

remember you are not weightless. You don't have to say  
anything to me about that. My head and legs

throb. That's all I feel now. You may keep lying there  
as long as you like.

## Where Credit Is Due

I like a man who ducks and shields himself from a Frisbee.

I like a man who stutters.

I like a man who asks me to write a book about Beckett with him.

I like a man who prefers to dance alone, and says so.

I like dogs that sniff each other calmly.

I like a man who prints in round letters.

I like a man in rubber soles.

I like a man with curvy hips.

I like it when all the dogs at the park stand up at once.

I like a man who throws an armload of leaves  
over his head. I like it how they stick to his hat and shirt.

I like a bald man.

Not all bald men.

I like a man who is voluptuous.

I like a man who wants a garden.

I like a man who is learning to play the piano.

I like a man who does not want to watch.

I like a man who does not own a watch.

I like a man with long floppy ears.

I like a man who listens to Sleater-Kinney.

I like a man who proposes marriage the first time he goes down.

I like a man who practices temperance.

I like a man whose vagina is strong, and knows it.

I like a man who owns a sheet of stickers.

I like a man who makes gratuitous lists.

I like several men at once.

I like a man who'll pay me to repair his bicycle.

I like a man who can't name half the U.S. Presidents.

I like a man who asks me to help open a jar.

I like a man who dreams about chasing cats and squirrels and geese and moles.

I like a man who used to be an anarchist.

I like a man who means it if he bows.

Take the J Bus. You May Keep It.

From here, it looks like that woman with the short hair is leaning over the man in the gray shirt. How he leans back in his chair, and she's looking up, but at the woman across from her with the same model of hair, just another year and color. The reason most people I knew before I moved here thought I was the worst is that I would point that cool thing out and swear I'd not have been confused about what was going on across the café if only the man were leaning forward with the same easy expression, and the woman were below him and looked a little stupid,

maybe alarmed. Do you know any of those people? I've seen the older woman on the bus, only I switched to the CW route last month. All I know is we commute east at the same time of morning, which is kind of cool to think about—So, remember that OK Cupid date I told you about, with the comic book girl? Well, she started riding the J when I stopped returning her messages, so when I'm not walking I take the CW. The world gets smaller and smaller, no matter how often you move: the two quiet bars in town, Saturday mornings at the community garden, a new roommate-- Which is fine. She can have the J bus, but I don't want her to see me, or where I get on and off.

## Ghosts II: Evidence

Run behind the lumber warehouse and the nursery  
mornings and up the hill past the trailer park you can  
hardly see but you can hear the highway. It's bad  
for my posture to look so long at the ground. They see you  
no matter where you look. But they don't mess  
with ghosts. And you might find red leaves, squirrel  
tail. Treasure. They will reach with their hands and go straight through you.

I know they have no imagination. What they would do  
on top of me is the same every time, it's what I do next  
that's always changing. Checking their books out in the library.  
Buying them a mug for their birthday. Avoiding

the grocery store. There's something stupid  
about speaking after all this time. How it never happens  
when I'm here. And the stupid way people like  
the knife. That I have one that's small and fits  
on a key chain. How would I get a hand free

I have no idea over and over again my arm  
is an extension of the knife which cannot resist the logic  
and charisma of the eye. Pounds of body out of my socket over  
and up. Once I am free and sprinting home I am on the ground again  
with one free arm and a sissy knife. Nobody

has told me what comes next. I remember lots  
of different things. Greenway smells. A bathtub I wished  
would turn red. There are things my legs can do  
at prayer to rend speed from desire, from safety, arrival.

## A Bad Influence

I wonder what I really want with you,  
little man inflexible, behind the want

to prove we share this        quiet you're busy  
making like the paperbrown leaf in my hand

taken apart by segments  
and by soulless excitement. Now

all my words are skin  
and lint confecting

the air, *nephew*,  
*you unhouse me*, always

what I wish to say is terrible,  
I mean to say that you are beautiful

the way a jar full of pig's teeth  
is a threat –without doubt. Tell me

what you think threats  
have to do with the roots you know

like balance-beams, and the breakneck  
canopy, the whole thing suspended

before the euphoric moment of  
clasping is called a canopy,

do you know this place every  
day was my refuge to the last

of the sunlight? What I mean is we  
are here, which may belong to us both.

## Night After a Funeral

no one alone  
in the dark. He  
only went down to  
the kitchen,

hearing  
*Grant, Grant*, so  
no, not really

alone in the  
curtains, waiting  
and hearing  
everything

the breath measured  
on his tongue, even that  
he can  
hear, though

the walls should  
hold it. Trace one's  
length, the calluses

that seem unable to depart  
whispering into them in the light  
through the cherrywood  
doorframe and the light

blue carpet, why should I  
bear the sacred knowledge  
why should I bear witness?

Sufficient Conditions III

8.

you imagine

the Sun within this palace

9. A soul gives itself

wander at will through the rooms of the castle,

perfect

its hive

it is a great grace from God to practise self-examination,

earth that we are.

10. I do not know whether I have put this clearly;

heaven I would not have you careless  
while on earth

you may be lifted to

enter first by the room where humility is practised,  
This is the right road;

to endeavour to

I believe we shall never learn to know

His

His

His

11.

we turn from ourselves

## Buddy Sonnet

Because I've sung a great love poem with you,  
befuddled streets, because the sound had no  
direction, object, you are dear to me,  
who've heard the grave and read the fleeting thoughts  
each day how many months? You know I'm not  
accustomed to this, keeping on my clothes  
before one so important person as,  
admit it, pal, yourself. You've seen the parts  
I'm still afraid to flaunt: the man behind  
the misandry, the slut who talks a big  
sex-negative game. Your thoughts, too, return  
to how we're wrong, or how we've wronged,  
like hounds that make their peace with she-wolves, stones  
that dread to miss the magnet's pull.

## The Skin Permits

The sunshade to trickle  
over your neck through the warp  
and weft of magnolia leaves: departure

the warbles and after them a pursuit  
following you out of the house for good  
after a decade sum of hibernation and husband

out of the house with the last  
living slate kitchen floor under

the world's magnolia roof for good;  
following something urgent

in your creeping blindness over the gutter  
imposing the dark places before

your warbles. The dusty room  
inside the pigiron pot inside the

outdoor closet under the gutter  
with the small blind handglances

against the sky. Arranging the room  
as it was near the sea. Just above,

as the cabin of a boat is out of the sky  
and the posterity of pursuit.

### Ghosts III: Erotica

Trusted in a rhythm  
that does not flinch at close  
calls, but sees one car

pulling against another  
unmarked friction that lifts

skirts, the radio missing  
an antenna since

Roanoke Rapids' mills  
fell with the rain

the red line into  
forest that followed a car  
across okra fields

that cooks for the aunt  
on weekdays, and sees her

sees her bathed, that learns  
aluminum foil, craft  
and withering, that steals

and is not death, is not  
there on weekdays, not touched

by the withering, not by  
baptism, that is lost

in the next town, for the roads have changed,  
that drinks only milkshakes,

that knew he was gone when the car  
caught on fire, that takes

Alka Seltzer from  
before we were born,

that only knows how to care, care,  
and thinks she's fallen in love  
with each mortal thing.

## In the Second Language of Her Thought

You might not feel this way  
and I understand because you  
were not her lover, were you? No, I was sure

of what she would say and then she said it. I do  
think she is a promising scholar. She  
would not believe that about me, how much

how much I think of her. Before we were  
over she even accused me  
of belittling her, not calling her stupid but

calling her thoughts into the  
shadows of my own. And of course I never would say  
that to a lover. I always

always told her how much more  
the creative mind was the realm

clear sharp pane of her

wit. She had my most profound respect  
when she swayed and the Bach washed  
over me while I watched her. This paper

I'm sure is new to you but to me it is a memory –  
the thesis is so like  
something she would suggest to me  
before we fell asleep, or I to her.

I Am Happy—It Is My Birthday

What comes later I would not trust even  
I will choose often  
not to heed advice from anyone

who has no sympathy for  
romantics. It will be merely interesting.

## Robbing the Grave of a Single Bone

I left because there are many beautiful things in the world.  
I could not count the number of things I cheated, were I to choose you over  
all other beautiful things in the world.

I did not leave because there is something wrong with you. Stop:  
stop saying there is.

It doesn't matter whether you would prefer to be lied to. That is  
not your decision to make.

You can only tell someone they're a creative genius so  
many times before they realize you're  
calling them stupid. No,

no matter how stupid they are. Afterward, you can't get away  
with saying much to their face.

I wish I could be happy with you. I still wish I could be happy with you.

In the First Language of Your Thought

In the first language of your thought  
I know you could be just as angry  
As you caress what seems to be me

In the first language of your thought, each verb  
slightly irregular: an alloy of vowel sounds  
in only one part of the paradigm. There are no cacophonous

nouns, none. The beating of wings the pure intellect  
of your arousal. Your pincushion.  
Your fretting. Your chest lifting my back as I shuddered  
into sleep. Your long toenails. Your hair

your hair. When we would dream together I heard  
some of those words. That is why I ask.

Blind old age

some mornings I wake

the television is still on  
and has grime on its teeth

but what a sweet  
film I watched when I woke  
in the night  
his voice, asound  
in air

Clark Gable's voice, pulling  
trouble into tiny proportions.

some mornings  
I wake, the television  
played two films  
back to back

and I heard the women quarrel  
who'd pause to listen  
to Mr. Gable, as if

he were a strain of music.

what wakes me

watched in the night

fingers seek lips, stumble  
against a chin

no one's face in the night

he sang to the line  
of sunlight behind  
the window-drapes

Sufficient Conditions IV

12. the devil must have caused such thoughts as these

13. From personal experience I  
I will only say that you  
souls enter by many different ways,  
The devil  
entraps in a thousand ways.

power vassals of  
desirous not to offend God.

14. Blessed Mother do battle  
for we creatures possess strength  
life miserable life

my daughters,  
be useful .

15 You must notice the light  
in these first mansions; and

and see I  
; I this  
the number of venomous reptile  
souls They resemble  
eyes clogged and half closed with dust.

blind the eyes of the  
beginner .

16. so  
preoccupied with earthly honours and affairs,  
it sincerely wishes to enter into itself

as  
compatible with the duties of one's state of life,  
ever to reach the principal room,

bitten some time by the  
creatures surrounding him.

17. What then would come , if, after  
having escaped into the  
more secret mansion, she should, , return to all this turmoil?

In our convents we are free from these exterior evils;

18. my daughters,  
all  
mansions of this castle ,  
the powers of the soul,  
arts, He  
creeps in numberless ways,  
until late.

19. he works like a file

For instance: a nun has such a longing as to feel no peace she is  
torment herself suppose that the Prioress



Twice

the suspicion you've  
caught me wiping my  
glasses with pools of  
lemon tea and silver  
nearby on the ground

have you lived by the sea

what reaches the eye

rain waters, a leaf  
the relentless air

that you came here once  
slow while I blinked and  
swayed another such

echoless day

## Apologetic

You think I've died? Saying my name aloud  
to remind me you  
are just what I used to be: capable

of a sympathy that runs  
on detritus, does not move  
the whole world. No,

I am not dead, though I make a racket  
with the shower curtain, though I stack

prodigious, cryptic dozens of books  
on the living room floor  
each night. The open mouth

you took to mean reverie? You  
have not heard me moaning, oh, all

these minutes—I cannot tell you  
why. But do not say that name again  
to me. Listen: I hear

everything in this house, and so  
at any time could you, who like myself  
are mortal.

## Get to Work

Loved ones bravely  
take responsibility  
when this  
among all things that hid

I did myself. One will write  
a poem about subway lines  
without dirt in it,  
and a poem about dream  
catchers. I did not know

there was a correct way  
to violate the  
taboo of skin. Anyone  
who has stared  
their mortality down

will know my fraudulence. It's easier  
to write "my mom grew up  
poor; I grew up poor" than to see

strangers flinch at my upturned  
palms. What I did was a gesture  
only I have found mysterious.

Jocasta

There are some things I can't  
say with certainty to you. They

should die before they fall  
out of me conspicuously. I thought

I'd lost you. Now who alive  
but you knows the scents and

qualities of light from the happiest  
month of my life? You might be

asleep like a defiant child  
pretending to nap with one lid

raised until it isn't, and the afternoon  
diminishes under his belly, light

from the window only sweetening  
his feet. I had a child

once, but take none of this  
from distant memory.

I pull myself past the blankets to you and breathe all night long.

## Surface Tension

Mornings are optimistic. I don't  
see portents while everything  
seems to begin around me. The buses,  
deliveries, the rain – I love  
their fate. I love their fate for them.

News of your departure will fall  
from such a height it breaks  
every bone of its body in me. I've come  
apart in your hands so  
many times you can do it and leave

me arranged. Meanwhile  
across town weeds  
and cousins of  
weeds you assigned  
to your pocket–

your body and its minerals  
the silence in your vestibule the  
spare threads of separation  
the intervals of the faucet  
and the curtains:

may they all be well.  
The actual recedes  
at night. You  
you could be hid  
and frightened anywhere  
in the invisible clutter.

Lyric and Arrangement

order of the shadows  
and tree of two hearts

I am in your balance now  
and the birds are back           there is glamour

in the middle of the day  
between the tree's  
hearts: the tree's mind  
and the tree's heart

glamour, and order  
also, light

Nag

You used to beat my dead  
horse and hold me in your  
beansprout arms. We mourned each  
other to sleep and woke  
in the sweet manetangle.  
Nothing hurt. You didn't  
hurt me and the horse  
doesn't feel like a human. When  
someone stands up and holds themselves  
in front of the projector in the horse's  
eye –those people  
look up for trouble and tear  
me apart of you.  
Nobody is crying.  
I would touch you now if you  
stopped offering to replace my horse.  
It's not even sad: the horse  
with the shit in her hooves  
and no more eyes following  
the helmeted woman into the stable  
door closing behind them  
both while the house lights  
open their eyes for good this  
time and the audience  
straggles into its coats and the daylight  
street where nobody has been  
beaten, not in a long time, and nobody's  
trying to walk home faster  
than you, five-lunged hummingbird, breathe

smashfoot jockey, breathe rat  
catcher, like you don't expect a shot.

## The Librariantiphon

Someone has thought this and it is not worn  
/To be opposed is to be accepted  
and folded/  
as a fold is acceptance  
/the reference fold to make crane or make  
dog's ear the smell inside  
finding letters in the warm  
thick tissues/  
I can say this any way  
/I hope nobody cuts your head off  
and fries you/  
I hope nobody catches me you're right  
my spine is narrow.  
/We are so many/  
We are peering between  
/Still more/  
*It Chooses*  
*You As Consciousness*  
*Is Harnessed to Flesh*  
/Even if one's feelings are  
fit to the task/  
What if I hurt you?  
/Off to the bindery/  
Off to the furnace  
/You are barbaric and  
how I like that/  
I like  
that this is allusive  
/And you've heard my  
mind/  
premeditated, unwhisperable  
comfort  
/not a secret  
language/  
you can change your mind  
/by leaving by opening/  
not the furnace; manifold  
/openings are answerable  
to my mind/  
*It Chooses*  
*You As Consciousness*  
/folds across its  
back its face/  
coins, petals, armor, arguments,

real numbers, windows  
/nothing keeps the light  
out of my bedroom/  
you wake up sweaty all  
year long I think  
/those aren't letters/  
but they might be evil  
/wrong for me to say how I/  
want  
/you dog-eared, fried, headless/  
you may keep my head.

I Wanted To Make You a Necklace

So, I looked it up: there is no difference  
between warm-blooded bones and cold ones –now that  
it's late summer the literal balances the cool

and the cold blood thrives behind the bark.  
I let it out at the belly by  
the way they hang, and am

covered in shadows and  
thin copious poisons. So much will grow here  
a couple of springs from now.

All the animals  
foam at the orifices I make  
when I bathe them sweet

in peroxide. To put my hands  
to work like this for you  
takes days, peering down the ballast

slope –all I want  
is a spinal cord's memorial: to thread  
a pretty leather string

through a pair of rabbit vertebrae. I bury and wait  
because you're quick and fright  
leaps across your blood

to the brain. I would have liked, I think,  
to live with you in a  
place that's quiet

and dark like here, behind the bark.  
Beneath the ballast and the blood. Somewhere  
precalcified.

## Inheriting My Low Weight

Wondering was I in danger  
or actually dying in my  
mother's bomber jacket and standing  
late after school in the girl's

bathroom with my hands so  
cold I remember them  
blue under the hot  
water and saying whatever

to the wonder  
I've never been cold like this before  
to my own--let's say it—pain, whatever  
happens I'm not living past sixteen, become

Faust enough without the weight  
of the stately  
things I'd do on a baker's floor or each  
storm on Saturn my ancestors couldn't finish

appease or vanish with their deserving mouths,  
that it feels the opposite of a soul—if I'd  
just think of it in that way, like a soul, what  
do I know, that light

and the next one and the next  
one reflected in the floor no one's  
taught me a lesson against, that jarring  
across the face like the moment

before a kiss by which I hold myself  
up, nuclear secrets  
traded for a piece of fruit a glance another  
girl. Why deny myself a shield.

## Husband

It would help if you'd tell me  
the first thing, what would you like  
to know about him? He was  
funny, like your uncle, a  
monkey up the magnolia  
dressed in football pads sitting  
in a submarine. I raised sons  
in a box hanging on a lead  
-painted windowsill looking  
over San Francisco. In movies  
about the late 'sixties  
everyone is talking about outer space.  
I did not talk about outer space. The sun  
warming your skin  
was eerie enough. I bought  
five pounds of coffee-flavored candy  
and drove with everything  
we owned in the Volkswagen  
in boxes. It was fields,  
cornfields each morning  
my head ached with the sun.  
I would not have lived  
my life if I had known it then.  
That he'd come to the East  
coast whole, he was like  
any husband. On the weekends  
he sailed. And so  
much of my life would be  
without him. Something  
I had so early, young  
in a way terrible  
to remember. It hurts  
to say he was my own.

## Sufficient Conditions V

20. the mutual affection of the nuns, . Be sure, my daughters, true perfection consists in the love of and our ,

21. let each one look to herself. I here will only beg you to remember the necessity of mutual affection.

Sometimes the devil tempts nuns in this way about the Prioress, which is still more .

to keep silence for fear that speech would be a temptation against charity, would be that very temptation itself.

22. However, I must warn you seriously not to talk to each other about such things, lest the devil deceive you.

Thank God our custom here of keeping almost perpetual silence , still, it is well to stand ever on our guard.

## Attachment Theory

What a day. I like sticking my head  
in the freezer with you. Let's do this forever. Ever,  
being the preferred occult  
vernacular for the sun

has it moved all these hours at all? Would you  
put your hand on top of the  
fridge now? Let me get in your armpit.  
Sometimes I shrink in the freezer. See how

skinny my fingers are? Like one marble  
left in the bag. Yours, too. Only  
they're so much bigger than mine. You aren't  
stretching your arms all the way out,

pantingly; aren't you afraid I can't  
see what you're showing me oh  
they're lovely, hard things. The person  
who made them must have been a real

scavenger, nobody  
fitted hands with nails this shade  
of purple after the early nineteen-  
seventies...Does that mean you're

sick? Count with me, no  
the sun's still right on top of your neighbor's  
car, just like when we opened the freezer  
all those weeks ago: three,

two, one, no, two—  
one—sheep!  
Listen to that wooly thing run all  
over your living room, and I'm

so small on account of the freezer,  
but we made that. No, I smell it,  
too: frozen potatoes, ice cream,  
is my nose cold? I'll put it back.

Words, Deeds

You said yourself  
I could host a square dance  
in my bedroom.

Who shall stand  
on the bed and cry

allemande your buddy  
allemande     allemande

your shoulder turned  
and whole as looking  
frank and polite beside mine.

The floor is clean enough.

We could do it.