

Because I never call anymore

I don't want this to be too sentimental,
so fuck you, Grandma.

I've been thinking about the dead,
those near to death like to a lover.

Perhaps I've taken you for granted.
I never visit except in my mind, which I do all the time.

I am constantly walking the wood paneled halls
of your small and immaculately kept home.

I am rearranging the furniture just so.
I am unstraightening pictures.

Especially the one of you on your wedding day,
The one where you look so beautiful,

The windblown curls of yellow hair,
Your bright blue eyes,

a smile like abandon,
Like luck.

I know you don't live here anymore.
I know you moved to an apartment in the city, to be closer to the hospital.

I know the walls must be bare, the cupboards empty,
the beds in storage.

I am told that you are happy in your new place,
as happy as a person can be.

Tell me, what have the days been like?
Do you still wake early to walk the beach?

Does the pale blue light that tips in
through the bedroom window remind you of me?

Does the coolness of the morning air almost
stop your heart?

In my mind, I take down your picture, and press fingers
sticky with grape jelly and Jiff to the glass over your lips.

I hold it against me,
as though I were holding onto you.

You'll have to wipe the smudges from the glass over the photograph.
You'll have to rehang it on this imaginary wall.

Once you were a tern or a loon,
Perhaps a frigate bird.
Something that returns to the water.

I rode on your back, all motion and wind,
and the sea was in us. Salt water was in our veins.

You are not coming back
to tell me we are kindred.

I've seen it in the gray mist of your eyes,
in the curve of your body, bent like feathers,
like a dead gull, battered and still graceful.

This is why
I never come.

I can't bear to watch
the stillness overtake you.