

# Searching for Accidents



Francis Raven

ungovernable press  
2009

cover image: *darkly looking* by Francis Raven

There are three things in reading  
As in life:  
An opening, a continuing, and a closing.

1.

We are connected more by loss than by gain.  
This is not trivial, but the way the world is:  
Shaped by hammering, by defeat,  
By the scooping out of possibilities  
Not by their addition.  
Sometimes we are prepared for it  
To kick the shit  
Out of us;  
Other times  
We should have had religion.  
My uncle didn't have it.  
Do you think it would have helped?  
I don't think so. I really don't.  
We should have had science.  
We should have used the scientific method.  
What does that begin with?  
Looking at the world?  
And then there is always the hypothesis:  
Making stuff up  
Always helps  
For a few minutes. But in the end  
We want to know what really happened.  
In the end  
We want to know  
The beginning;  
It's just the way we're built,  
Constructed the same,  
Which guarantees  
That we react  
In similar ways  
To similar events:  
That which comes out of.  
Did you know that's the etymology of 'event'?  
It's what comes out of. That is,  
Everything comes out of something else;  
Everything has a cause  
Even if it doesn't make sense at first.  
So what have we learned?

We are connected by loss and this loss has a cause.  
The loss I am mentioning is death,  
Three deaths to be precise.  
They are connected and they connect  
Not necessarily the people who died  
But others, surely they have to connect someone  
And those people, in turn, are connected  
Primarily by their losses. There's the connection part.  
The causes, the explanation are the other part:  
Why we're connected, essentially.  
And it's true, I have personal interest in this case.  
I am one of those who lost: my young wife died  
On March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005. We'll get to how she died.  
It was neither accident nor natural, but firmly intentional, voluntary.  
But they all thought that she was the one with the intention,  
With the thought in her head, with an incomprehensible conceit.  
That's, at least, how the police saw it.  
They all believed that  
Yes,  
Someone intended to kill herself  
Someone fulfilled her intention.

It is often considered a sin  
To kill yourself  
But you must believe in sin  
For a sin to exist  
And she didn't believe  
In such divisions of action: original or otherwise.  
She did believe in explaining the world.  
She believed that we could understand the world we live in.  
Her death, her apparent suicide, shut the door to such explanations.

Intention divides us ultimately  
From accident. Half of each  
Investigation is spent  
Making sure  
The crime  
Was spent  
On purpose.  
But a division is another way of saying a connection.

Everything under the line is connected.  
Everything above the line is connected as well,  
But the two sides are divided from each other.  
I am divided from everyone who has not lost anyone.  
I am equally divided from those  
Who have lost someone to a terrible accident,  
And accidents are terrible.  
I'm certainly not saying they're not.  
I've been accused before  
Of saying that I don't think  
Accidents matter at all.  
Well, you're hearing me here.  
That's not what I'm saying at all.  
Accidents can be terrible  
But they're different, just different.  
Essence is, we should have learned by now,  
Different from accident:  
What should have happened,  
What somebody thought should have happened,  
Is different from  
What nobody thought should have happened:  
It's more interesting,  
Makes you think deeper  
And is a lot harder to deal with.  
That's all I'm saying.

2.

How well do you know an uncle  
Is always a question about  
What it means  
Not what it could mean.  
That is, a father's relations  
Are always prescribed  
Even if he is absent.  
In his absence  
The prescription is prepared.  
Doubt, loneliness, rage  
Are all reasonable side effects,  
But we might not even notice an uncle's absence  
Or he might be  
The most important  
Person  
In our lives.  
It all just depends.  
An uncle depends on so many things:  
On the way the world turns out, on politics really,  
On the age discrepancies between siblings,  
On cultural variations in living arrangements.  
Yes, the uncle is strange.  
My uncle raised me,  
But he was not otherwise important.  
He was, of course, a factor in every decision  
I made  
But  
A neutral one.  
I never thought of pleasing him,  
But, equally,  
I never tried to displease him.  
That is, he didn't regularly enter into my psyche  
Though he was the closest male around.  
He clothed me, fed me  
And I suppose taught me something,  
But since he was the one who taught me,  
And not my father,  
What I needed to know

I learned less from him  
Than from the world.  
This is another thing the absence of a father brings:  
More experimentation.  
Yes, my father died  
When I was not so terribly young.  
I can remember him  
And not merely in  
A peering at a photograph way  
But actually remember  
His legs.  
This memory, of course, hauls with it  
Some pangs  
Of loneliness, of impossible possibility, but  
Aside from those pangs of legs  
There is little emotion  
Associated with my natural father.  
I was left to this earth  
And since this earth  
Could not raise  
A young boy alone  
That task was left to my uncle.  
He did a fine job, at least I think so.  
I am happy enough  
Or have been happy enough  
When being happy enough  
Was appropriate  
As I said before  
I lost my wife, Sarah,  
And thus, being happy enough  
Is not, or was not for quite some time,  
An option.

My uncle, what is there to say:  
My life  
Or more properly  
My feelings about  
My life  
Would have been  
So different



If I hadn't  
Been  
So proud  
Of him.  
Okay, so I had feelings for him:  
Many feelings.

But that was, of course,  
Before he married his second wife, Melissa  
Who also died: his frivolous wife.  
He betrayed me with her.  
I had never thought that a wife could be frivolous  
Before he married her, but  
I had also never thought  
That a wife needed to be controlled  
Before he married her.

It turns out that she was having an affair, a long one  
That I never got to the bottom of.  
Depression, like frivolous wives (and just so  
I won't be thought of being sexist, husbands who are tools)  
Need to be controlled.  
Fabulous medications  
Have been invented  
Just for that purpose.  
There is nothing frivolous about such medications.

3.

It was a traditional second marriage  
(He divorced my aunt Katherine  
After I was out of the house  
(They were perhaps the only aunt and uncle  
Who stayed together  
For the kid)  
And this I've never been clear on:  
Is an aunt by marriage  
Still an aunt  
After the divorce?):  
But the new wife, the first of his wives to die,  
The one who finally reconnected us,  
Was hot, too hot for his 67 years.  
She liked fancy cars  
And knew about them. Her musical tastes  
Brought my uncle's up  
By several decades. And travel,  
Yes, she was up for travel:  
Heady for *living life*,  
That catch phrase for being yourself  
But freer  
Without the responsibility of a self.  
My uncle had picked up some cheddar  
In this life and I had to watch out for his cheddar.  
But he was a lonely lawyer with cheddar, which  
As you might guess  
Is an extremely vulnerable position to be in.  
Thus, I felt that it was my duty  
As his surrogate son of sorts  
(Although, as I've mentioned before,  
This surrogacy came with none of the emotional baggage  
Of actually being a son, of real relation.)  
To protect his interests,  
Which were quite substantial  
In commodities and real estate.  
Further, thus, I was against the marriage  
From the very beginning.  
I didn't like her

And her fawning ways  
Seemed rather obvious ways  
To extort my aging genial uncle.  
I refused to go along with it.  
I would not give him my blessing.  
I wrote out my concerns in  
What I thought was  
A well thought-out letter.  
But people only see what they want to see.  
People do not see what they do not want to see.  
You would think that the second followed  
Logically from the first,  
But it really doesn't.  
So much is separate.  
So many thoughts are separate and remain so.  
My uncle Philip had both afflictions in spades:  
He only saw her hotness and fun and *spirit*  
And did not see her flightiness (which would soon  
Transform into equally flighty art)  
Nor the possibility  
That she was just a skanky golddigger  
In relatively tasteful, expensive, clothes.  
That is, my repeated warnings  
Were not heeded.  
Needless to say  
They were married.  
She replaced my other aunt  
As my aunt by marriage.  
My uncle, to her credit,  
Looked happy when I irregularly saw him.  
I couldn't really stand her enough  
To maintain our relationship  
In the manner  
I had  
In years past.  
But I also knew, or suspected,  
The emotional cost  
Of giving up my father figure  
And I didn't really have the time or energy  
To deal with such trauma.

Thus, I played along,  
All the while yearning for our previous relationship,  
Although I was too stunted to admit it.

So, my uncle married her  
Hot looks  
Blond  
Nice body even though  
Relatively old  
(I suppose she was in her 40s)  
With two BMWs,  
One was a 5 Series and the other was an 8 Series  
Actually that's false  
But they were really nice cars.  
I just  
Can't remember models.  
She liked to drive racecars  
And she updated Philip's  
Musical tastes  
Into something just a little bit hipper,  
Just a little bit more elevated.  
But this hipness, this speed  
Was totally inappropriate for Philip.  
He was way too sentimental for that.

They were the years  
When relatively hip middleagers  
Listened to world music.  
She listened to world music.  
A world music band  
Would be at every birthday,  
Anniversary, even Christmas.  
It was kind of grating.  
But it seemed cool  
And Philip seemed happy.  
But hidden within this happiness  
Or behind it  
I should say  
She was cheating on him  
With some African prince

For almost the entire duration  
Of their foreshortened marriage.  
Even after her death, however, Philip  
Never revealed more than that  
But that was enough for me to hate her more.

Then came the art.

Which is to say, there were always costs.

Frivolity, at the edges  
Feeds into art. Not that  
All art is frivolous;  
Nothing like that  
But when you are a hot woman  
Twenty-odd years the junior  
Of your new husband  
Art is a natural outcome  
Like cancer  
Is  
Of smoking.  
Life will say (and will say again):  
Told you so!  
Art just seems to come out  
Because art, in the beginning  
Is about you. About your tastes  
What you have to say, how you can  
Express your inner...  
Well, whatever is inside.  
Melissa, that was his new wife's name,  
Started by collecting some small paintings.

Becoming an artist is like founding a country:  
It is violent.

There is often no foreseeing it, no overseeing  
Its whims  
And whims it has  
Like a frivolous wife.  
What I'm saying is that

My uncle's frivolous wife  
Had a frivolous wife:  
Art.  
She wanted to become some,  
But that wasn't the way you said it  
So she took some photography classes  
And she started throwing lumpy pots  
On the wheel  
And then she was urging gloppy paint  
Into supposed shapes:  
Could they be something mystical?  
Could they be something real?  
That's the question of art  
Even before it really begins:  
Could it be real? There is just this question  
Tingling through the bones:  
Could we represent it better?  
But that's actually how anyone starts their art.  
No, they begin with some stupid inkling  
That they want  
To express  
Themselves.  
That was exactly how Melissa began  
*I just need to express myself*  
*But I don't know how*  
Philip suggested *why don't you take a class.*  
It was in actuality  
Less an earnest question  
And more a way of ending the conversation,  
Of letting someone else answer her questions.  
Nevertheless, she took the bait.  
She registered at the San Francisco Additional Education Center  
For a course in pottery  
A couple in photography  
And another in oil painting.  
The painting class was supposed to be advanced  
But the lower level one was full  
And she really wanted to express herself:  
*I could be advanced,*  
*I mean how good could they really be?*

*It's just painting.*

This was her attitude:

And this is what she wanted to do.

But people don't have much insight, do they?

Similarly, she had no idea

What kind of art

She wanted to practice

So she just registered for what they had.

She was *keeping her options open*.

Of course, decisions are more efficient

And meaningful

Than options.

Options waste time, space, energy,

Entail a lack of knowledge and insight.

Insight provides a decision.

She thought she'd just cancel a couple of classes

If she didn't like the teacher.

But a teacher cannot impart art

To the student. The teacher

Can only

Create the conditions

For art,

Which is

An art

Itself.

Thus, Melissa was going about it all wrong.

But we don't pay attention to what other people think.

Her first paintings were copies of Cezanne's apples.

She explained to Philip

What her teacher had said

About the perspective being wrong

And he just didn't get it

But merely said *how is that guy famous?*

*I would love a world*

*Where lawyers received accolades*

*For doing everything wrong.*

But she explained that the wrong perspective

Was, in fact, the right way to art

And then she sort of understood something about art.

Well, not really, but it was the first feeling  
Of understanding.

But, unfortunately, art is a neglect of duty.  
Hence, their marriage  
Which should never have occurred  
Began to cease  
To occur.

Art is also a neglect of the body.  
These two facts led Melissa  
To grow overweight  
To leave the house in filthy shambles  
Overwrought with profusions of excess  
For projects she would most likely  
Leave unfinished.

So, just as her art was coming into its own  
Her affair ended. She just wasn't a catch anymore.  
Art would have to hold her together.  
But questioning such neglect is no easy task.  
The artist's spouse is the most difficult position of all  
For he is called to support

The art  
But must also  
Call the artist  
On her shit.

He must wait while she flings.  
Philip's lawyerly tendencies led him to record  
In detail  
Her demise.

Her photographs were at first  
Not very good.  
They were the obvious examples  
In a beginner's photography class:  
The oblique self-portraits, the rear-view mirrors,  
The vistas, the critique of consumer society...

But slowly, not gradually, but  
In evolutionary leaps  
She became more herself.  
When neglect and excess  
Roll up,



Spiral into a hairball  
That tenderly aches  
Under the master bed,  
A self is reborn  
As an artist;  
Reborn, that is,  
As someone else.  
And as a birth is always merely natural  
The conventions of marriage  
Do not easily apply  
At such a stage. Thus,  
More neglect:  
Neglect of her role,  
Neglect of their intimacy,  
Neglect of the house,  
But she was an artist  
Who had been born and would continue.  
That was undisputable,  
A fact of the world  
For all to see.  
And for this I hated her  
Doubly.  
When Philip finally understood  
That he could not have the life  
He had hoped for,  
A stable marriage with a hot lady,  
He retreated first into his work:  
He was an impressive lawyer.  
Yes, he was.  
As if it needed repeating.  
But often he did need it repeated  
Back to himself.  
He was just that vain and insecure.  
But work can only bring so much solace.  
It cannot cure a broken heart.  
Rather, it was not so much as his heart  
That was broken  
But, rather, his heart masquerading as his ego.  
Thus, he brought his glassy eyes  
To bear on the bosoms of other women.

His matted gray hair and gaunt figure  
Were not that attractive  
But he could talk a good game  
When such a phrase  
Means that someone  
Is successful and has money

And I wanted him to be able to have these women.

Neither is art solace  
Even if it is necessity.  
Thus, both Melissa and Philip  
Were searching  
For something  
The other  
Could not provide.

Melissa became severely depressed.  
At first she thought she was just feeling artsy.  
She thought she could use these feelings  
In her photos and her small geometric paintings  
(Geometry was all she had mastered)  
But then she sort of  
Stopped creating anything.  
That should have been the sign  
For someone else to read  
But no one else  
Was reading.  
We need readers in the world  
Much as we need  
Spotters when we climb.

4.

My marriage was different.  
Sarah and I met before each going away.  
Hence, a gap.  
Growing apart is not the same thing  
As growing apart.  
In presence: the difficulty is movement.  
Is growth explained? Beforehand, the subject doesn't even know the words.

Hence, we always wish we knew each other earlier  
But this doesn't even make sense. We are  
Always supposed to want  
To know each other earlier. But if so,  
We would not have even seen each other.

We are always too late and early for love:  
Happiness forces us to regret  
Our prior life  
But our  
Projects are still  
So ultimately unfinished.

Some things we did right:  
We went to different colleges.  
And although living apart was painful  
I don't know if we would be together now  
If we had chosen the same.

Imagining from here is always  
Imagining from here what  
Imagining from there  
Would have been.

When you look back on a relationship  
Each moment appears less serious  
Then it had to have been

But at some point you know  
It is really serious

And you get married.

If I were to give any advice  
To a couple about to get married I would say  
That the wedding is nice (it's great to have a party,

To have everyone say they love you  
And get presents, so many presents)  
But don't forget the vows you are making to each other.

Even on that day of cake and wine  
Your relationship should be  
At the forefront of your mind.

We were a perfect match  
Made  
By each other:

A partnership  
Involves creating roles:  
She paid the taxes, you cleaned.

These roles are delicate  
Shifting  
And then fixed in place

Like natural objects.  
A marriage becomes a natural object,  
That's all I'm saying.

We were really natural, enjoying it.  
There were really no problems  
For a narrative to untangle.

Except

Sarah and I were a perfect match  
Except, one day she came home  
And started talking about how  
She would die soon. It was

Really weird.  
Even she knew it was really strange  
And she really wasn't a strange person.  
She desperately wanted to get her affairs,  
Our affairs,  
In order. She piled receipts  
Into piles. She piled those piles  
Into other piles.  
She told me what I should do  
With these piles  
When she was gone.  
She was very matter-of-fact  
About the whole thing  
And she wasn't really  
A very matter-of-fact type person  
Not that she was prone to histrionics  
But she usually displayed  
The appropriate amount of emotion  
In appropriate situations.  
But now  
Now  
She was acting really weird.

Eventually, she fulfilled her own prophesy  
And fell  
Backwards  
Over a railing  
At Bryce Canyon  
To her death  
While we were on vacation.

The real moral,  
Well there are so many morals,  
But one of them  
Is not to  
Speak of your own death.  
It is sacred  
And not yours to proclaim.

When someone dies from falling off a great height

What they usually die of  
Is something  
To do with their organs being jarred  
But a great height also often breaks many bones.  
This was the case with Sarah.  
Her limbs  
No longer  
Seemed  
To fit a person.  
Or, more appropriately,  
She seemed to be  
More than one person.  
I, of course, only knew her  
As one person  
But in death  
The soul  
Can take on many forms.

I didn't know what  
I was supposed to do.  
I spoke with the authorities.  
I was primarily in shock.  
Shock was all I was offered.  
I had to speak with the authorities.  
We were just trying to  
Take a nice photograph.  
If you travel alone  
With your spouse  
There aren't that many opportunities  
To get photographs  
With both of you in them.  
I was snapping a few shots  
In front of those bright red pinnacles.  
Though if scientific truth be told  
It's not really a canyon.  
I sort of forget why,  
But it's true.  
It's misnamed.  
It has something to do  
With the fact

That they were formed by wind  
Instead of water.  
But that's not important right now.  
My wife, Sarah, died  
And I know I'm saying this  
Very matter-of-factly  
But in a way it is  
A fact about the world.  
I haven't accepted it  
But I do know that it's a true fact.  
Well, anyway, we were taking photographs  
One after the other.  
Like, I would take her photograph  
And then she would take mine  
In front of the same hoodoo.  
Then when we got home  
We could either cut away  
The space between us  
Or if we wanted to use technology  
We could photoshop the affair  
To appear like we were standing together.  
But how can you stand  
With a dead spouse?  
I ask you, how?  
You might think that  
We would have just asked another tourist  
To take our picture together  
But we were much too shy for that.  
What happened was  
That somebody asked us  
If  
They could take our picture,  
You know, as a favor to us.  
They must have seen that we were  
Taking pictures together  
Apart  
And have taken pity on us  
Else it was something they always did:  
Asked to take another couple's photos,  
An alternative that is slightly weird,

Almost creepy, but not quite.  
But anyway, they somehow  
Didn't know how to use the zoom  
So what was in the photo  
Was in the photo:  
There was no changing that,  
So they asked us to back up  
And when you're not looking  
Where you're going  
You fall  
And fall she did.  
I was skeptical of the perfect photograph  
And knew the plan by heart  
So didn't really back up.  
I kind of just wanted to get back  
To the privacy of the day  
But she wanted a perfect photo to frame  
And as she backed up  
She kicked up  
Dust like smoke  
And let out a scream  
That just kept getting quieter  
Until I heard her body  
Cleanly hit the bottom.  
Damn those people.  
They should have just minded  
Their own business.  
Generosity always comes  
With strings attached.  
Hopefully  
They're not usually  
Strings so heavy  
As death.

The authorities first suspected  
Foul play and who else  
Was there to suspect  
But me?  
So I really had to get into my feelings  
And that really wasn't



Something I was good at  
With strangers  
But when you're in shock  
Over your wife's death  
And there's the potential  
Of going to prison  
You really have no choice  
So you go along, crying like a baby  
And for this I was thankful:  
Talking to the cops  
For the days after her death  
Was really  
Like therapy;  
A therapy  
I'd recommend  
To no one.

But therapy is only  
As good  
As its outcome  
And I came out  
Of it  
Not only  
Not knowing  
If I pushed her  
Or if I should  
Have died  
Instead of her  
But not really knowing  
Who I was;  
Not really understanding  
Our marriage  
And that was,  
Even under normal circumstances,  
The one thing that kept me sane.

That took a long time  
In real therapy  
To come to terms with  
But I tried not

To go too long:  
I didn't want to talk  
About myself  
All the time.  
Obviously, this poem  
Is a way  
Of understanding myself  
But one which hopefully,  
In its externalization,  
Helps you  
To understand  
Yourself as well.  
We all need help  
Don't we?  
It's not an easy world.

5.

Death, like a diary  
Is a common thickener.

After the fall  
I was offered a suite in the Bryce Canyon Lodge  
For as long as I cared.  
Since Sarah had no burial wishes  
We had a small ceremony  
(Her family flew in)  
And her ashes were flung  
Amongst the oxidizing iron dust,  
Amongst the true meaning of rustic.  
I said a few words  
That I now forget  
And then had absolutely no idea  
How to continue;  
No idea what to do next.  
I was overcome by grief, yes,  
But also simply paralyzed by life,  
By not knowing what this new life  
Was supposed to entail.  
Since I didn't know  
What to do  
I took up the National Park Service's offer  
Of a free suite:  
My tax dollars at work.  
I stayed put.  
My linens were changed.  
Room service arrived.  
Something was elegantly put under my pillow  
(The item changed each day)  
But I stayed.  
From my window  
A mighty view was apparent;  
A mighty view that had murdered my wife.  
But I suppose that I cannot  
Bestow so much intention  
Upon nature.

If I found a beautiful stick  
That nature washed upon a shore  
And dried to perfection  
I could take it home  
But I would never  
Call it art.  
Thus, this was no murder.  
This is the analogy:  
Murder and art  
Complicating themselves  
Together.  
There I was thinking  
These thoughts  
In a posh hotel room  
When I realized  
How awful it was  
To be experiencing such comfort,  
Terrible really,  
To be on vacation  
When my wife had just died,  
But we were on vacation together;  
I tell you, together.  
*Why didn't we pony up  
For this suite  
When she was alive?*  
Was a question  
That kept running through my head.  
It was a beautiful suite,  
Worth every penny  
Though I wasn't entirely sure  
How many pennies that was,  
But it really was fabulous and possessed  
Among other accoutrements:

- \* Complimentary high-speed Internet access, both wired and wireless
- \* Two-line speakerphones with computer data ports
- \* Cordless Phones
- \* Private voicemail
- \* Large desk with an ergonomic desk chair
- \* Amenities of home including hairdryer and terrycloth robes

- \* Coffee makers with Starbucks coffee and Tazo Tea
- \* L'Occitane bath amenities
- \* In-room safe
- \* Nintendo and on-demand movies
- \* Flat screen television, and Stereo CD Players
- \* Evening turn down service
- \* Feather down comforters and pillows
- \* Unique bath menu, to personalize your bath experience.
- \* Lighted make-up mirrors
- \* Gourmet treats in the fully-stocked honor bars
- \* "Forgot It? We've Got It!" essential travel items
- \* "Mind, Body, Spa" in-room Yoga Channel programming
- \* Express check-out
- \* Same day dry cleaning and laundry service
- \* Complimentary shoe shine
- \* Complimentary newspaper delivered to your door each morning
- \* Complimentary pet goldfish delivered to your guestroom upon request
- \* Double-glazed sound-proof windows
- \* Mediterranean suites featuring whirlpool tubs
- \* All guest rooms and suites are non-smoking
- \* Check In Time: 3:00 PM
- \* Check Out Time: 12:00 PM

Wasn't it awful to focus so materially?  
 But this was the limit of my focus, on possessions  
 On everything that made this a vacation  
 And it was no longer a vacation  
 It was a grief journey.  
 It was well appointed,  
 But, nevertheless, completely grief stricken.  
 I stayed for a month.  
 I became a fixture:  
 A fixture of dry grief.  
 They looked at me and thought...  
 They thought many things.  
 I was a sight to think about.  
 I was a thinking spot: a sight of reckoning,  
 Of atonement with one's self.  
 My uncle called a few times.  
 I seldom answered.

Finally, it was his frantic message  
That brought me back to civilization,  
*She's gone mad; she's become an artist.*

And so madness was the call.  
He needed me to speak with her.  
To beg her to come home to her senses.  
It seemed more like away from her senses,  
But Philip was neurotically panicked.  
I felt I must go back.  
It was a way back in  
And perhaps I needed him now.  
Besides Sarah  
He was the only reliable source.  
It was at that moment that  
I knew Melissa would have to die as well.

6.

The story was that  
Melissa went to the pool hall  
Where she had never been before  
And picked out the  
Sketchiest guy  
She could find.  
She said she wanted  
A job done.  
At first  
She did not specify.  
Then  
She offered 50,000 dollars  
To steal her jewels.  
When the jewels had been stolen,  
After she had filmed the ne'er-do-well  
Stealing her jewels,  
She blackmailed her future assailant  
Into killing her.  
It was suicide by murder.

What I am asking for,  
Of those who died,  
Are decisions.  
I would be okay  
If I didn't understand  
Those decisions,  
At least I think I would,  
But I'd really like to see  
That a decision to die was made.  
I'd like to see some thought process.  
Thus, a note would be nice, some trace.

A plan in a pool hall is a trace, a witness.

7.

Melissa's daughter, Philip's stepdaughter, my stepcousin, Rebecca,  
Found her dead.

This is the part where it gets exact;  
Where it needs to get exact;  
Where a particular species matters  
In the throat or around the bend  
At the time of death.  
We've all watched too many,  
But luckily that doesn't mean  
We will become  
Anything more violent  
Than our static personalities allow.

To get to the bottom of mystery  
Once it is officially known  
As a mystery  
You need a purpose  
Not a paycheck,  
Off duty morality: use that.

Rebecca was sleeping over for Easter,  
A holiday my uncle relished.  
She went to Melissa's study after  
The house was asleep  
Because Rebecca was pregnant  
And wanted to tell her mother  
She was going to keep the child.  
Easter is as good a time as any  
To tell a parent  
You are accidentally pregnant.  
She found her  
Under her desk;  
No way to get over  
The way she was slumped under,  
Protected and dead.

I wasn't very close with my faux stepsister (actually my stepcousin).  
That's the thing about stepchildren:



They have to fit into a family that's already there.  
The facts are already objectively displayed.  
A natural child defines the culture of the family  
In large part  
But a stepchild is more of an appendage,  
Like atheists view religion.  
It has to fit in with  
What is already there.

I was already in a strange position.  
I was already not natural.  
However, Philip had done a great job  
Of making me feel  
That I had somehow  
Created  
What I lived within.  
Still, every attempt at this  
Was just that:  
An attempt.  
It did not come naturally.

When there are stepchildren on both sides,  
As there were in our case,  
The equation  
Is often messier, more potentially dangerous  
For each side already  
Has an intact culture.  
Since I was already unnatural and older  
It was my sullen culture  
(The one that I had steadily grown accustomed to)  
That was thrown to the wind.  
As you might imagine

This is perhaps how it normally works out:  
The woman's family  
Defines the culture  
Of the new family  
If there is to be one.

It is true that

Simple things

Are often

The most

Confusing.

Like how much money you get for your birthday.

Or what the appropriate meal is for that birthday.

Philip and Katherine used to take me and two friends

(It was always two friends, never more, never less)

To the restaurant of my choosing.

There, over appetizers or desert

He would force me to recount the year

And make plans for the next.

But anyway, Rebecca

Found her strangled

At her desk

Below

Such that

If someone were

Sitting

At her desk

They would have

Kicked her.

The bruise marks

Were most shocking

Around her neck

Like she was wearing makeup

But there was no makeup.

You could rub it for days

And it would not come off.

Further, if you were

To rub it

For days

Her body

(It was not even her)

Would have

Begun to rot.

A dead body is stiff,

Actually lifeless

Heavy  
As if in life  
We are puppets  
Silently lifted upward.  
As if  
In death  
The strings are cut.

Her hair clung to her body, dense,  
Wet seeming. It is terrible  
That a body  
Appears vulnerable,  
Needs to be folded inward,  
But it does.  
Terrible really  
That what we need  
In life  
Can only be given  
In death.

Her past tense  
Included the motive  
For her murder.  
That's the real body  
The investigation works back towards.  
Although the victim  
Has nothing to say  
Murder files are closed  
At a higher rate  
Than other crimes.  
The motives are normally clearer  
And connect us distinctly.

A crime of solution penetrates.  
It doesn't matter what you grip  
But motion is an old olive  
Stuck on the floor;  
Pits as eyes;  
Foreign money makes foreign sounds.

8.

To find a mother dead  
Is obviously  
Unnatural

But it can be a growth experience.

Don't neglect the fact,  
The absolute fact,  
That it is only in the face of tragedy  
That people can change.

I used to have first hand experience of this:  
No one I knew  
Had experienced a tragedy  
And no one I knew  
Had changed.

*Though*  
*Negatives cross and don't really make the case,*  
Is what used to be argued  
To me  
Across my head  
And then I became flustered  
But what I really wanted to know  
Was if, in the face  
Of her mother's death,  
Rebecca would alter her self-centered ways;  
If her tantrums would cease;  
If the world would appear to her  
To spin a little less  
Around her middle finger:  
I'll ask,  
I'll send her a survey.  
Of course, her world might be transformed  
By itself,  
By her pregnancy. Babies sometimes trump.

This leads me to a more motivational question:

How do people change?  
Are they capable of it?  
Perhaps we could get to the bottom of it  
If we were only allowed  
To more rigorously experiment  
On our fellow man, which is why  
I'm going to be closely following Rebecca  
In the weeks immediately following  
Her mother's death.  
There will be updates.  
I promise you,  
There will be updates.

9.

I was able, however, to see the body myself.  
The marks on the neck were blue and almost powdery  
As if easily removable, but I knew  
That they could not be removed  
Even if they might be  
Painted over.  
I knew they would be painted over  
And thus, the killer's hard work  
Would go unnoticed,  
But a killer's work is always present to us  
(And killing by strangulation  
Is incredibly hard work,  
The soul fights against its egress  
With every ounce of body  
And the body weighs many ounces).  
It is forced upon us  
By the victim's future absence.  
This made me glad:  
I don't like to see hard work  
Go unappreciated.  
Everyone should receive his  
(Or her)  
Due.  
That's sort of my motto in life.  
I don't care if the due  
Is received late or not  
But I can't stand it  
If it's not received at all.  
I really need that due  
To be served  
If I am to sleep well at night.  
On the other hand,  
A murderer's due  
Must remain hidden.  
Thus, I didn't know how to feel.  
Well, obviously, I had to feel sad  
For my uncle and for Rebecca.  
But how was I supposed to feel for myself?

That's always the question  
Once you're done with the comforting  
And the feelings for show:  
You have to look deep in your soul  
And see how you, the real you,  
Really feels.

10.

The mystery was that  
I did not know that  
Sarah's death would be judged a suicide  
Until the inspector said  
*Unequivocally,*  
*For a fall of that magnitude,*  
*With such and such*  
*A trajectory*  
*She would have had to*  
*Jump slightly*  
*Backward,*  
*Sort of like*  
*A little hop. Yes,*  
*It appears*  
*That she hopped*  
*At the end.*  
Hence, I have a photograph  
Of my wife dying;  
Her last sight  
Is my sight  
Expressed  
Equally unequivocally  
In a photograph.

The death of your closest loved one  
Is a blank page  
That keeps on saying  
It's full.

It turned out that our life, our apartment, our trips  
Our sex, our ruts, our highs, our dishes  
Weren't enough for Sarah,  
Not nearly enough:  
She wanted so much more  
She couldn't even describe it  
And her saying, proclaiming  
That she was going to die  
Was her only choice.



I know it's awful to say  
But wouldn't it be nice  
If we could just imagine  
That everyone who died  
Committed suicide?  
Look no further.

We could say  
It's all in our own hands:  
Life, death  
Whatever we choose.  
Unfortunately, accidents happen,  
Evil exists.  
It is not all within  
Our own hands.  
If we make a choice  
We need the world's infinite cooperation.  
That's why there are so many attempted suicides,  
So many.

11.

Whose is the third death?  
There were two of us  
But another must connect.  
The intention of murder  
(Even if suicidal murder)  
And the accidental plunge  
Are connected by the straight suicide.  
The deciding person is not the dead body.  
The intention of the person  
Is internally connected  
With the expectation of the body  
And yet, is separated  
By the precise moment of death;  
Is separated  
By precision  
And yet, connects  
Two categories of death.  
In the fact that it splits,  
That it separates,  
Lies its ability to connect.

But what if the connection  
Is false? That is, what if it  
Is based  
On false premises,  
Assumptions, facts,  
Would it still connect?  
And if it didn't  
Would this be due  
To its own inabilities?  
If it didn't  
Could it  
If it wanted to?

The third is most obviously  
The suicide by knife  
Of my aunt Katherine,  
If you could even call her my aunt

After they got divorced.

Their divorce was a shock to her.  
Philip came home from Tokyo  
Exaggeratedly said,  
*I've never been happy.*  
Said he wanted a divorce  
Quickly  
Melissa encouraged him  
To do it quickly.  
My aunt got everything.  
I mean everything  
Even Philip's parents',  
My grandparents',  
Furniture;  
Even their sideboard  
From their years in China.

She lived through the years  
Alone  
Growing steadily crazier  
Without speech

Katherine read reports of Philip's young wife.  
Imagining them.  
Calling her a bitch.  
Mouthing the word *bitch*  
In her sleep.  
Contemplating awful things.  
Contemplating her awful life.  
She had never been anything as an adult  
Other than Philip's wife.  
Those are not skills that can transfer.  
She took a painting class.  
She focused on the fact  
That she really screwed him in court.  
She gave advice to women who were getting divorces:  
*Take them for all they're worth.*  
*All they're worth is you, nothing more.*  
*It should all be yours.*

She had a complex scheme  
Involving the realization  
That Philip wanted to get divorced quickly,  
And if you can wait  
And if the lawyers are paid  
From the same accounts  
Anything is possible  
(Plus, there was the fact that she threatened  
To use certain accusations of homosexuality,  
Of abuse, of money laundering...  
She directed the young almost-divorcees  
To learn some unexploited secrets  
And threaten to exploit them.)  
Thus, Philip came out of the legal affair  
A much poorer man  
But an unencumbered poorer man.  
Thus, he came out.  
I've already explored his failed marriage  
To a blossoming artist.  
Katherine had no such later failed marriage.  
She grew out of speech.  
She got *crazier and crazier*  
According to various friends' reports;  
An undiagnosed personality disorder.

They said she was bipolar,  
That she drank to self-medicate;  
A popular,  
But not terribly effective, strategy.  
We all told her that she should see a psychiatrist,  
Anyone, a social-worker, an analyst, a life coach,  
But unfortunately  
It was a psychologist who supposedly  
(At least in Katherine's mind)  
Told Philip  
That he was allowed to divorce Katherine,  
That it was okay.  
Although, I find it very hard to believe  
That any therapist said this  
(At least, it's easier to feel this way).

That said, I was kept in the dark  
About their relationship  
And like I said before  
I really wasn't their son.

After her breakdown she did not so much read  
As group words.  
It wasn't a one to one ratio.  
There were always patterns because there were no arguments.  
There was no way through.  
There were the piles, cairns of ideas I repeat.  
She was deaf, became deaf,  
But that was just an obvious expression of her personality.  
Nothing came in, though she could continually repeat  
A concept back to you in her monologue.  
It was not so inner.  
Everything was pushed out.  
She was solid—*the bait*, she had heard and said, *Don't take the bait*.  
It's advice that she needed to give.  
She always needed to tell you something.  
She needed to tell you how to live.  
I loved her all the same.

12.

But what if the deaths  
Really were accidents?  
Not the events themselves  
For we know  
They were respectively  
Strangled, plummeted, and knifed.  
But what if the way they felt  
Was an accident? That is,  
What if  
Behind purpose  
There lies an accident?  
You would be forced  
To keep going back deeper  
To arrive finally at purpose  
And its soul mate, decision.  
To ask:  
Who was the self  
Who chose this self?  
Is to contemplate  
The possibility  
That we are all  
Merely accidents.

13.

But what if I have a disease where I only see suicides?  
That's a pretty good story at least.

I know you're going to  
Think I'm crazy  
But what if JFK  
Committed suicide?

It would have had to have been  
Another  
Suicide by murder  
But it's a possibility  
That no one,  
And I mean no one,  
Has seriously looked into.  
I think it's a possibility  
That we should at least contemplate.  
Think about what was happening at the time.  
The world was imploding.  
Let's just say he couldn't take it.  
Let's just say he knew that he couldn't resign.  
It was his parents dream.  
It was his family's destiny.  
It was a destiny that he had to evade  
At any cost, even at the cost of his life.  
Now, once he set the balls in motion  
There would have been  
No way to stop his murder.  
He would have been resigned to it.  
You can see the resignation in his wave.  
You can see the history in his face.  
That's what you're watching.  
He knew he was going to die  
Because he planned his own death.  
Of course, I'm not privy  
To how he did it.  
That would require an extensive investigation.  
But I can tell you

That almost no one  
Or perhaps  
Absolutely no one  
Would have known about  
His scheme  
To evade this life  
And rejoin forces  
With his maker and with history.  
He was President of the world's most powerful nation.  
He could have had it done.  
That's all I'm saying.  
It's possible, goddammit, it is.



14.

The real question that I'm trying with my every fiber to understand

Is

How do we adapt

To the awful facts of the world?

It seems that we do.

My uncle is doing okay, if not great all the time.

Even I am okay, though never great.

It even seems important that we adapt

But sort of tragic too.

Wouldn't it be more ennobling to know

That we didn't adapt; that we couldn't;

That life wouldn't continue to go on

If X happened (like losing your wife),

But that's not the way life works.

Yes, life works.

It's a rather complicated engineering feat,

But it works.

And by working

I mean

Basically

We continue

And to continue

We adapt.

15.

Okay, fine, I don't really believe in suicide.  
I killed them all, all three of them.  
Not JFK, of course, but the others.  
I killed my wife, my aunt, my step-aunt.  
It was a family affair.

It was too much to be married.  
Anyone can understand.  
Anyone should understand.  
Marriage is stifling.  
It is always too early.  
Our personal projects are never completed  
And once we are married  
They have  
Run out of time.  
I ran out of time.

The other thing was  
That I hated how  
She always  
Said she was going to die.  
It was like she owned death.  
I was tired;  
Dead tired  
Of her.

Well, yes  
Of her in general  
But at that particular moment  
I was tired of her  
Trying to predict her own future.  
It was like by giving control  
To something else  
Like a deterministic fate  
She got to control everything  
And that just wasn't cool.  
We don't know what the future  
Will bring.

That's the whole point of life.  
And if we say we do  
Then we should be taught a lesson.  
That's why I think of myself as a teacher  
And more specifically,  
As a Kierkegaardian teacher.

First, the Kierkegaardian teacher shows (or takes) the student to the next sphere on this journey of becoming a self. Second, he meets the student where she is. And third, he uses indirect methods. The meeting of the three attributes, however, suggests a problem. For if the goal of a Kierkegaardian education is for the student to become a self, but one of the methods of the teacher is to meet the student where he is, it appears that the student must already have a self in order to be taught, but also that to learn we must have a self. That is, it appears that teaching is propaedeutic to selfhood, but that selfhood is propaedeutic to learning. The obvious way of reading (and therefore dissolving) this paradox is to note that the self that is the *goal* of a Kierkegaardian education is qualitatively different from the self that is met along the way by the teacher. That is, the teacher meets the student's self and guides him on a journey to become an authentic self; a self that has been chosen in its eternal validity and is transparent to itself and to God.

That is, the Kierkegaardian teacher  
Kills his student.  
At least, that's my interpretation of the matter.  
Let me know what you think.

16.

I paid the couple to take our photograph.  
I paid them to ask her to back up.  
I planted a small avalanche.  
The police report  
Indicating that she had committed suicide  
Was pure genius  
But not mine.  
I just thought it was going to be considered  
An accident.  
Accidents happen,  
You know.  
I would be depressed.  
I would have to act depressed.  
I don't like acting depressed.  
Thus, I had a lot of reluctance towards  
Going through with the plan  
But once I saw the tremendous upside,  
Once I really considered it  
In the light of a streetlight  
I knew I had to do it.

It's not really that difficult  
To arrange  
The falling of stones—  
The photographer's true assistant.  
The small avalanche  
That absolutely had to  
Remain a secret  
And did:  
A secret that roared wide  
In my soul.  
But the murderer  
Must evade  
The urge  
To leave  
Traces.  
This is, in the end,  
What separates

The murderer  
From the artist.  
The artist can't help  
But leave art  
For the world  
To discover his intentions.  
But if the murderer  
Were to behave  
Like this  
The murderer  
Would be in jail  
And I had no intention  
Of being arrested.  
I certainly did not.  
Jail was a most unappealing place  
For its bad food,  
Violence,  
And primary color: lack of freedom.  
No, that was not for me  
So I had to keep  
It to myself  
As painful  
As the bursting  
Was meant to be.

17.

The accident and the essence  
Are forever twined within me.

But then I just got on a roll  
And knew what I had to do.

Therefore, Melissa. That was simple:  
I hated her. I loved my uncle

And she  
Humiliated him.

After they ruled  
Sarah's death a suicide  
By fall  
I knew that I could  
Move on to Philip's problem.  
After all, Philip kept calling to complain about her  
While I was in quoted mourning.  
And there is, of course,  
A certain confidence  
That moves into one's soul  
When one accomplishes a job well done.

When I think about it now  
I kind of regret that Melissa  
Wasn't the first.  
Her life really was the most pathetic.

Look, all I did was  
Pay someone, Bruce,  
To say  
That she had hired him  
To strangle her.  
I had a noose around his neck:  
I had paid someone else  
To give me information  
Which would have sent

The eventual fake murderer/suicider  
To jail for life  
For certain. All he had to do  
Was tell someone, a friend, anyone  
That she had hired him  
And then  
Get lost  
For the rest of his life. Well, that and kill her.

It was elaborate, Bruce was a bodybuilder  
All ripples  
And

I was skinny.

I did the killing  
Via my plan (who cares  
Where my hands actually were?)  
But I needed someone else  
To take the fall  
Should the chips come  
Down to the wire.

But why Katherine? Because  
The miserable should not live.  
After her divorce  
She didn't do anything.  
Yes, I mean  
She did serve on a few committees  
But nothing  
That could serve  
As a forward motion  
In her soul.

In a lot of ways  
I think that it was Philip  
Who should be blamed  
For her death.  
It was he who left her  
When she needed

Not to be left.  
They were partners  
In this life  
And when they split  
It was as if  
Her life ended.  
Thus, my decision  
To kill Katherine  
Was only formal,  
Only the mortally tinged  
Repeat  
Of a song  
That had already  
Been played, already  
Run its course.



18.

When you kill someone  
You really have to  
Recognize the fact that you  
Might have to kill someone else.  
These are chains of things that  
Lead to other chains of things.  
Murders lead to other murders.

It's like if you realize that a certain person's life  
Isn't worth living  
You might be forced  
To realize  
That a lot of other people's lives  
Really aren't that important.  
Killing people is all about realization,  
About the implicit unimportance  
Of our lives. It is this realization  
That serves as the thread between men  
Who have lost their wives.

No, I am what connects me and my uncle.  
I am the thread between men.

But what connects is also what separates.  
It's just a fact packed back in the concept of the thing.  
You see, the thing in between, that is,  
The thing that connects  
Is also what separates  
The two things  
That the thing in between  
Is between.  
I am the thing in between  
Separating men  
While connecting them.  
Was it a secret connection  
Or a secret separation?  
I wasn't entirely sure.  
Maybe it was primarily its duality

That was a secret.  
My duality as connector and separator,  
My hypostasis,  
Is what is hidden.  
But the oddest part of all this  
Is that I am also  
What is connected.  
I am connected to others  
Who have lost their wives,  
But I caused that loss.  
Therefore, I really don't  
Know how  
To think about myself  
And I think about myself  
A lot.

19.

To summarize the third bloody scene:  
The knife penetrated Katherine's heart.  
I did this one myself.

Her death was cloaked in  
The sadness of her life.  
Wittgenstein once wrote, so seriously,  
*The world of the happy man*  
*Is a different one from that of the unhappy man.*  
But I suppose he would have said  
That their deaths are the same  
And, of course, it is a theme  
Of modern literature  
Well, really, of all literature  
That our deaths are the same.  
This is not, strictly, true.  
I watched her die.  
The blood did not spurt out.  
She relieved herself  
Into the knife  
More than I plunged.  
Thus, I barely sweated  
And I had earlier skipped working out.  
I thought I was going to get a workout  
But no workout was to be had.  
Her life was, as they say,  
Over before  
It was over.  
I merely shoved it along its way.  
It was a foregone conclusion.  
So, no, Wittgenstein's existentialism  
Does not go far enough.  
He should have also said,  
*The death of the sad man*  
*Is different from that of the happy man.*  
That's very gendered  
But people were more gendered  
In general

At that time  
So I don't really think  
We can criticize him  
For that.  
Let's stick to criticizing him  
For the first thing.  
It's more substantive.  
I'm sick of people  
Being more worried  
About tiny words  
And less worried about  
Actual states of affairs:  
A woman is dead.  
A sad woman is dead.  
What does that mean?

That the absence of where to stand  
Is where we stand  
Nervously shifting position.

There is no doffing one's hat  
Except the wish of  
Bowing against

And now just  
The single sharpened blade  
Kept pointed away

After plunging  
And, again, I wouldn't say  
Blood came rushing

But, more correctly  
Was there.  
Blood was there

Not quickly  
But intimately  
Immanently

As the notes of class  
Are readily visible  
Upon first encounter.

As this knife is its own body.

That is, in effect  
The problem with crime  
Is having a body

And where to hide one's evidence  
But within  
The great lakes are nice

But wherever humans congregate  
The precise bathymetry  
Is known.

Thus, I must carry the blade  
That so openly  
Transformed

Accident into essence.  
Openly and yet  
No one saw

After such violence  
After such drunkenness  
The world is silent  
And more the same color.  
More of the same color.

But that's enough of the metaphysical,  
The technical aspects must also be contemplated.  
Thus, a knife must be sharpened  
As one of its causes, materially and finally.  
You can't just let it sit  
And expect  
A clean cut.  
Anyone who has

Ever tried  
To make a tomato sandwich  
Knows this.  
It's common knowledge.  
And the body is firmer  
Than a tomato.  
Therefore, a dull knife  
Will go in  
But it will tear  
And the entire task  
Of killing  
Will be  
Ever so much more difficult  
For the assailant.  
That's why before I killed Katherine  
I purchased a knife sharpener from Williams Sonoma.  
I wanted the cut  
(Or cuts if need be)  
To be firm and precise.  
An imprecise murder  
Is sort of like  
An imprecise stroke  
In an otherwise beautiful artwork:  
It just makes you cringe  
A little bit  
And I wanted to feel proud;  
I wanted to feel like  
That with these murders  
I was walking,  
No, marching,  
Into the upper echelon of mankind.  
Me, yes, me, silly little me  
Above everyone else!  
That was the moral  
I wanted inflicted on society.

20.

Our desperateness  
Can lead to revenge  
Or  
Nihilism.

After she died,  
After I killed Sarah,  
Life did not come back.  
The projects of my life  
Did not become mine. My life  
Was not  
Won;  
It was lost.

Thus, belief  
Was itself lost.  
The emptiness  
Led to practical necessity.  
What followed  
Became what was done.

The other murders  
Followed  
From the falling  
From belief.

But, lo and behold,  
Poetic language has also fallen. It has fallen  
from our ordinary language's rigid  
predication, the almost perspicuous feeling  
of language, the absolute exchange values of  
words, and the conventional use-value of  
language. Indeed, if poetic language had not  
fallen it would not exist, there would only be  
our ordinary literal language.

Thus, poetry erupted  
From my own wickedness.

Plato was right, art is dangerous  
Or follows from dangerous circumstances,  
From a malevolent character.



21.

What people don't really understand  
Is the amount of work  
That killing someone requires.  
Hannah Arendt rather famously distinguished  
Between Animal laborens and Homo faber;  
That is, between the laborer and the creator  
And while it might seem  
That murder belongs in the category of the laborer,  
For it is a sweaty task,  
I would like to forthrightly claim  
That it actually belongs  
In the category of creation, of absolute creativity.  
Other animals might kill one another  
But man is the only species  
That murders.  
Thus, (the capacity to) murder  
Is a necessary  
But insufficient (for I would not leave out reason)  
Condition  
For an animal to be a human.  
Thus, in my murders  
I have succeeded in becoming  
Just a little bit more human;  
Perhaps I have even helped humanity  
Progress  
Just a little bit.  
But even if you're not  
Feeling this argument  
There is another I might make:  
The amount of planning and technical prowess  
Involved in murdering someone  
Is up there with all but the greatest art  
And I'm talking Michelangelo here  
Or perhaps Picasso,  
But most art, most music, most poetry, most architecture  
Is not nearly as evolved  
In terms of its execution  
And inherent level of craftsmanship

As a well-performed murder.  
What I want to ask is whether  
Mature capitalism is compatible with  
This extremely delicate form of craftsmanship.  
It is true, much of the world we purchase  
Is artisanal  
These days:  
Look at the coffee;  
Look at the backlash against globalization;  
Look at the furniture; look at the locally produced,  
Prepared, cured, turned, and fried foods.  
Look at these things  
And you will see  
The coming of a land where  
Every single thing is local and slow.  
But it is equally true  
That everyone  
(And I mean you too)  
Has used their money  
To buy  
Cheaper and cheaper goods.  
They aren't even good anymore.  
This situation forces me  
To contemplate a world,  
A future world  
Where everything looks local  
But nothing is:  
This includes murder.  
I may very well be  
The last of the great craftsman murderers.  
Do you know how much time  
It took  
To plan everything?  
And that's not even thinking about  
The money I spent.  
You know, I had to go to Bryce Canyon  
Before we went there  
To plan it all out  
And I couldn't go for a long time  
Since that would have been suspicious

So I just went for the day  
So I was on the plane all day  
And I can't ever work that well on the plane  
So it was basically an entire day wasted.  
I'm not complaining  
Mind you  
I'm just trying to demonstrate  
How much work I put into my murders.

22.

So, I've been thinking lately about killing Rebecca.  
She's not very smart.  
She thinks she's some kind of radical  
And she has this unplanned baby  
That she's going to raise to be  
Some sort of radical tyrant, possessed of its own awfulness.  
God, I can't stand it.  
God, she's so flakey.

It also turned out that Rebecca did not change  
In the face of her mother's death.  
I was wondering if her own death would change her.  
Of course, I couldn't really  
Change her for her  
But I held out the hope that her death might  
Change her for me.  
It's like this, if someone dies  
Your perception of them  
Gets warped.  
You thought they were miserly  
And you remember their generosity.  
Oftentimes, it is like that,  
Precisely the opposite  
Of what we thought  
During their lives.  
It's like we feel guilty  
For thinking  
Ill of the dead.  
I've never exactly experienced  
This phenomenon. When my father died  
I didn't know him well enough  
To do anything  
But shroud him  
In a certain mystery,  
Which is difficult enough  
In this era of precise technologies.  
So, my thought process now is that  
If I kill Rebecca

I'll really be able to test  
Whether one's perceptions  
Change in death.  
Because I really don't like her  
And I'm surmising that I might  
Like her  
After she dies. That's my hypothesis  
At least. Perhaps I could get a paper  
Out of this experience.  
Of course, the scientist in me  
Recognizes that the fact  
That it will be me  
Who kills her  
Will have a significant effect  
On how I feel about her  
After her death,  
Which might nullify my results.

But I don't want to kill her now  
Since she's having a rough patch  
With her boyfriend  
(On account of the baby).  
I really don't want her boyfriend  
To lose touch with her  
After her death  
For this would ruin my connection  
With him  
And he's a really cool guy.

23.

To be honest  
I'm not really sure  
How I'm going to kill Rebecca.  
I also can't really tell  
If killing  
A sibling  
Even if she is only  
A surrogate sibling  
Would be crossing the line.

Of course, there really aren't too many boundaries  
I haven't crossed.  
For Christ sakes, I killed my wife.  
I assume that has changed my life  
And the boundaries in my life.  
I mean, obviously it did change my life:  
I am no longer married,  
But I assume  
That at some point  
I will feel guilty  
And that this guilt will penetrate my soul.  
Actually, that's the sort of thing  
I go in for.  
I'm really sort of waiting  
To feel like this.  
Of course, you're probably realizing now  
That I just want to feel guilty  
Because I accidentally killed my father  
(My mother died in childbirth)  
When I was four  
By climbing into the car and accidentally  
(Or was it subconsciously)  
Putting it into drive.  
I was never really allowed to feel guilty for that.

Parents (and surrogate parents)  
Let this be a lesson to you:  
Let your children feel guilty

About which  
They should feel guilty.  
If you don't  
They might  
End up  
Killing people.

If your mom dies in childbirth  
You should be allowed  
To feel bad about it  
Or you might  
Kill your dad  
And then,  
When not allowed to feel bad about that,  
You might just  
Kill lots of other people  
Including your wife and your aunts.

But back to the method  
I will use to kill Rebecca:  
She's sort of a pathetic radical, part of the New Left  
That values expression over strategy.  
That is, it's more important to her to  
Express that you're on the right side of the argument  
Than to show how you were going to win that argument.  
I hate that shit.  
It puts us so far back.  
My main problem with her politics  
Is that there's really not much  
Politics in them.  
When poststructuralist French philosophy  
And identity politics converged  
The subject just kind of evaporated,  
Leaving it merely as a *transit point* for the discourses of critical theory.  
This, in effect, left no subject who could take part in political action.  
I want my method for killing her to intimately relate  
To her righteous liberalism.  
That's it: an evaporated subject  
Is a dead subject.  
I will kill Rebecca

Via evaporation.  
Don't worry  
I don't really  
Know what that means  
Either,  
But I am very persistent.  
I will figure it out.

Of course, do you think she'll just grow out of her politics?  
If you let someone live  
There's always the possibility  
That they'll change  
And given that she's going  
To have a kid  
The kid might change her  
More than anything I could do.  
On the other hand, if I kill her  
That's really not a possibility.  
She'll always be this static  
Stupid liberal.  
If she were smarter  
I might think that  
She had what it takes to change,  
But she's dumb.  
She has to die.  
It's the next step.



24.

I dreamed that I was finally  
Sentenced  
To prison.  
It would be such a relief  
But I am seemingly not in  
For such a relief.  
No, I just live my life,  
Think about the people  
I have murdered  
And kind of carry on  
Like everyone else.  
It's not like murderers don't have  
To buy groceries or get their hair cut  
Or do their laundry  
Or pay their rent.  
In fact, in my experience  
The life of the murderer  
After he (or she, although this is less likely)  
Has murdered  
Is much like the life  
Of everyone else  
Except for the fact  
That he has murdered someone.  
But if the murderer  
Can just stop thinking  
About this heinous act  
He can go on to living a normal life.  
On the other hand,  
If I'm being honest with myself  
I can honestly attest  
To the fact  
That murder  
Doesn't really solve life's problems.  
Life is still there  
In all its haunting awfulness.

25.

I'm not even really sure  
I understand  
My own motives.  
That is, the idea was  
That if I could figure out  
Why I murdered  
Then I might understand  
Why other people murdered.  
Hence, all the talk about connections.  
It is only what is connected  
That can tell us what is the same.

All I wanted to do  
All I really wanted  
Was to be connected  
With my fellow man.  
How could I be more in tune  
With my uncle?  
If our lives  
Were more similar  
Was my answer  
To all of life's questions.  
That is, I would have to  
Create the essence  
Of the widower  
Within each of us  
And then connect those essences.  
For a while  
It worked.  
We comforted each other.  
But charades are  
Not that comforting  
After a few weeks.  
After a while  
I felt sick  
And even further  
From any fellow man  
Than I had

Felt before.  
Murder is not a very good way  
To get closer  
To a surrogate father figure.

Motive is normally hidden,  
Psychologically so,  
That or  
We just keep it a secret  
Because to give away  
Why we do the most dangerous  
Of tasks,  
Why we commit  
The most audacious crimes,  
Would be to give away  
Our souls  
And we will not part with our souls  
Without a good deal  
Or the utter penetration of guilt.

But I am no sucker for guilt:  
I don't buy its sources.  
I don't feel its limbs  
However much I'd like to.  
And you have to remember that  
Even if guilt should really hit you  
And make you want to confess  
You'd have to penetrate  
Your own psychology  
To really access that deeper motive.  
That's not something I've  
Really been able to do.  
I've been trying  
Every week,  
Not so much with an analyst  
But by myself:  
I walk around  
And try to ask myself  
Why I do  
What I do

But it's behind the screen  
Of my own past.  
Another movie is being shown:  
A French film  
That I can't stand.  
I think I'll leave before  
I get bored. But leaving before  
Getting bored is also leaving  
Before understanding, in advance  
Of a broken mind;  
Hence, suicide.  
Had I thought of that option before?  
Not before you brought it up.  
But now that you mention it  
It could be a nice death;  
By my own hand  
Without understanding,  
In advance of it.  
Those are my terms.

26.

It's funny  
I've really come full circle:  
From thinking  
(And really needing to believe)  
That everyone who died  
Committed suicide  
To knowing  
That I killed  
Many people  
Who were close to me  
To finally  
Coming to the conclusion  
That I really  
Have to kill myself.

Is it a circular argument  
If it's a narrative?  
Do stories evade  
This familiarly boring trap?  
If so, I have to say  
That I enjoy stories  
Much more than arguments.  
If not, arguments  
Still have my vote.