1975

Portrait of My Sister

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She stayed in her room all day, and no one could hear her. She wanted air. She looked out the window to a lake. Two people were on a dock, inspecting a canoe. From the outside she was almost a picture, standing at her window. It was the most we ever saw of her.

She had journals, scrapbooks, broken needles, spools of white thread. She had an ell of ancient linen. She had everything we could not give her. She wanted air. Her finest clothes were patchwork, confusions of desire. The rest were black and she did not wear them.

She wanted air. We were given to know that she was mad. We rarely spoke of her outside the family, no one came up the lawns to ask of her. The years passed on, left her speechless, trying to squeeze the light from her eyes. The sun grew smaller out of boredom. Her shadows remained detailing her every move.

What could we promise her? The moon in a teak box, a fist of doubt, the power to turn from reason, some faith—She had everything we could not give her. Lying at her window, unravelling a prediction of cloud she wanted air.