

Somewhere in Arkansas or some place like it

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The First Letter was drafted and went something like this:

DAUGHTER DEAD SEND FLOWERS STOP.

the writer, shy of forty two,
took that daughter to a convenient store
bathroom, married her, took her out west,
showed her the leaves, took her
from her mother - a bipolar womb -
from her father - an unpresent -
from her brother - caught in the window -
and unlaced her in the fold of red clay

suppurating in the weed beds.

Maybe he killed her too, when
he set her up in that tiny house
with the pale blue wallpaper, bright
pink Formica counters, sticky
with the jam from the fingers
of the children that lived there before,
their heights etched in shaky
penmanship on the doorway.

She died on a Tuesday from boredom, in
a chair he'd made her, and she was missing
a mother she knew could never peel apples.

She was sitting at the window plotting her escape.

When he found her, he wrote to her mother,
because it's what you do with such matters.
She had sent her photographs every Sunday of
all her future husbands. She replied she was taking
the train - the scenic route - would bring lilies.

he decided to sell the house,
he made a sign, fastened it to a corrugated metal
rod and stabbed it in the yard.

Astronauts, it read, do not survive here.