

There is a clock ticking
In this room.

"Did you hear about Margaret....?"

She killed herself—
Shot herself...
In the head."

The clock continues ticking.
I wonder,
Did she place the gun
In her mouth?
Did she raise the muzzle
To her temple?
Was the metal cold—
At that moment—
That moment before?
Did she pause
One last time
To see if someone
Dared to stop her?

It's warm outside tonight,
August in Maryland.
Drought—
No rain for seven weeks,
And yet the scent
Of grass and cut hay
Clings to the land.
Corn leaves,
Like women's shriveled hands,
Closed tight around mother corn's
Yellow kernels.

I have forgotten her name.
I see women's hands binding wounds,
Trying to heal.
No meaning—
Merely women's hands
That weave and comfort—
Nothing.

The clock ticks.
I rise.
I sleep.
I wander about—

Living great.

She had good reasons
To kill herself:
the gun called,
the fields of shriveled corn
screamed for water,
their dry leaves crying
as they rubbed against each other.
She looked up
read the time by the sun,
raised the gun,
and the old women's hands
led her away.

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