

Deadlight

(with a last line from a passage by Je...Iz...)

I must have chosen you, as I chose my mother and father, and you may have even
been my poor father, or even more poor mother, come back again, in the third year,

as you must have chosen me,
years away, chosen, as I did too,
the affairs, the pushing away
from what you could not push away from
or be with, or you would die.

The air raids, the bombs, the abandonment,
you. The ship, me: my Navy father, his gun,
the suicide pilots, over & over & over.
The scream. The ready-room
burned through, over & over, the boys,
the dead pilots.

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Once, after your surgery, I bought you a suit.
You were very thin then. I thought your work
would hatch you again. Family. The paper. Fresh kale.
Clothes? I took the suit when you hated it
Down to the clothes-offering bin in the town.
I still didn't get the language (only in dreams)

though everyone spoke it.
I learned what you learned—no words, no touch.
One woman wanted her portrait, one money,
one love & fame. One's door closed
like teeth. What I learned
when I saw the knife in your hand—

what I hadn't seen yet this last life, when I saw
my father's gun in the drawer, and my mother's door closed,
and the ship's ready-room, blown up again as he ran over
toward it, with his gun in his hand,
to the room and the boys, the dead pilots—I saw the deadlight

wanting me, in particular dead.
My hair, my paper & pencil, my night words. Deadlight that millions
have seen on this earth.

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There was daylight when the knife dropped, and you slept, no words, no touch,
daylight the next morning, when the driver came, for the train, and took my suitcase,
without a single question, just that sideways nod, & we walked to the car, & sorrow was endless,
there was daylight, though it was leaving everything but this blank December day,
to seek the one from whom I had long been estranged.