

CRYSTAL HURDLE

## The Mother Speaks

I loved you before I met you.  
 I always wanted only the best for you.  
 You always were too clever by half.  
 I had you tutored, but I could not teach you.  
 Your father was never a god  
 —such a bee in your bonnet—  
 he was just a man  
 though I could never make you believe it.

I knew more about bees, superfamily *Apoidea*,  
 than he did.  
 Honey-drudged through the mildewed tomes  
 while he played long-distanced father  
 for thirty minutes a day  
 to you and your baby brother.  
 And why for him all the credit?  
*Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten*

He never acknowledged my work  
 I drafted his lectures, marked his quizzes  
 (as, I demur, you played secretary typist  
 for your husband, *Ach*, a woman's work is never done)  
 called me mere copy editor of his life  
 me with the work-weary black-carbon fingers  
 the burgeoning brain, the knowing for him.  
 Scanties:  
 a breakfast paper smile here  
 a cup of tea there  
 razor burning dry kisses  
 only teaspoons of gratitude

but I accepted it all with good grace  
Anything for you and your brother  
Attended your graduation on a stretcher  
I only wanted the best for you  
Surely, that is not too much to ask?

He was not a just man, just a man.  
I pity us both for that.  
More's the pity.