

Patricia Clark

Second Marriage

Sometimes, as though I've known you
for years, you lapse into silence,
and sometimes, laughing, you look like Michael,
my red-headed brother, your face

narrowed to bone. You look, sometimes,
like no one I know. The room lies in shadow
behind me, and our neighbor's light goes out.
I remember, sleepless in another house,

a foghorn tolling over the bay while those
I loved breathed steadily around me.
I can't think of a story to ease myself
to sleep, or one to tell you, something

to save me from my dreams and the woman
who haunts them. Ghosts trailing the past
are sometimes easier to love than the living.
They carry in their arms one moment, preserved,

as though it were a gift. Over and over, dreaming
the burden I can't carry or put down, I pass it hand
to hand, night to day, the effort making me
turn in sleep. When dawn comes up, I stay

at the window, trying to see further out.
She's back, lightly, from the dead,
walking easily through the door as though
she belongs between us, welcome in your arms.