

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FRIENDS WHO ARE SORTING MY DAUGHTER'S THINGS THIS AFTERNOON

I want her coats—the new one she got for skiing, the old one she wore in the yard, the black one she wore on the photo in the rain—and the green hat and scarf she knitted in sixth grade. I want the games: Clue, cribbage, backgammon, Trivial Pursuit. I want Yahtzee and the Rook cards, too. And any score sheets with her name at the top. I want the pink hoodie with the kangaroo, her yoga mat, all the unmatched earrings she saved. I want her purses and belts, her viola and her second-hand guitar. I want her measuring spoons, her ironing board, the photo albums, her last bottle of shampoo. I want the Birkenstocks (even the ones with the worn footbeds; especially the ones with the worn footbeds), her picnic blanket, and all the yarn. Save her watercolors, her candles, her great-grandmother's sewing machine, the t-shirts she had set aside for a quilt, and her tent. I want her pillow. Her stuffed elephants. Her felt-tipped pens. The broken lamp she planned to fix, the doorknobs she replaced but never threw out. Don't give away her nail polish or her emery boards. Or any of her rings. I want her hairbrush, the hair still caught in it. Her toothbrush. Her last morning. I want the sun in the window. The cats that woke and stretched beside her. I want her last phone call. *Goddamn*—all I want—let me have back her choice.