I have Anne Sexton hidden under my bed between my winter sweaters and holiday decorations. I once pulled her out to find the wire of an old glass Christmas ornament hooked to her lower lip. I felt embarrassed and apologized as I lifted the bulb gently off her chin and maneuvered the wire away from her mouth. She pretended it wasn't a problem, but I could see the small puncture mark. It bled a little and looked painful. And besides, I felt bad in general. It's selfish of me to keep her around, let alone under my bed. It's not even my house though I live with my parents and they hate company—dead or otherwise. Christ, just thinking about it makes me cringe. This whole scenario needs to come to a conclusion, it really does.

I leave in the morning to follow courses at the nearby university and feel guilt-ridden for leaving Anne alone with my two small, fluffy dogs licking at her toes and considering the trouble they'd be in if they ever chewed one off. It was in an evening poetry class that I discovered Anne in the first place. She was just sort of sitting in an anthology—all dead for decades—when I noticed how much we seemed to have in common. I mean, right from the get-go I could see how much good she might have imposed upon me had we been able to know each other back when she was a living, breathing, pill-popping diva of the written word. After some thought, I decided that I didn't need to hold her being dead against her... per se. It is a little irksome considering that she might still conceivably be alive had she not committed suicide. It was, however, the sixties, and everyone was insane and she was no exception. Whatever, she's presented her case to me countless times from under the bed while I've been trying to fall asleep or speak long-distance over the phone. It's difficult to live when you so whole-heartedly want to die, she says.

There's a small part of me that is very anti-dead people. It's something I have to deal with all the time, considering Anne's daily presence in my life. Sometimes I think it would be easier to just divvy her up into small sections, like they do on television and all throughout inconsequential towns, and feed her to the high hills along the Rocky Mountain Range. Bite my tongue, really. I could never do it, but it's just...sometimes. Anne can be a little annoying, to be honest. She gave herself so stupidly to so many stupid people, it gets really frustrating for me. And now that she's dead, you can't really even get mad at her for it. What is she supposed to do about it now? That's another reason I took Anne: she places herself and her thoughts in very unreasonable situations and then unsurprisingly gets her ass kicked and then writes something really biting and clever in response. I seem to live that way. My best writing comes in retort to my own self-ignited, often silly, but mostly awful circumstances and how I managed to get out of them or at least file them away.

I asked permission of my professor to better acquaint myself with Anne. She later told me how offended she was that I had to ask a professor of English, of all people, if I could take her home. She's always been her own person. Anyway, granted permission. I took the tall, slender, very pretty Anne home with me. I don't know what I was thinking, but right as we approached the house I remembered what stubborn people my parents are—the chances of them accepting a successful suicide and poet under their roof were not very good. But by then, we were already there, so I picked Anne up and gave her a gentle toss down into the window-well. I was able to sneak down to my bedroom, remove the screen, and pull her through the frame with hardly a scratch.

I thought that it would be a brief affair—more like a series of questions and answers—before I returned her to, I guess, her little tomb within the anthology. It's been over two years now and I've got too many questions. I want to take more and more. It's to the point where Anne doesn't even mention our impending departure. She likes me. She is proud of me. Besides, she hates the anthology. I think if she knew what death-by-suicide at such a prime age was going to do to her and to her poetry, she might have stuck it out. Anything, she says, even passing the
days underneath my bed is better than being jailed alphabetically between Sappho and Gertrude Stein in an embarrassing compilation of love poems by women. She didn't understand love, she didn't feel loved, she didn't love. She said that, with absolutely zero exceptions, none of the women in that anthology did. I like us to sit across from each other on uncomfortable stools when she is talking to me like this. She sits very stiffly yet, like all women of her generation, with natural beauty and a cigarette. I sit like a heavy sack, like all women of my generation, with my feet up on the pegs and my fingers picking at my lower lip.

Eventually I'll have to put her back. She doesn't accept my other company with much grace. I've tried to allow other writers in on our conversations, but she's always quick to scare them off. I'm not kidding, she has no problem ripping the skin from her dainty forearm to expose to my horrified guests all sorts of gore and tendons (“pure bone and passion,” she explains, displaying the mess like an item up for auction). It's truly frightening. Anne isn't really big on symbolism, but she can really do a number on you when she's in the right mood. I beat my head against the wall trying to justify why I might just want to have a chat with Wallace Stevens or “that trashy, sassy” Miss Dorothy Parker.

Anne will never understand what she is doing under my bed. I will never be able to explain to her just exactly what she has done for me as a young woman and writer in these early years of the twenty-first century. I will continue to grant her domain over my thoughts and allow her blood to flow through my pen for the time being. I don't know if I have much of a choice anyway. It means too much that she was once here on this earth, living and feeling and writing. If all she wants now is to escape where she's been imprisoned for so many years: in two or three very isolated poems in one or two very boring anthologies, then so be it. I thrive on her company. And lying under a bed in Ogden, Utah, is much more fun than collecting dust on the shelf or, even worse, being returned for a partial refund at the end of the semester. At least in my room, she can smoke.