

The God Who Loves You

It must be troubling for the god who loves you
 To ponder how much happier you'd be today
 Had you been able to glimpse your many futures.
 It must be painful for him to watch you on Friday evenings
 Driving home from the office, content with your week—
 Three fine houses sold to deserving families—
 Knowing as he does exactly what would have happened
 Had you gone to your second choice for college,
 Knowing the roommate you'd have been allotted
 Whose ardent opinions on painting and music
 Would have kindled in you a lifelong passion.
 A life thirty points above the life you're living
 On any scale of satisfaction. And every point
 A thorn in the side of the god who loves you.
 You don't want that, a large-souled man like you
 Who tries to withhold from your wife the day's disappointments
 So she can save her empathy for the children.
 And would you want this god to compare your wife
 With the woman you were destined to meet on the other campus?
 It hurts you to think of him ranking the conversation
 You'd have enjoyed over there higher in insight
 Than the conversation you're used to.
 And think how this loving god would feel
 Knowing that the man next in line for your wife
 Would have pleased her more than you ever will
 Even on your best days, when you really try.
 Can you sleep at night believing a god like that
 Is pacing his cloudy bedroom, harassed by alternatives
 You're spared by ignorance? The difference between what is
 And what could have been will remain alive for him
 Even after you cease existing, after you catch a chill
 Running out in the snow for the morning paper,

Losing eleven years that the god who loves you
 Will feel compelled to imagine scene by scene
 Unless you come to the rescue by imagining him
 No wiser than you are, no god at all, only a friend
 No closer than the actual friend you made at college,
 The one you haven't written in months. Sit down tonight
 And write him about the life you can talk about
 With a claim to authority, the life you've witnessed,
 Which for all you know is the life you've chosen.

Dennis, Carl. New and Selected Poems:
 1974-2004. New York: Penguin, 2004.