

Someone first borrowed you from my New Orleans university library in March 1977, two months after my parents married, 100 years after your author—Isadora Duncan—’s *Life* began. I read *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* the summer I turned 30. A back page said McCullers read you (not the very you, a duplicate) at 14 and was deeply affected. I’m a dancer so of course I had to find you. Your first chapter, first paragraph, when your author lived in utero, she says her mother ate only oysters and champagne, a fact McCullers might’ve recalled in 1959. She learned Isak Dinesen shared the diet just hours before she and Marilyn Monroe arrived for lunch. 30 years later I was six and Dad set the box of donuts on the wooden table between the mantel and the sliding mirror closets. He said *Enjoy these while you’re young. You can’t eat anything fun when you’re my age.* But he did anyway. He ate raw oysters in months without Rs and guzzled them down with alcohol—a liver-killer recipe (especially with hep C). But Dad always said that was bullshit. Thanks to you I know at least two who’d agree. You stood on metal shelves from 1998 until today, 15 years, *half my life* inside that library unmoved (maybe save for renovations). Two weeks into your stay I smoked pot for the first time in some garage in Port St. John. I always told my parents I wouldn’t move out till I was 35, but they left me in Florida at 18, three years into your term, to move to the house in which they were married, not far from your station: third-floor at the lakefront. Dad would’ve loved the constant AC. There to repair units he had panic attacks in New Orleans attics—antique shops where he’d see being built what was sold downstairs. Did you think you’d never come out again? Halfway through your long repose, deprived yet respited of sunlight, the bowl below you flooded and many lost their lives. Nine years after you last left the library Dad died of a heart attack. To everyone’s surprise

he almost made 30 twice. Three months shy. *A young man*  
we all said. In case you're never checked out again  
I'm bringing you to California, your author's birthplace.  
Like her I'm most alive by the sea. My first time  
at the beach after 30 was in Mississippi. I only  
went in to my knees. I waded in that same water  
six days from 28. Amy Winehouse, same age,  
died that morning. I wasn't in danger now of joining  
the 27-club with her and Kurt Cobain. I was 10  
when he died and didn't see him then as such a young  
man. My last week of my twenties I was back  
on Cocoa Beach. My baby nephew from Alaska  
splashed in the ocean for the first time. I smoked  
joints with Mom on walks in the sand and fell  
creatively into waves like Isadora must have.