SUSAN MUSGRAVE

YOU DIDN’T FIT

You wouldn’t fit in your coffin
but to me it was no surprise.
All your life you had never fit in
anywhere; you saw no reason to
begin fitting in now.
When I was little I remember
a sheriff coming. You were
taken to court because your
false teeth didn’t fit and you
wouldn’t pay the dentist. It was
your third set, you said none of them
fit properly. I was afraid then
that something would take you from me
as it has done now: death
with a bright face and teeth that
fit perfectly.
A human smile that shuts me out.
The Court, I remember, returned
your teeth, now marked an exhibit.
You were dismissed with costs—
I never understood. The teeth were
terrible. We liked you better
without them.
We didn’t fit, either, into your
life or your loneliness, though you
tried, and we did too. Once
I wanted to marry you, and then left;
I’m still the child who won’t fit
into the arms of anyone, but is
always reaching.
I was awkward for years, my bones
didn’t fit in my body but stuck out
like my heart—people used to comment
on it. They said I was very good
at office parties where you took me
and let others do the talking—the
crude jokes, the corny men—I saw
how they hurt you and I loved you

harder than ever.
Because neither of us fit. Later you
blamed me, said “You must fit in,”
but I didn’t and I still think
it made you secretly happy.
Like I am now: you don’t fit in your
coffin. My mother, after a life
of if, says, “This is the last straw.”
And it is. We’re all clutching.