

The curve

In the emptiness of that afternoon
you decide to look for her.
You've got fuck-all else to do
and the job's going nowhere.

You know it will be tough
with that blank surname, *White*.
But you'll follow through,
forget the report you thought you'd write –

remember how Fran joked,
Yeah, I was at the marriage.
She picked some really skinny, ugly bloke,
right there in her home village.

You scroll through the announcements
on Norfolk papers' websites, search –
find it. There's disappointment
she did the whole country church
thing, took *his* name – at least it's less commonplace.
Now social media's your ally.
On Twitter and Facebook
although she's camera-shy,

you find her. You can't comprehend
how, twenty years later, she's twenty years
older. How two or three children and
the drink problem that endeared her

to you, left her bloated, careworn. All this while
you'd clung to the sight
of her slenderness, her lop-sided smile,
the curve of her shoulder in the half-light

of dawn, the phone call that dragged you all
the way from Yorkshire to Islington
on that freezing, fogbound journey – and that last call
you knew was her, but just killed the line.