

The summer dresses are unpacked and hanging in the closet, two of them, 1  
pure cotton, which is better than synthetics like the cheaper ones, though  
even so, when it's muggy, in July and August, you sweat inside them. No  
worry about sunburn though, said Aunt Lydia. The spectacles women used to 4  
make of themselves. Oiling themselves like roast meat on a spit, and bare  
backs and shoulders, on the street, in public, and legs, not even stockings on  
them, no wonder those things used to happen. *Things*, the word she used  
when whatever it stood for was too distasteful or filthy or horrible to pass her 8  
lips. A successful life for her was one that avoided *things*, excluded *things*.  
Such *things* do not happen to nice women. And not good for the complexion,  
not at all, wrinkle you up like a dried apple. But we weren't supposed to care  
about our complexions anymore, she'd forgotten that. 12

In the park, said Aunt Lydia, lying on blankets, men and women together  
sometimes, and at that she began to cry, standing up there in front of us, in  
full view.

I'm doing my best, she said. I'm trying to give you the best chance you can 16  
have. She blinked, the light was too strong for her, her mouth trembled,  
around her front teeth, teeth that stuck out a little and were long and  
yellowish, and I thought about the dead mice we would find on the doorstep,  
when we lived in a house, all three of us, four counting our cat, who was the 20  
one making these offerings.

Aunt Lydia pressed her hand over her mouth of a dead rodent. After a  
minute she took her hand away. I wanted to cry too because she reminded  
me. If only she wouldn't eat half of them first, I said to Luke. 24

Don't think it's easy for me either, said Aunt Lydia.