

## Beach Cottages, Etcetera

You can't wear two wedding rings,  
her mother said. It wouldn't be  
right, and I don't have to tell you  
that the styles would clash, although I  
see that they are not both diamonds, but you can't  
be thinking of doing it,

and, of course

I've always said that you can't keep a large dog  
in the house with children, your own or stepchildren  
with strange allergies, and if you rent a beach cottage,  
you'll be sweeping out sand all summer,  
and where will you keep the other wedding ring  
when you're not wearing it? You have to think  
of fire and theft. One husband was enough  
for me, and you can't put the wedding ring  
in a safe deposit box because you'll never see it.

I don't have to tell you that you'll have two  
sets of in-laws and sister and brother-in-laws  
and two family reunions to go to, that is,  
if you get along with them all, not neglecting  
the one, putting the old ring in the bank vault  
where you're bound to forget it, the old one,  
I mean, with the large diamond, (and by the way,  
what did you do with all his shoes?)  
not to mention that album of wedding pictures,  
too much for a bank vault, too much for me  
to understand—

and you with two sets of children  
in that ramshackle beach cottage with all those  
storms coming in, and what if you happen to be  
ironing or sewing with all those storms coming in?  
Electricity, I mean. The needle, I mean,  
that lightning could strike the needle, strike you,  
cut you down in the prime of your life  
for who-knows-what-reason.

*Julie Herrick White*