

## FIFTEEN

What was my bright  
Idea the next morning—Saturday, that is,  
The one morning  
Each week—besides Sunday, my day off—when I don't  
Have to open  
The store? Yes, that's right, I thought I'd  
Go upstairs and tell  
Elaine Mandrigo, no relation to Gussie,  
About the amazing, mystical  
Coincidence  
Of our birthdays.

"Oh. It's you," she said,  
And she stepped into the hall and closed  
The door behind her.

"Guess what?" I said.

"Oh god," she said. "I don't know how  
To say this. Yesterday,  
I was mad at my—I have a boyfriend—I thought he'd  
Forgotten  
My birthday, and then  
You came to the door with my cards, and you  
Were so serious—I had  
A very nice time. Really I did.  
I want you to know that. But it turned out  
He was planning  
A surprise for me—it was the most wonderful... But I guess  
You don't want  
To hear that, do you?"

"Not really," I said. "No."

"Oh my god," she said. "This is hard.  
I was actually hoping  
You'd be a jerk and never try  
To talk to me again.  
But since

You are here," she said, "I have a question.  
For you this time,"

"Okay," I said.

"Did you—I mean did we—use a condom?"

"You don't know?" I said.

"I was kind of drunk," she said. "It was  
My birthday. I thought  
Everyone  
Had forgotten."

"No, we didn't," I said. "I tried to ask, but—"

"Oh fuck," she said. "Well, I'm sure  
It's okay. It is,  
Isn't it?"

"As far as I know," I said.

"What else  
Would you say," she said. "Will you  
Please go now."

So I went downstairs and I checked my mailbox,  
And I found three more birthday cards,  
All addressed  
To me.