

This Is Just To Say

BY WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold



How does a paragraph proof look in written form?

OBJECTS AND FORCES

Objects within the poem

- Husband
- Wife
- Plums
- Their relationship

Forces at work in this poem

- Time
- Passive aggressive behavior
- annoyance
- Anger
- Thoughtlessness
- Pettiness

Background Statement

William Carlos Williams offers an interesting study in relationships with this poem, “This is just to say”. The husband and wife, inferred as the two subjects in the poem, appear to be at that stage in their relationship where they no longer talk openly through problems but instead plot and plan ways to get back at each other. It is unclear whether this is the husband or wife speaking, but whoever it is feels wronged and resorts to a passive aggressive method to even the score so to speak.

Newton at Work

1st Law: An object in motion stays in motion unless acted upon by an outside force.

A normal state for this couple may be considered that they each keep to themselves and actually speak very little. Evidence for this can be found in the title **“This is just to say”**, which suggests that the poem itself is a note that has been left on the door of the refrigerator. Writing a note to confront a person rather than speaking directly to them suggests the state of communication in this relationship (side thought: how much of our communication today is done in this manner? It’s easier to send a text to your son upstairs to come down and take out the garbage). This pattern continues until the force of some event, probably more an annoyance or slight occurs, which causes the speaker to take action. The slight can be seen in the sarcastic tone the speaker uses to emphasize the pleasure of his conquest **“Forgive me/ they were delicious/ so sweet/ and so cold”**. He or She deviates from the usual pattern of not communicating to write a note. That note is triggered by a sense of invasion. The speaker has been injured and feels compelled to act. Again, our object in motion is the lack of direct communication within this relationship--it appears to be the standard operating mode for the couple. The force being applied is an unknown inconsideration. It is enough of a force to move the speaker to take an action that violates the quiet between the couple.

Valid / Invalid

Under this scenario the 1st law of Newton is upheld.