A Poem Written on Venetian Blinds, Slats Facing Outside
(The Hilton Garden Inn on East Virgin Court in Tulsa)

This is what the outside world sees, written on the surface of the blinds that face the hotel parking lot. I am one of those middle-aged blondes who comes to the Hilton to have a nervous breakdown. My blunders are a source of amusement to the maids. I trusted that my gray blends into my highlights, as the stylist told me, but the world sees a bland pale woman who disappears in her khakis, as indecision binds her hands and feet. What kind of woman bonds with Miss Cleo, instead of her therapist? And pays a bundle to boot? At first, I imagine each visitor hears my whispers, bends toward my door to hear me quietly sobbing about my bald husband and that hussy. But no one, it seems, wants first dibs on my run-of-the-‘burbs story, absent of asphyxiations and dildos. I’m so typical that anyone (who even bothers to peek in) dubs my narrative in a more exciting language: hotel rooms as dens of drugs and guns and sorted disasters. Tissues. Dabs of moisturizer under my puffy eyes. Tabloids might nibble at my story if only I were famous, but even the man at the lobby bar nods off when I begin my woeful saga. I pick at the nubs on the free popcorn—I can’t even entice a desperate nebbish! I am the woman you see at the vending machine, buying Cheese Nabs at 3 AM. I am the one amusing myself, pulling the lids off cans of Diet Coke to hear the carbonated pop, my earlobes damp with fizz. I am the one who looks drunk, a lubber lumbering down the hotel hall, who lends you her last quarter or match—what the heck. I was lucky to land him—that’s probably what you’re thinking. How fast I slid from middle-American grace to become one of those slobs who doesn’t even tuck in her Polo shirt, who slurs her vindictive tirade. Maybe you imagine Edith Wharton’s sled—that one day the hussy will become as grouchy as the wife: two slabs of cold butter on the same slice of lukewarm toast. One in her Land’s End sweater, the other in her Land Rover. Flash forward and the lens closes in on them as they run into each other at Jiffy Lube.
Snippy pretense. Soap opera civility. Then one woman lobs
the other with her Dooney & Bourke Tassel Tote. Their Starbucks lids
burst open and both are scalded. A mechanic nabs
their flailing fists, both women humiliated, doused in nebulous
coffee perfume. A handsome customer fetches ice and melts the frosty nubs
on my reddened arms. I ask him, “Are you from Tulsa?” and he nods,
“Why yes, I am.” He offers me an orange slice and I nibble
on it. He takes his monogrammed hankie and dabs
the tear streaks on my cheeks. Yes, even at middle age, I am dense
enough to have such a fantasy, to believe a phone psychic. You may dub
me the Queen of Quick Fixes, a dim-witted Dona
Idiota. I won’t even defend myself. I won’t say diddly-squat.
I’ll just go on with my life, replace my brake pads and bald
tires. Soon I’ll recover from my Hilton Diet Coke bender,
start to take care of myself—get my flu shot, bundle
up in winter. I’ll return the hussy’s car, cash in a few bonds
until I get what I can in the divorce. It’s not as if I’m a bindle
stiff—and, to be honest, I was getting a little bit tired of my bland
marriage anyway. I have always been the woman who blends
in, but now I stay up all night writing about my life’s blunders
on the verticals in my hotel room. Then, like the star of a dumb blonde
joke, I yank the string and bunch them up, my story lost in the blinds.