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Lesson in Modal Verbs

I can use a phone, meaning that I am able to,
I have the ability to dial, to speak, to listen,

to be brief or extended as required
by economy and opportunity. This is a skill

unlisted on any resume but unmitigated, hedgeless,
like I can pick up the kids, put milk on a third shelf,

Swiffer wood floors, fold t-shirts by exact specifications.
In the South one *might could* remember Mothers' Day

before Mothers' Day and one *might could* shave
in a way that doesn't leave evidence of one's entire manly self

like a drought's ant invasion, or one *might could* tell the other
one has taken care of dinner, baby sitters, gifts for one's

mother. One uses *can* to talk about the present or future, abilities
achieved, such as one *can* breathe, one can take our daughter

to the bathroom before bedtime, one *can* run but one *can't* hide
from hypothetical pasts for which we employ could

as in I *could have* danced all night had you asked me which you *could have*
but didn't. Can I ask you a question?

You for whom English is second nature, you who should know better,
who *could have* asked for clarification, directions, who *would have*

if you had been me? Would you like to take lessons
in our language? Between pick up and drop off,

after snackbowls and bedtime stories, we can start
by studying requests and politeness conventions, move

to adverbs of manner followed by wishes and infinitives,
the verb phrase, *to be*, as in *happily ever after*.