HAVEPOETRY.COM

LOUISE GLÜCK

A WARM DAY

Today the sun was shining
so my neighbor washed her nightdresses in the river—
she comes home with everything folded in a basket,
beaming, as though her life had just been
lengthened a decade. Cleanliness makes her happy—
it says you can begin again,
the old mistakes needn't hold you back.
A good neighbor—we leave each other
to our privacies. Just now,
she's singing to herself, pinning the damp wash to the line.
Little by little, days like this
will seem normal. But winter was hard:
the nights coming early, the dawns dark
with a gray, persistent rain—months of that,
and then the snow, like silence coming from the sky,
obliterating the trees and gardens.
Today, all that's past us.
The birds are back, chattering over seeds.
All the snow's melted; the fruit trees are covered with downy new growth.
A few couples even walk in the meadow, promising whatever they promise.
We stand in the sun and the sun heals us.
It doesn't rush away. It hangs above us, unmoving,
like an actor pleased with his welcome.
My neighbor's quiet a moment,
staring at the mountain, listening to the birds.
So many garments, where did they come from?
And my neighbor's still out there,
fixing them to the line, as though the basket would never be empty—
It's still full, nothing is finished,
though the sun's beginning to move lower in the sky;
remember, it isn't summer yet, only the beginning of spring;
warmth hasn't taken hold yet, and the cold's returning—
She feels it, as though the last bit of linen had frozen in her hands.
She looks at her hands—how old they are. It's not the beginning, it's the end.
And the adults, they're all dead now.
Only the children are left, alone, growing old.