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LOUISE GLÜCK

SECONDS

Craved, having so long gone
Empty, what he had, hardness
That (my boy half-grown)
Still sucked me toward that ring, that bless-
ing. Though I knew how it is sickness
In him: lounging in gin
He knots some silken threat until
He’ll twist my arm, my words—my son
Stands rigid in the doorway, seeing all,
And then that fast fist rips across my only
Child, my life … I care, I care.
I watch the neighbors coming at me
With their views. Now huge with cake their
White face floats above its cup; they smile,
Sunken women, sucking at their tea …
I’d let my house go up in flame for this fire.