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LOUISE GLÜCK

THE GARDEN

1. The Fear of Birth
One sound. Then the hiss and whir
of houses gliding into their places.
And the wind
leafs through the bodies of animals—
But my body that could not content itself
with health—why should it be sprung back
into the chord of sunlight?
It will be the same again.
This fear, this inwardness,
until I am forced into a field
without immunity
even to the least shrub that walks
stiffly out of the dirt, trailing
the twisted signature of its root,
even to a tulip, a red claw.
And then the losses,
one after another,
all supportable.
2. The Garden
The garden admires you.
For your sake it smears itself with green pigment,
the ecstatic reds of the roses,
so that you will come to it with your lovers.
And the willows—
see how it has shaped these green
tents of silence. Yet
there is still something you need,
your body so soft, so alive, among the stone animals.
Admit that it is terrible to be like them,
beyond harm.
3. The Fear of Love
That body lying beside me like obedient stone—
once its eyes seemed to be opening,
we could have spoken.
At that time it was winter already.
By day the sun rose in its helmet of fire
and at night also, mirrored in the moon.

Its light passed over us freely,
as though we had lain down
in order to leave no shadows,
only these two shallow dents in the snow.
And the past, as always, stretched before us,
still, complex, impenetrable.
How long did we lie there
as, arm in arm in their cloaks of feathers,
the gods walked down
from the mountain we built for them?

4. Origins

As though a voice were saying
You should be asleep by now—
But there was no one. Nor
had the air darkened,
though the moon was there,
already filled in with marble.
As though, in a garden crowded with flowers,
a voice had said
How dull they are, these golds,
so sonorous, so repetitious
until you closed your eyes,
lying among them, all
stammering flame:
And yet you could not sleep,
poor body, the earth
still clinging to you—

5. The Fear of Burial

In the empty field, in the morning,
the body waits to be claimed.
The spirit sits beside it, on a small rock—
nothing comes to give it form again.
Think of the body’s loneliness.
At night pacing the sheared field,
its shadow buckled tightly around.
Such a long journey.
And already the remote, trembling lights of the village
not pausing for it as they scan the rows.
How far away they seem,
the wooden doors, the bread and milk
laid like weights on the table.