LOUISE GLÜCK

TANGO

1.
On evenings like this
twenty years ago:
We sit under the table,
the adults' hands
drum on our heads. Outside,
the street,
the contagious vernacular.
Remember
how we used to dance? Inseparable,
back and forth across the living room,
Adios Muchachos, like an insect
moving on a mirror: envy
is a dance, too; the need to hurt
binds you to your partner.
2.
You thrashed in the crib,
your small mouth circling
the ancient repetitions.
I watched you through the bars,
both of us
actively starving. In the other room
our parents merged into the one
totemic creature:
Come, she said. Come to Mother.
You stood. You tottered toward
the inescapable body.
3.
A dark board covers the sun.
Then the fathers come,
their long cars move slowly down the street,
parting the children. Then
the street is given over to darkness.
The rest follows: the labored
green of the yards, the little gardens
darned with green thread—
The trees also, whose shadows
were blue spokes.

But some the light chooses.
How they tremble
as the moon mounts them, brutal and sisterly:
I used to watch them,
all night absorbed in the moon’s neutral silver
until they were finally blurred, disfigured …
4.
What was it like to be led?
I trusted no one. My name
was like a stranger’s,
read from an envelope.
But nothing was taken from me
that I could have used.
For once, I admit that.
In the hall, posed
for the record’s
passionate onset, ages
five and seven:
You were the gold sun on the horizon.
I was the judgment, my shadow
preceded me, not wavering
but like a mold that would be used again.
Your bare feet
became a woman’s feet, always
saying two things at once.
Of two sisters
one is always the watcher,
one the dancer.