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LOUISE GLÜCK

LAMENTATIONS

1. The Logos

They were both still,
the woman mournful, the man
branching into her body.
But god was watching.
They felt his gold eye
projecting flowers on the landscape.
Who knew what he wanted?
He was god, and a monster.
So they waited. And the world
filled with his radiance,
as though he wanted to be understood.
Far away, in the void that he had shaped,
he turned to his angels.

2. Nocturne

A forest rose from the earth.
O pitiful, so needing
God’s furious love—
Together they were beasts.
They lay in the fixed
dusk of his negligence;
from the hills, wolves came, mechanically
drawn to their human warmth,
their panic.
Then the angels saw
how He divided them:
the man, the woman, and the woman’s body.
Above the churned reeds, the leaves let go
a slow moan of silver.

3. The Covenant

Out of fear, they built a dwelling place.
But a child grew between them
as they slept, as they tried
to feed themselves.
They set it on a pile of leaves,
the small discarded body
wrapped in the clean skin
of an animal. Against the black sky

they saw the massive argument of light.
Sometimes it woke. As it reached its hands
they understood they were the mother and father,
there was no authority above them.
4. The Clearing
Gradually, over many years,
the fur disappeared from their bodies
until they stood in the bright light
strange to one another.
Nothing was as before.
Their hands trembled, seeking
the familiar.
Nor could they keep their eyes
from the white flesh
on which wounds would show clearly
like words on a page.
And from the meaningless browns and greens
at last God arose, His great shadow
darkening the sleeping bodies of His children,
and leapt into heaven.
How beautiful it must have been,
the earth, that first time
seen from the air.