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LOUISE GLÜCK

A FANTASY

I’ll tell you something: every day
people are dying. And that’s just the beginning.
Every day, in funeral homes, new widows are born,
new orphans. They sit with their hands folded,
trying to decide about this new life.
Then they’re in the cemetery, some of them
for the first time. They’re frightened of crying,
sometimes of not crying. Someone leans over,
tells them what to do next, which might mean
saying a few words, sometimes
throwing dirt in the open grave.
And after that, everyone goes back to the house,
which is suddenly full of visitors.
The widow sits on the couch, very stately,
so people line up to approach her,
sometimes take her hand, sometimes embrace her.
She finds something to say to everybody,
thanks them, thanks them for coming.
In her heart, she wants them to go away.
She wants to be back in the cemetery,
back in the sickroom, the hospital. She knows
it isn’t possible. But it’s her only hope,
the wish to move backward. And just a little,
not so far as the marriage, the first kiss.