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LOUISE GLÜCK

YELLOW DAHLIA

My sister’s like a sun, like a yellow dahlia.
Daggers of gold hair around the face.
Gray eyes, full of spirit.
I made an enemy of a flower:
now, I’m ashamed.
We were supposed to be opposites:
one fair, like daylight.
One different, negative.
If there are two things
then one must be better,
isn’t that true? I know now
we both thought that, if what children do
can really be called thinking.
I look at my sister’s daughter,
a child so like her,
and I’m ashamed: nothing justifies
the impulse to destroy
a smaller, a dependent life.
I guess I knew that always.
That’s why I had to hurt
myself instead:
I believed in justice.
We were like day and night,
one act of creation.
I couldn’t separate
the two halves,
one child from the other.