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LOUISE GLÜCK

THE WHITE ROSE

This is the earth? Then
I don’t belong here.
Who are you in the lighted window,
shadowed now by the flickering leaves
of the wayfarer tree?
Can you survive where I won’t last
beyond the first summer?
All night the slender branches of the tree
shift and rustle at the bright window.
Explain my life to me, you who make no sign,
though I call out to you in the night:
I am not like you, I have only
my body for a voice; I can’t
disappear into silence—
And in the cold morning
over the dark surface of the earth
echoes of my voice drift,
whiteness steadily absorbed into darkness
as though you were making a sign after all
to convince me you too couldn’t survive here
or to show me you are not the light I called to
but the blackness behind it.