

AUNT LAURA MOVES TOWARD THE OPEN GRAVE
OF HER FATHER

You are coming toward us
As if you have done this
Every day of your life.

You are stumbling. You are my
Aunt, our ignorant, old fool
And you are completely in

Black. We are, to put it plain,
Putting grandfather into
A hole in the ground. We are

Dry eyed as dry ice is cold.
We have made it clear to you
How much you did wrong, how much

Better we could have done al-
Most anything. Except this.
This perfection. This grief.

You are in black. You are moving
Toward us. You are wisdom,
The dark that stabs me at midnight

On any street because I
Am who I am and we are violent
At the horrible, hard gates of

Paradise. You are an army
Of crepe, onyx. Like the wind
You move curtains of sorrow,

Simplicity, toward us.
And I love you while Grandpa
Slips now from our fingers for

Ever and I take your hand
And we hold on together.

Joseph de Roche

GO BACK UP

The people sitting at the table with a child
are parents, because of money everyone turns
the fork over and the child yawns, dessert
comes and the father takes a long swallow, but
for the most part he keeps to himself, letters
on the sideboard contain an occasional reference
to the mother's illness, she asks the child
to bathe and change for bed, gives the door
one more look. The father shifts his legs,
irritation changes to thoughtful dismay, my
own son says when I tell him the story as long
as he can see some branches through the window
he knows the trees must be on the other side
of the wall, there is grace in his voice now,
we spend most of the night upstairs refilling
the humidifier, sometimes we give up and rush
him out to the damp air, there is juice for
really bad coughing, rain is falling now thank
the Lord, it's between fifty and sixty degrees,
the parents turn toward their son, chat with
their hands, there are puppets on them from Hungary.