

Winter 1999

Grief (poem)

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John Gery

GRIEF

offers no comparisons and teaches no lessons.
It sits across from you in this dark room
or passes by on the street, and if you should

lean toward it or attempt to exchange
a word or two, slowly it will maneuver
out of your way, its back turned

as though it hasn't noticed you. You try
but can never pick it out in a crowd
down at the station house, although someone

you hardly know, maybe met only once,
keeps coming into your mind, causing you
to question why you seem so unlike

yourself, like nothing else you can
remember: You forget to seek relief
in the usual ways, a glass of water

or evening light. Even stranger,
you imagine returning from an errand
or brief sleep, only to find grief

in a new hat parked on your doorstep
with a basket of fresh figs! It doesn't
matter, really, that it has a name, too,

that can be spelled out on a sheet of paper,
then erased, as haply as I,
the one typing this meek escape.