

Philip Levine

**MOTHER CALLS IN THE WOMAN FROM GOD
AND WE WORK TO BRING BACK THE DEAD**

In a tea-rose dress, her throat
flushed like a young rose,
she came in all open
out of the cold
and shook my hand
and called me *Master Philip*.

The black case on the card table
unopened. She drew the curtains
on the French doors and made mother
take the big chair and lit candles
in the sunny room and then sat
and was quiet at first.

Oh, a long road led
down the stairs and out
into the city, confused
and winding to the river.
A hand was sinking and grasping
for shore.

As it must, she said,
the river ran on. She could hear
a voice saying No No,
wanting the peace of the deeps.
We must stop asking.

Mother stopped listening,
and said, Ssh, be quiet, in a small voice
but the woman was hearing herself
and not the electric hum
of the dusty room, like breath
held in tall hay.

Mother clenched her fists
and then her eyes and would not answer.
The woman rose, buttoning her collar,
and left the glass doors

shivering, the stairs
ringing on her heels.

The light darkened between us
until I said, Mother.
She opened her eyes, tearless,
then the hand with the wadded bills
and laughed. We both laughed.
Money, she said,
doesn't come from God.