

Fear of Laughter

After my mother and her two sisters were stripped
of the sure walls that held their lives,
and the gentlest of them received news
that the man she loved was killed
four months after they were married—
they learned to fear laughter.

It's like they were afraid
to let go of vigilance,
reluctant to let go of loss,
anxious that misfortune's fist
would swing and strike them again.

After catastrophe, joy hibernates
in heart's dark and boarded-up spaces
lest feelings of ease slink in
and gnaw away the fragile shield
set against the unseen,
but surely coming storm.