

MARK COX

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*The Lion's Share*

They are gathered as if to be told a story.  
Three kids, perhaps seventeen, facing  
the headstone, a pastel bed sheet beneath them.  
That bottle of wine on its side in the grass?  
Safe to assume it is empty, safe to assume  
the center girl being comforted, leaning  
forward as if speaking, drank the lion's share;  
her hair now mussed, her posture so clearly  
deflated and spent. The other girl and boy,  
they are here because they promised to be.  
One year to the day, perhaps, since the death  
they have in common. A toast, an awkward  
eulogy, a token gift, all of it more difficult  
than they'd bargained for.

And you and I, reader, we are parked in the cemetery, why?  
Because I thought it a shortcut to a parallel road?  
Because I needed to feel for a moment the fact of my own life?  
A sparse flock of starlings is feeding in the short grass.  
The wind flutters in memorial flowers, even the artificial ones.  
Whatever the reason, I am grateful you've come.  
So much that needs saying. In such little time.