



The backward glance

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We're the people who don't kill other people.
In common cause we've spread across the earth.
Our code forbids the fatal pill or needle,
We see in every life it's source of worth.

We claim our place with ancient oath and token,
Red Cross, or staff with serpents intertwined;
Signs before which locked gates are thrown open,
If sickness unto death should lurk behind.

*A peerless singer lost his precious wife
To the prick of a wicked serpent's bite;
Determined to give all to save her life,
He journeyed to the kingdom of the Night.*

*Hell itself could not resist his singing,
So with him made a solemn, dreadful pact;
He might walk his bride back to the living,
If he could lead the way and not look back.*

Like Orpheus we've sworn to use our art
To give to those we serve a second chance;
Like him we'll find our life's work fall apart
If we give Death it's longed-for backward glance.

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