Nocturne

By Louise Glück

Mother died last night,
    Mother who never dies.

Winter was in the air,
    many months away
    but in the air nevertheless.

It was the tenth of May.
    Hyacinth and apple blossom
    bloomed in the back garden.

We could hear
    Maria singing songs from Czechoslovakia —

*How alone I am* —
    songs of that kind.

*How alone I am,*
    *no mother, no father —*
    *my brain seems so empty without them.*

Aromas drifted out of the earth;
    the dishes were in the sink,
    rinsed but not stacked.

Under the full moon
    Maria was folding the washing;
    the stiff sheets became
    dry white rectangles of moonlight.

*How alone I am, but in music*  
    *my desolation is my rejoicing.*

It was the tenth of May
    as it had been the ninth, the eighth.

Mother slept in her bed,
    her arms outstretched, her head
    balanced between them.

Source: *Poetry* (December 2013)