

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)