

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)



Pulitzer-Prize-winner Louise Glück grew up on Long Island and attended Sarah Lawrence College and Columbia University. Her poems are elegantly poised and spare, even though their themes—loss, disenfranchisement, death—are often dark. She returns again and again to myths and ancient tales, often revivifying them to explore modern topics. Many of her poems are attuned to cycles of nature, through which desire and hope are renewed.

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