

"Mentor" by Rachel McKibbens

"death cannot harm me
more than you have harmed me,
my beloved life."

—Louise Glück

I tell my daughter first, because her knowing
forces it to become true. *I have to leave dad.*

Nothing is going to change. She nods
like a priest in a booth, the last fifteen years

staring down at us. Explains, softly,
how she's spoken of me to her therapist.

Her worry of becoming my mirror. Tells me,
I remember you, mom, before him. You were happy.

Oh. Oh. To surrender to your death by someone else's
hand is still a kind of suicide. Slower. I stand naked

on the porch as she recounts in perfect detail,
(in a poet's detail) the very things I'd hoped

to disguise. My careful little spectator. Diligent neighbor
to my unnamed agonies. It is not ungrateful to resist

the tyrannies of obsession. It is no selfish act
to want, suddenly, to stay alive. My dear girl.

She is teaching and I am learning. I not only
want to be seen, I want to be seen through.

I return to my house, haunted and waiting.
I look into the mirror and notice the door.