

# The Past

By Louise Gluck

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Small light in the sky appearing  
suddenly between  
two pine boughs, their fine needles  
5 now etched onto the radiant surface  
and above this  
high, feathery heaven—  
Smell the air. That is the smell of the white pine,  
most intense when the wind blows through it  
10 and the sound it makes equally strange,  
like the sound of the wind in a movie—  
Shadows moving. The ropes  
making the sound they make. What you hear now  
will be the sound of the nightingale, Chordata,  
15 the male bird courting the female—  
The ropes shift. The hammock  
sways in the wind, tied  
firmly between two pine trees.  
Smell the air. That is the smell of the white pine.  
20 It is my mother's voice you hear  
or is it only the sound the trees make  
when the air passes through them  
because what sound would it make,  
passing through nothing?