

Pneumonia · *Joan Swift*

The year of my mother's divorce
snow lay at the back door like a great hound.
The potatoes closed all their eyes in the root cellar.
I wore a patched coat to school, brown stockings.
I stepped in the bigger steps and carried
my hunger in wool hands.
But nothing was warm enough.
A draft blew in and out somewhere around my heart.

When it was time, they put my sickness
on a small cot near the pot-bellied stove.
Eight days I lay in fever,
one-hundred five, one-hundred six. . . .
Sunny, sunny, I said.
And my hands climbed all over the wallpaper
to gather the yellow day lilies,
the cut stems.