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Swinging into Grief

LILY BEA DILLINGER

If someone had told me that it was just another day
Another day in the scorching heat of Arkansas summer,
I would have believed them.
Or at least I would have wanted to.

Everyone's all-black attire
And the flowers flooding every room
Could have fooled me.
Or at least I would have forced such foolery.

I would have told myself it was mere chance
That we all wore the same color of night.
I would have gone as far as to think it was Mother's Day.
That mama was still here
And loved ones had simply showered her with too much spring.

If I could pretend with foolishness, then I didn't have to contend with fear.

I sat on the swing of Granny Tolley's front porch
With eyes nearly swollen shut, but not so much
That I couldn't stare senselessly into the dead distance.

I sat on that porch swing.

Aimlessly pushing forth with my toes.

Aimlessly leaning back on my heels.

I repeated this motion.
Just the same as the repeated motion
Of the screen door slamming

With every casserole

With every condolence

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That wafted into the household.

How many more pats on the hand?

How many *I loved your mother very much?*

How much more could I take?

I wanted to run away.
I wanted the fresh soil of mama's grave

To become embedded 'neath my nails

To become confined in my cuticles

As I clawed my way to her corpse
So that she could scoop me up

And I could lean in

And I could lament

into her bosom.

