

After this last death,

by Nonnie Augustine

After this last death,

I lose at musical chairs.

Rough strangers shove me toward the carved door.

Feeling fierce, I yell, "Don't push me!"

House racked with noise, smells, rushing,

I turn the doorknob. Cool, quiet, a darkening path.

Arms folded under the hot weight of my breasts,

I lean against the trunk of a tulip magnolia.

The nubs and edges of the massive tree scratch chilled skin.

I step away, drop my arms, open my palms.

Breezes tease the insides of my elbows.

Dead family murmur, pull until I float

toward them, surprised by ease.

