

1981

# Pneumonia

Joan Swift

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview>

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Swift, Joan. "Pneumonia." *The Iowa Review* 12.2 (1981): 340-340. Web.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.2791>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact [lib-ir@uiowa.edu](mailto:lib-ir@uiowa.edu).

## 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.