

Death in Arkansas

Eliza Gilkyson

I remember how the wood would smell
Just as the last great tree was felled
Like many that came before
It was used for table and a door
A palette and a long hall rack
Hung my great grandfather's hat
A stable and a barn, a bed and a seat
A roof and fence and a floor that creaked

And a coffin leanin against the wall
When there was a death in Arkansas

I liked the wagons and the wheels
The wind that knocked us down in the fields
And the girls with the southern drawl
And those that came before were the pictures on the
wall
And the lone dogs howled and the crows would caw
When there was a death in Arkansas

We were laid to rest out under the sun
And we breathed our last
And it was done
And the air redeemed us and we would learn
That a life was hallowed and we wouldn't burn

Hands folded gently to say goodbye
It was just this place underneath the sky
Do you see our bones hidin like a toad
In the old red dirt that is now a road
Beneath the sign that blinks off on
And a shopping mall where the house is gone
Forgetting that a soul may call
When there is a death in Arkansas

And a quilten patch of new concrete
Helps the trucks roll down the street
There's a Dollar Store by the setting sun
And a sign on the church says His Will is Done
I can't see the birds or find the fields
That hold my bones beneath the wheels
And a mother worries that her son won't call
And a tv stares at a blinking wall
But the lone dogs howl and the crows still call
When there is a death in Arkansas