

JULIA LISELLA
Mothers Talking Summer Night

The heart sleeps so much of the time
it's possible to forget to breathe
or forget you're breathing.
Beats beat and breaths
rise and fall. But you
are just sitting, listening to that mulled sound.

Then there's a day: it's hot;
the concrete would burn your feet;
black ants want a meal of you.
You're wearing your new expensive skirt
that looks casual and cheap
and she tells you she's been to the oncologist.

You feel salt
rummaging an imaginary
slit on your tongue
and just loving her casually
as a mere acquaintance
is not enough.

You sit beside her on the dirty stoop.
You listen for what she has to tell you.
You want to hurry her
and slow her down
all at once.

Mainly you want her to live
and now both your tongues are burning.