

The exact likeness of grief

by [Gary Fincke](#) in the [December 2, 2008](#) issue

Swinging a pitching wedge, my father lofts
Seven golf balls over my mother's grave.
To spare the grass, he hits from the shoulder,
Picking them clean from the thin lie of dirt.

It's fifty yards, I'm guessing, to the woods
Where all but one of seven disappear
In yardage he can manage, length to spare,
At eighty-eight, his knees beyond repair.

He limps to her grave site, his love an arc
That ends among trees. The flowers he's picked
Follow him in my hands; he turns the club
Upside down and uses it as a cane.

"Some day you'll know," my father says, meaning
His knees, and then again, "Some day you'll know,"
Meaning this trip to a grave, this choosing
Of flowers, orange ones I cannot name.

My father, the prophet, bends to the vase
Of wilted stems. My father, who's warned me,
"You'll see" a thousand times, lifts the fresh buds
From my hands, steadies himself on my arm.