

“The Poem”

Niobe had just lost her son.
To help herself, she read a poem
to those assembled in the funeral home,
a poem about pain and mercy and mother love.
When it was over, she refolded the paper
along its newly creased lines,
slid it back in the pocket
of the blue jacket in the coffin.

Her hands busy folding and tucking,
her mind wandered back to six months before,
buying the jacket at a large store
in a shopping mall. A couple sizes
too big, so he could grow into it.
That was mercy: the price
and the purchase. The rest of it
and most of it was pain:
the creased lines of the poem
in the small blue pocket
and how quickly everything would turn to dust.