

My Brother Was Buried Wearing a Red Jacket

Mark Bennion

Walking up to the coffin
(a little larger than a viola case),
I see his jacket lying stiff
as baseball card gum.

Compact, vermilion. I take the thick cloth
in my hands and touch the fake gold
of buttons above the navel and wrists:
swirls of new pennies, video game tokens
beaming.

But a tan smear on the collar,
lint small as sand leaves no smile
for the undertaker. Bulging coat pockets.
Mannequin smell. Cuffs slightly askew.
Wrists white as the skull of Yorick. Hearing
the gravedigger sneeze, I wait

for the culpable thing. All those Sundays
I should have noticed the red dye,
the fuzz clinging to his turtleneck,
Mom's lipstick running down his jaw,

and what should I say of the wool
in his jacket, the lamb bleating there,
nose down and grazing? Each minute
he grows fatter, chews grass
near the side of a road.