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The Funeral

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The Funeral

Helen G. Reed

The family sits in the parlor
in a corrosive yellow
stain of silence.

Words left unsaid
burn dark holes in the air,
twist trails of destruction
across pink eardrums—
wormholes in the glistening
perfection of shells.

The old children sitting there
do not raise their heads for fear
of meeting each other's eyes.

In the coffin before them,
the woman who did not
save her sons
from the father's raised fist;
her daughters from his footsteps
in the dark beside their beds,
his calloused fumbling fingers—
that old man who sits
snuffling beside them now.

No one moves, for fear
of detonations—
triggering hidden mines
laid down long ago.

Words between them
missing for so long,
silence begins to feel like comfort,
to be pulled more tightly around them—
a musty wool blanket,
the familiar moth-infested dark.