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## Paradigm

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### Abstract

Second Prize winner of the Peter Sears Poetry Award 2022 at Western Oregon University

### Keywords

Poem

## Paradigm

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*Faculty Sponsor:* **Dr. Henry Hughes**

*Second Prize winner of the Peter Sears Poetry Award 2022, Western Oregon University.*

*Keywords:* Poem

Church is over, girls huddle and whisper  
in the lighted lobby like flocks of doves.  
One of them asks me to help fold the drapes,  
pressing corners of black velvet,

matching them immaculately, stitch over stitch,  
no creases, wrinkles, or bumps—  
a symmetrical rectangle halved and rolled  
into a cylinder of cloth, crammed  
tight into a plastic box only to be unraveled next  
Sunday.

My fingers slip and drop the drape.  
She says it won't do, so we start over.  
Fold over fold, seam over seam—

“That's better,” she says, lining up the smooth edges.  
*That's perfect*, I think, crinkling a frayed corner.  
Shake, rattle, and roll and repeat—  
she's smiling and folding, smiling and folding,  
and I'm just holding on.