

A Pocket Poem

— *Found in Goodwill (Translation: we buried my grandmother on a Wednesday)*

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2026 1st Place Prize for Poetry

when the chayote skin dried out
& its roots withered
 like fish vertebrae in my hand
I took her clothes from the closet
 & splayed them out in front of
me. kneeling on the wooden floor:
 meshes of azure & coral pulled
from sea. it was like
 watching a sailor in shipwreck, afloat
among the algae blooms. not knowing
if he is struck with foaming beauty
 or home-longing because his eyes
never tipped & leaked. I saw:
a few scattered jumpers a wind-blown
 blouse. a purple sweater with a bleeding lip.
a screaming orange shirt from volunteering
 at the children's hospital. a home-knit
shawl. jackets with secrets tucked
in its pocket: a love letter, a recipe,
 a grocery list with five different
types of squashes, a sleepy haiku. then
perhaps another to-be shawl or scarf or vest, with the hems
 still loose. a green linen dress,
that she always wore when she danced. she never danced
 in front of me. it was always in private,
in the corridors without eyes & only teeth. outside,

the earth was set to simmer
& the cicadas
burned & the moon embers
plucked a song
& the floor held
its breath
&
she
danced

sometimes, when it rains soft
enough to wash the city
away from itself,
when the sky becomes
a constellation of unfastened fish jaws, you might
find
these phantoms
clipped to cloth
leaking from beneath the closet.
this orange shirt might rock in the air
with a cavity in its arms. this shawl/
scarf/vest might
unknit itself. this dress,
you might find in a corridor, or
you might not.
what I mean to say is:
I am counting days
by the amount of time it takes
to press a dried squash into my palms
until it breaks
butternut, honeynut,
red kuri,

kabocha,
chayote