

Finalist for the Gwendolyn Brooks Poetry Prize

Taking the Weight of Him

My husband stripped
down to his underwear
in the basement.
Stood in front of the washing
machine, peeling back the layers
of his blue police uniform.

“Why,” I needed to know
over the chicken and broccoli casserole
“did you stuff all your clothes
into the washer at once?”

I was dirty
was all he’d say.

After the spin cycle
we went for a walk in our tidy neighborhood,
front lawns edged sharply,
storm windows puttied and painted,
chalk outlines of hopscotch on the sidewalk.

That’s when he told me
about the boy, 16,
hanging by the neck
in his parent’s basement.
Found at dawn
by the nine-year-old sister.
My husband said,

I cut him down myself
before the priest got there
for a final blessing.
Took the weight of him against my own body.

Later, dozing on the sofa,
half-watching the evening
news, I notice his hands,
moving, rubbing, fingering
his rosary.