

The Photograph Album

Noreen Oesterlein

A high keen filled the room as her tears splashed on the pages of the family album with her not there in the early years of place and the birth of the baby who would be her sister with toddler toys and smiles.

Pictures of joyful inches grown in happy times all without her until her adoption photograph appeared on a page stark in black and white with a shaved head middled by a starved belly in front of the old orphanage building.

Her memories were as empty as her presence in the photograph album with no recall of a goodbye to her birth mother or the plane ride to a new home with a welcome and promise to love so she turned the page.

Sin Line

Noreen Oesterlein

School year Friday confessions
grades one through eight
a procession of uniforms
line along the pews.
Steel eyed sentries
costumed in black and white
a synchrony of habits
holy hands under scapulars
fingering the rosary
attention divided
amid beads and penitents.
Confession box in sight
wrongs swirl in young minds
the coughing fit
the fake faint mask
murmured communions
in the search for sufficient
sins to disclose to the Fathers
hidden away in the dark.
Examination of conscience
reveal offenses against
the eighth commandment
thou shalt not bear false witness
bless me Father
for I have sinned.