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## sandy lee carlson

### “Take Her Coat”

I pull open Mom’s closet door  
And take out the everyday fleece-lined work shirts,  
Flannel jackets, and sweatshirts–  
All neat and ironed, Mom’s work–  
Dad says, “Take her coat.”

The design of this good coat is timeless  
And the construction, flawless--  
Satin-lined, topstitched,  
Soft and supple camel’s hair.

I do as I am told, and Dad nods,  
So I slip my arms through the sleeves,  
Enveloping myself in the cool satin of the lining,  
When Dad looks me in the eye:  
“She had one in high school, so we got her one  
After we got married.”

Somewhere, there is a photo of Mom posing in this coat,  
And there is a photo on the same night  
Of her in a black cocktail dress,  
The shirred skirt like a magical waterfall  
Around her small waist,  
The fitted bodice accenting her petite form.  
Her eyes are bright with love for the proud man  
Taking photos of his beautiful new wife.

Mom has not been gone a week, and here is the coat  
Wrapped in silent memories Dad and I share  
Like protective tissue.  
“Take it. It fits you,” Dad says.  
I nod and do as I am told.

(continued)

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In New England, you have two coats:  
A work coat, and a good one for going out.  
Very often, the good one will outlive you.  
You know this when you put it on the first time.