

POCKETS

Janice Wilson Stridick, Revised Easter, 2015

When I put on your clothes
I always find you in the pockets—
a small but persistent reminder that we
were not finished.

Kleenex is a constant—
soft, slightly used, wadded, refolded,
and pieces of toilet paper ripped from a roll
as you prepared to leave your comfy green chair

and perch in a waiting room.
Stuffed in your pockets,
these remnants stood ready
to contain a cough, dab a tear.

But there are other mementos
in these pockets of boiled wool jackets,
jaunty little suits, flowing knit shirts
that cover hips, make one ready—

to roll...to present...to receive the needles
and questions—to repeat, endlessly repeat—
name, age, address, insurance,
and health history.

No matter how many times
you passed through their doorways,
these purveyors of healthcare
never seemed to know you.

But I knew you, and know you still—
by the tissues in your pockets,
by the consignment shop card you stashed
while shopping for a gift,

by the unfinished portraits of me,
unsigned but carefully boxed—
not quite good enough—these memos
to the ways you tried to catch me.

Today as I don your brass-buttoned jacket for the first time,
pulled from a closet of things salvaged,
I find a tissue-thin pharmacist's page of disclaimers
and unfold it like the map it never was.

I crumple it,
reach deeper,
find our seam
and open a new one.