The Funeral

We wake at dawn and dress,
the day much warmer than usual,
a lion, a lamb, they say the season
either way, has teeth to bite.
Spring is never a delicate thing.
Muddied snow banks melt

On the way to the cemetery,
I’m surprised to see daffodils wavering up
through new tough earth.
Nose soft against the glass,
my breath makes a kiss.

Later, eight of us, four on each side,
grip the coffin’s curved handles
as the throats of horns blast
“Taps” into the cool mausoleum.
I make eye contact with my brother,
look away. The solemn ceremony of soldiers,
their crisp clicks and turns.
Through stained glass, bare tamaracks,
the twigged grace of branches.
In the back, church women
clutching rosaries, one with a chiffon scarf
hung from her wide-brimmed hat.

She’s the only one crying. I watch her
shoulders quake quickly, business like,
her upper body a dark umbrella shaken
after hard rain. I don’t know
who she is or how she knew my grandfather
but I want to nestle under her

winged veil, lean into her sorrow,
some make-shift shelter.