

## Funereal Robin

---

*Ron Pronk*

They laid Uncle Mo's casket near the dark hole  
and Joey watched as he reached around  
to his back pocket, crawling with cleaned fingernails  
until the unwrapped Bazooka stuck.  
He buried it in his cheek  
and repulped.

He heard the Reverend Fowler tell an unlikely tale  
about Uncle Mo, who always smelled like soap to Joey  
and tried to listen until Aunt Pen noticed  
his slow grinding jaw and backhanded her fist  
across his flannel padded shoulder, prying  
her stare into his lips  
so he spit out the wad.

They lowered the casket when Joey  
saw the robin and wanted to shout. Aunt Pen said  
the one to see the first spring robin  
should always shout and tell everybody, but the six  
pairs of sunken eyes, looking as they did whenever  
the Saints lost, told him he ought to keep quiet.

Even so, he felt light and didn't mind waiting.  
It was almost over, anyway. He could tell  
by the way Aunt Pen played  
with the shoulder strap of her black  
patent leather purse.

He would wait, and then  
they would all smile.