

NICK STANOVICK

INSTAGRAM: @N_STANO

MY MOTHER IS STILL DEAD AT MY WEDDING

- After Siarra Freeman

her chair empty next to my father
I hug it, cry-rocking, and am five,
terrified before my first day of school
I sit and am seven, asking questions from her lap
the flower girl is my sister's quiet Grief
the ring bearer is made of my poems she has not heard
the third ring on the pillow is hers
I place it, too, on my new wife's finger
I open my mouth to say my vows, but instead:

*dead mother hands me the diploma
cadaver mother opens a bottle of wine
mother before the incinerator cooing
happy birthday, happy birthday, happy birthday
ghost mother knows the bride's name*

I slow dance with a bowl of ash
the DJ cuts the music and we all count to forty-six
then observe five hundred ninety-four seconds of silence,
one for every word in her obituary
I put food on her plate
During a toast, I read her medical file
her death certificate finds its way into the video montage, a jarring relic
I smile in photographs with hundreds of people

except one