What happens?

A parent recalls a son’s departure through intimate domestic details.

The main idea

Separation can turn ordinary acts of care into an intense private encounter with public conflict.

1. “spasms”

Method: Bodily diction

A paper flower briefly evokes involuntary pain.

2. “blockade”

Method: Military metaphor

The vocabulary of war enters a domestic fastening.

3. “song bird”

Method: Symbolism

Release links independence with the parent’s loss of control.

4. “playground voice”

Method: Auditory memory

The ending reaches towards an earlier, familiar version of the child.

Form and structure

A first-person address in four unequal stanzas of free verse; recollection moves between domestic and commemorative spaces.

Development, voice and tone

Preparing to leave — Tender but restrained. Clothes and touch carry feelings the speaker struggles to express.

Departure — Proud and bereft. The child’s excitement is followed by the parent’s solitary movements at home.

Memorial — Longing and uncertain. A search for connection ends in listening; the son’s death is not explicitly confirmed.

Context

Written for a contemporary collection responding to war. Remembrance symbols coexist with a parent’s specific emotional experience.

Comparison links

War Photographer: private responses to public conflict. Kamikaze: family and loss.

Recall question

Which uncertainties should an interpretation preserve?