

## A Dead Shirt

By Deborah Malamud, 2012 Claudia Ann Seaman Award Winner for Poetry

I wore a dead person's shirt.  
I was young, but not oblivious  
and I didn't believe in ghosts.  
So there was no last time,  
no last word.  
I wore her.  
And my mother, not only unflinchingly but as though there was  
no reason to shudder told  
me to wear it in good health.

I spent some time inventing memories  
after the funeral  
I didn't go to.  
And I thought death a boat shipwrecked. Because it must  
have purpose –  
one which, unless searched for,  
is not found.

And I spent a lot of time breaking my own heart.  
I curled into the arm of my One Month Stranger,  
half hallucinating,  
and mused to him that there are only two things one can be.  
Three, he said. Alive, dead, and in love.  
It rang in my ears as he didn't kiss me.  
I soaked my tears in a dead person's shirt  
and then I lost it,  
and death's a boat.