

Silence. She Is Six Years Old · *Lynn Emanuel*

She sleeps on a cot in the living room.
This is her father's mother's house.
And in the kitchen the men run their knife blades
across the oilcloth with roses on the table
and grandmother cooks them steak and eggs.
She is pretending to be asleep but she is listening
to the men talking about their friends
and grandmother in her white dress
walks back and forth past the door
and a hand reaches for salt and water.
Her father talks about divorce.
Now it is quiet.
Grandmother has left, her tight stockings
showed rainbows
and someone's upstairs undressing,
his dog tags making faint noise.
Her father walks into the room.
He is naked and there are certain
parts of him that are shadows.
And he pulls the blankets to the floor
and then the sheet — as if not to wake her —
and he lifts her up and whispers his wife's name —
Rachel, Rachel
and he takes her hand, small with its clean nails,
and he puts it to the dark:
Oh Rae, Oh Rachel he says
and over his shoulder she can see
the long hall mirror framed in black wood
and she smells lavender in her father's hair
when he gets up, first onto his hands
and knees like someone playing horse,
and puts her on the chair
and she sits and rocks like a deaf woman.