**At the Landing in the Middle of the Stairs**

Daniel Schneider

In my dream my grandfather helps us choose

what we want from his art collection

when he dies. I like the large, Dutch master

with the men playing cards in poofy velvet black hats.

My sister takes the painting with bright curves

and a red dot lost in a thicket of lines.

Grandfather smiles, offering us any and all

the art from his walls, filled

from floor to ceiling. He knows

his time will be any time now.

But he points out, seeing what’s inside

each frame as if for the first time,

how the little goat sits on his hooves

in the drawing of the whirling Dervishes.

His thinking is clear, unlike

his last years when he’d call me Mike

or cousin Josh and remind me

about the cranial-facial nerves

every first-year medical student must know,

*optic, olfactory, trigeminal,*

before falling back asleep.

*Do you want to renovate your kitchen?*

I ask grandfather in the dream. *This drop ceiling*

*could easily be taken down.*

I lift a tile and all the brightness drains

from his eyes, his mouth hangs open

like a trap door. My mother soothes him,

says the house is fine, nothing needs change.

She knows how soon he’ll start the wooden climb

from the life he made, the house he built, that leads

up to converted bedrooms,

screened in summer porches, a kitchen table

strewn with newspapers and pills,

faces that appear and dissolve like the days.

Stairs that have no beginning or end

but sometimes turn a corner.