

## The Second Floor

*Rachel Hadas*

*for Amy Pizzella*

You said that in your dream you couldn't find  
your father Sam, he had diminished so.  
You raced, a harried pilgrim to a shrine,

up and down corridors and to and fro.  
Or not a place of worship but a station:  
announcements, crowds, anxiety, but no

familiar face or any information.  
Wait: a Sam-like figure seemed to scoot  
ahead of you to some dark destination.

The folding doors swung open and then shut.  
As quickly on their short legs toddlers move,  
tall parents lumbering in slow pursuit,

so they speed onwards, people whom we love:  
first close, but soon more distant; finally some-  
how out of reach well before the grave

hides them. At most we're granted a last dim  
glimpse in some realm of indeterminacy.  
One afternoon I peeked into Sam's room.

He lay, his body folded in a Z,  
so frail that he seemed poised to disappear,  
float from the bed and lightly slip away

from his little room into the air.  
Before I left the second floor for good  
that day, I peeked again. Now you were there

too: daughter, father cradled on the bed  
in one kind curve, at rest, your four eyes shut.  
Sleep and love, the quick, the nearly dead:

back I tiptoed from that double gate.  
I never saw Sam—not in life—again.  
His final passage took some weeks to set,

and I was travelling. While I was gone,  
you emailed me your dream of flight and loss.  
Or was it a shared dream? Or only mine?

All possible. I too was giving chase  
to a phantom, fugitive and fading—  
a husband, not a father, in my case,

roaming the floor and silently receding.

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