

## Haunting with Open Mouth

by Lenna Mendoza

Em knows ghosts. She hears fingernails rattling  
in the pantry. Tablecloths keep turning up  
starched and ironed. Cusses spelled in barrettes.

All spirits are girls, according to Em, or women with pulp faces.  
Like cleaner fish, they thicken over the forgotten.  
One's up in the attic, teething on a dead uncle's shirt.

Beneath the trundle bed, there's always whimpers.  
A set of twins is parked in front of the padlocked shed,  
they sleep on each other's shoulders in shifts.

Em swears I won't meet them in this life  
because I ask too many questions. Her mom says  
I'm clingy, like laundry without softener, and I itch.

But I want a touch that feels like nothing.  
I want to look straight through someone.  
What hurt is so beautiful that you'd never let it go?