Poem

Julia Kauffman

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They were called the Pennypackers  
(the doll-children mother bought me for Christmas)  
And I was their god,  
Putting them in their rightful places.  
Mother in the kitchen  
Father in the garage  
And daughter in her room.  
At night, I imagined they led  
Different lives,  
Daughter silently clicking the lock  
On her door to stain her lips  
With a friend’s borrowed lipstick.  
Father, sucking the dry end  
Of a cigarette on the backyard swingset,  
The toes of his oxfords dragging  
In the dust underfoot.  
And mother, slumped over the last  
Load of laundry, breasts vibrating  
To the rhythm of permanent press.

Julia Kauffman