

Apparition

She glides
Into the exam room,
This dead-girl-walking,
Languid and serene,
Paler than pale.

Outside the door
Children are chasing each other down the hall,
laughing.
A baby is wailing his protest of shots.
Here
In this room
All commotion is stopped.

She sits still, calm,
All possessed,
Her hands folded in her lap, her feet together,
Energy conserved.
She makes no unnecessary movements,
Her smile, a faint upturn of the corners of her mouth,
Her lips, white as her teeth,
Nor indulges any excess in her complaint: "I am tired."

She is not dizzy as she rises from the exam table,
Her spleen swollen, her hemoglobin four,
Her blood pressure normal.

She sits straight-backed and tall,
Staring back at me,
Teaching me,
with what little we can live.

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