

DAVID KEPLINGER

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*The Lamp and the Mirror*

I was a lamp in the kitchen of adults,  
A too bright lamp, made to sit  
Under the table to shine. I played  
With my paint-chipped soldiers.  
Hundreds could fit in the small waxy bag.

The talkative guests of my parents  
Wrung out their hands. A man lost face  
And fell over, hitting the floor  
With a crack. The air seemed to slur  
(It was heaving) the next thing he'd say.

Soldiers who live go insane.  
They each have in common their ardor  
To die. I remember the decapitated man.  
Don't you dare make a move, I reproached him.  
Stay stiff in the bag where I've buried you.

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**DAVID KEPLINGER** is the author of *The Clearing* (New Issues, 2005) and *The Rose Inside*, winner of the 1999 T.S. Eliot Prize. *The Prayers of Others* was just published by New Issues Poetry & Prose. Keplinger teaches creative writing at American University.