

A Photo of my Grandfather (Sumter, SC circa 1928)

Staring from an old black and white
with brown tones hinting of color
 my black grandfather frozen in a chair like a general.

Boots above his ankles shine like the skin
of a river in sunlight
 bluestone breathing in his eyes.

The wall behind him bare
plaster scarred in unusual patterns
 lips locked in place like southern ice.

So erect
only his back's shadow brushes the chair
 his fingers pointing down at the fading linoleum.

He sits with too much importance for his time
 tweed jacket open
 tie the width of a garden snake
the confidence of his left leg crossed.

I can feel his come and get me calm

the coolness that cut through a man at a poker game

the invitation to the cops when they came to the door

 why my father said they refused to enter.