

ELIZABETH STEVENS

The Fifth of Five

*I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas*

Perhaps I'd feel more at home
than here with all of you.
But it happens all the time at family do's.

The only question is about men in my life.
I love Eliot, have you read him?
They think he was some guy I met in a bar.
I'm dismissed but at least I no longer sit at the children's table
Too tall now I grew in self defense.
I'm taller now than all of you.
A voice somewhere inside: *and smarter too*
don't dare mention that.
I was the one who broke the dish,
lost the money, told the lie, left the door open so the chickens
fled,
and stood in the shadows at the end of the line.
Assumptions made without asking;
my side of the story never told.
Always wrong and unforgiven.

*I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floor of silent seas*

Old neighbours say, *I remember the family but don't remember
you.*

They question my parentage:

There were four, two boys and two girls

Nameless and ashamed I disappear.

When I go to bed, I wrap myself in thin sheets,
and dream of Eliot.