

TREY MOODY

Scrubbing the Skillet,

I realize my daughter just turned seven and doesn't know
I was seven when my mother crept into my carpeted room
while I played a video game to say my father, who had been
far away taking fluids from tubes in a California hospital,
had died. My daughter doesn't know I said *OK* and kept
playing so my mother would leave, so I could feel
how it felt not to have a father, or how having a father
who was dead was supposed to feel because I already
knew what not having a father felt like. Now, my daughter
doesn't know I can hear her cartoon spilling from the TV
as I finish the dishes, doesn't know I am building the scene
I imagine unwinding inside her mind, the one where she
helps the town children rope their runaway mare scared
and stuck in the mountains, even though my daughter doesn't
know how to ride a horse. But in this scene, if someone
were to tell my daughter her father had died, she'd know

to calmly walk the mare back all the way into town, whispering
into the animal's ear how pretty she was, how sweet, because
most nights, beside my tired daughter in her dark room
as she curves against sleep, that's what she whispers to me.