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An Open Letter to the Father Who Was There

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An Open Letter to the Father Who Was There

Did I ever tell you what
happened to all those
words that I needed you
to say in defense of
me? I swallowed them to
fuel angst rained on memories
like confetti at a parade
but they calcified, became
the weight in my chest, heavier
each time she burned me down
and you stayed silent. We have both
gone to bed with her poison wrapped
around our necks.

I learned quiet much
faster from your apparent
apathy than from her
pinching the soft skin
under my doll-like arms
until my body watered with
whispers of, "I'll give you something
to cry about" through teeth pressed
together to flatten my emotions
until she could crush them in
her hands.

Don't explain to me
about dosages and chemical
imbalances because I know what hatred
looks like in blue eyes just like you do.
If you'd ever paid attention you'd
know what betrayal looks like in
hazel. You have always been my
teacher by opposition, giving
me a voice that can separate
her atoms by never even trying
to use yours. We have both been
colored by her. Nothing rips
apart a child's cheek like a diamond
ring applied with force but words
are what put me in therapy.

But we don't talk about
the reasons because what

exactly can we say? That the reasons behind my mental history are the reasons behind your complacency? I survived her. I haven't quite finished surviving you. No one can smooth out the bruises and explain away the tears like you. You'd think I'd get at least the art of lying from her but while you covered up her indiscretions I was covering up blood and wishing the words rattling around my brain were true: "You are not my daughter!"

She can serve herself the idea that I am not her fault but the concept will never taste right and you know just as surely as you'd like to believe that my accomplishments are yours, baggage is the only thing you've ever given me. So don't ask me to forgive you for the weight, you might know well the sound of anger bouncing off your walls but you'll never know the sound of redemption.