

Another Middle-Class Black Kid Tries To Name It

I used to dream about a woman trapped inside
a burning house. That isn't how she went,

my grandmother. Instead, the hood is full of grief
that moved inside her like a drunk man's fist.

All I know about my father's mother are these holes
in her, the holes she left. My father, pulled over

to the side of the road, crying because a song spills
through the radio. I think her grief moved

into my father when he was born & into his daughters
when we were born & I'm sure someone's tried

to tell you the blues is only music, *but the radio*
the radio.

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Once, I watched my teacher tell another brown girl
her language was too beautiful to belong to her

Once, my teacher bought me a cheeseburger & asked
how come the other black kids weren't more like me.

Once, the girl pinned me to the wall until I called myself,
or her, a nigga & all week I wore her fingers as a bruise.

That year, I wore cargo shorts through the winter,
books in each pocket, haunted hallways full of words
that weren't my own.

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Is there a word for a child talking to himself
or no one? I've said *ghost*

but I do have skin & a father, after all. Hands
after all, dirt colored & not buried in the dirt.

Sure, I've been opened the way girls are opened.
Sure, I've been a dark thing gone missing in the dark.

Sure, I've looked at my sister & seen a woman
caught in flame. But we have pills for that.

We have money for the pills for that.

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Please—

what's the word for being born of sorrow
that isn't yours? For having a family?

For belonging nowhere? Not even
your body. Especially not there.