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.

*

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.

*

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.

*

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.