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After My Mother Beats Me

E. Hughes

This poem was previously published in *Joint Literary Magazine*, Issue 3, 2017. E. Hughes is a Dordt College alumna, 2016.

Mother has fists
full of my collar. She is pulling me
down from the long-backed leather chair.
I am on the white linoleum kitchen floor,
between a wall and the grand clear-glass table
in our one-bedroom apartment.
Mother stands over me
then leans in real close, wrinkles
and stretches a new place in my collar.
There's a faint ringing; it's sour in my sinuses.
I see Mother's boyfriend in the corner trying to look.
There's a half-eaten hotdog on the ground.
Brother's face is wet. The yellow light
above the stove casts shadows on the sink
piled with dirty dishes.
Sister is flailing her arms and mouthing
something. I can't hear. Something sour
in my nose, metallic. Mother's hot breath like oil
on my lips. I can't hear. My head hits
the ground. Again. Again. Mother
has a leather belt and my shoes. Everything stings.
The taste of salt enters my mouth. She might kill me;
I don't want anyone else to kill me but her.