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## After My Mother Beats Me

Erica Hughes

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# After My Mother Beats Me

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*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.