

Permission

shook from temporary asylums
of our beds by crack of leather belt

on back & a basket of screams—
dreamless night & home smelling

of dead herons dad wore on his hands
four volcanoes erupting through our

chest, heavy eyelids tucked under pillows
we ran to the living room leaving fragments

of pink barrettes & hand claps at our heels
wedged ourselves between mom's stolen

strut & graves he planted on her skin
four daughters screamed with scarred

throats & tear-splayed cheeks half-hidden
by her nightgown—assemblage of tiny

fists push against him like gusts of wind
bruises left on the islands of our bodies

we longed for cradled morning
when the sun's mouth was gaping

oh how i secretly wished him to dust
so we would have permission to breathe