Antidote
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Confessional

Once my father lit our house on fire.
I drove my mother to the hospital,

kissed the shape of the doorknob
on her palm, and, when the burn changed
to bandage, killed the waiting room
lights. I saw what turns on after it's
turned off. All the old women’s shrieks
were just birds trying out other tongues.

I loved to roll heroic names inside
my mouth in the new dark. Back home,

I made a nest of cigarette cartons and fake
opal jewelry sent from Hawaii after
the death of my Great Aunt. They hatched
barbed wire—I kept it to myself. I buried it
under the cherry blossom tree to guard
all my dead pets. This was before I held
the lighter to my skin in the co-ed bathroom,
before the drugs were no longer fun,
before my mother, the scientist, told me
how she used to pull the wings from
Japanese beetles to make them her own,
little buttons, dark thumbs she could
carry with her. When men tell me
what to call my body, I cannot help but think

transubstantiation. How what one shoves
under the microscope will be named harmful
or benign. Once, my father’s death was
an excuse to stop eating. My mother’s father
was an X-ray man, once a man of flash and bone. Though I never met him, he tells me nightly

that a demon is an inverted god. Once, there were two young pigeons in a cage,

whom I mistook for sparrows. Last night a cricket jumped inside my mouth, replacing

the voice I spent so long trying to ignite. Now all my heroes are beginning to revolt

me. I choke on every creation myth. My name was never in any bible.