

mom,

leave the light off.

i had a long day at school.

pull the blinds and close the curtains.

i want the outside light to peel and melt off

my skin like a bad chemical burn.

mom,

there's something about the  
ritual of chew and swallow that feels like a sin,

and i can't gain any more of myself.

i don't know what i would do

with even more of me.

mom,

my sadness spreads around campus like a disease,  
a villain dressed in a black trench coat and combat boots  
who has bullets in place of teeth.

it is indiscriminate and vile,

a slithering beast that has caused an emotional pandemic  
and a disrupted social economy.

it is the demon that crawls on my back and tells me that

i should die before i'm sixteen.

mom,

my guidance counselor says

i'm spending too much time in my

bed.

but when these walls talk and their  
whispers fill my ears with self-hatred,  
the safest place is under my covers and  
away from the noise.

mom,  
i've been swallowing my hair,  
since God called it my glory,  
and coughing up thick curls that get caught in my throat.  
yet with all that strength,  
i still can't cry in front of you.

mom,  
you were the first person i thought about when  
the sleeping pills began  
to drag me through the floor.  
i was an old beanie baby on the shelf,  
heavy, worn, dirty.  
i was tipping over and the world was spinning  
and i missed the bus for school that morning.

mom,  
i'm sorry i took your medicine.  
but when the world's people have turned to leeches and  
i'm finding pieces of skin littered on my bedroom floor,  
it becomes so much easier to pop a pill for the pain than  
to rewrap the same old rotting wounds.

mom,  
my teenage body was not made for  
the men who swung it around.

i was a little soldier on a raging battlefield,  
disoriented in war, blinded by flashbangs  
and seared with tear gas.

mom,  
i've known pain so closely that it curls up in my lap  
like an old, obedient dog.  
i have finally mastered something, mom,  
and that is the art of being sad.

if i could wake up from this nightmare,  
i'd finger-paint a portrait of the sky,  
and i would hold my heart in my hands  
and remember what it feels like to smile.