

HARB

When piqued, boys be a bone.

Be a tantrum, a cracked tomb

of discipline exorcising itself
into the backs of boys they had

no business putting their fists
inside of. I tried so hard

to find myself in the spines of the men
who wronged me. As told by

my mother: all good is holy, while evil
finds itself in those

who do not sleep, those
who lie

awake learning to write and
heed, and pray; in me,

this wired thing. My father did all he could
to be sure I was birthed with a beating

fist to go with those sleepless beasts,
my lungs. We find — to this day — a book

of versed calligraphy is the prettiest
flesh to make a lamb of.

This is what I will tell my son
when he is beckoned by

the bully in him; if his scorn loses
sight of its prey. If my son develops
a taste for blood,

I will blame it on

my father's enemies, and
our ancestors. One day, he will ask me about the red
in the river
of our name,

where it turned.

When he does, I will
have the same answer I did
when my parents told me to hold
my tongue and cleanse
my fistful

heart: *I do not know what to throw away
when nothing belongs to me.*