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SUSURRATION

Like a snake, the belt slides
the loops, hissing down and down
again years later. Across an ocean,
an entire continent, my brother's
heart lashes inside the walls
of his chest, pumping blood
through splitting seams. The same
strap, the one that burnt like
fire across my back—it cracks
and breaks now inside him. Our
father, the buckle in his palm,
raised his arm—I wish I could
say only once—at his children,
bellowed at the woman beside him.
A man, a boy really, he just wanted
to play ball and spit from the pitcher's
mound. But he was our father, and he
was his father and all the fathers
before him, filled with a boy's ache
to run. There were the women though,
the children, the moments one after
another. The fathers, they were meant
to know the answers. But they didn't.
And I don't. And now I have this scar,
a wound I think is healed until
the sheets slide across my back,
and I watch my lover
loosen
his belt.