

After My Mother Told Me

Sam Rice

what I wanted to know first
was which hand did he use?

The right, or the left? The same hand
that reached into the cold air

of the fridge at 2 A.M. for a gallon
of milk as I watched

with my neck craned and my eyes
fixed on his dark stubble

until he slurped from the plastic jug
and passed it off to me?

Was it the same hand he clasped
with another as he held me from behind,

striking my stomach until a wet jawbreaker
fell loose and rolled across the floor?

But after a few moments, I found
something I wanted to know more—

what kind of love did it take her
to set me on his sun-bleached porch,

kiss me on the cheek and turn around,
knowing everything would be more than fine?