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## Father

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## Father

When the whole world seemed to be your hands,  
I could measure the sum  
of my unhappiness  
as the distance  
between your thumb and curled hard knuckle,  
and count the rest as small misfortune,  
bad luck surfacing in bruises  
the purple half-moon  
of your fist.

These hands guided  
my mother's low-backed beaded dress  
in waltz,  
petted dogs,  
built tree houses felled by the wind,  
and pushed higher our backyard swing  
because I wanted to touch the clouds.

Bruises fade,  
but yet unfortunate,  
I continue stumbling into walls—  
at least, that's the excuse  
I give still.  
After all these years,  
you  
are no more distant  
than those clouds.

—Alison Stine '00