For My Mother, Hidden

She was flaming water back then, my mother —
burningdrowningspreading, breathing
god-sized gusts of fear into my child void.
She spun through days like a dervish amok,
washing walls
bakingdustingLysolingvacuumingironing.
She was never young, and she never smiled
except for photographs.
Once she said to me in a voice of blue-white intensity:
"I would eat shit
if I could sit across from my mother
like you’re doing right now."
Another time, she said:
“Remember only love when you remember your child-
hood.”

Only that? Had she forgotten: her small fists
hammering upanddownupanddown on my back
while she screamed fuckingkidfuckingkid,
holding up the hot iron she was using
and threatening to put it to my tongue
or to the side of my face if I didn’t stop laughing,
the soapsuds enemas she gave my brother and me once,
sometimes twice, a week?

I don’t know her.
Don’t know how to know her.
But this part of her I would love to dissolve in.
The part that told me this:
“Midnight one night, I wake to a sound. Water moved
by something other than current, you know? I see...
a buck and his doe have walked into the canal
to their chests and are drinking.
Something moves in me.
Like your first roll in my belly.”

Rusty C. Moe