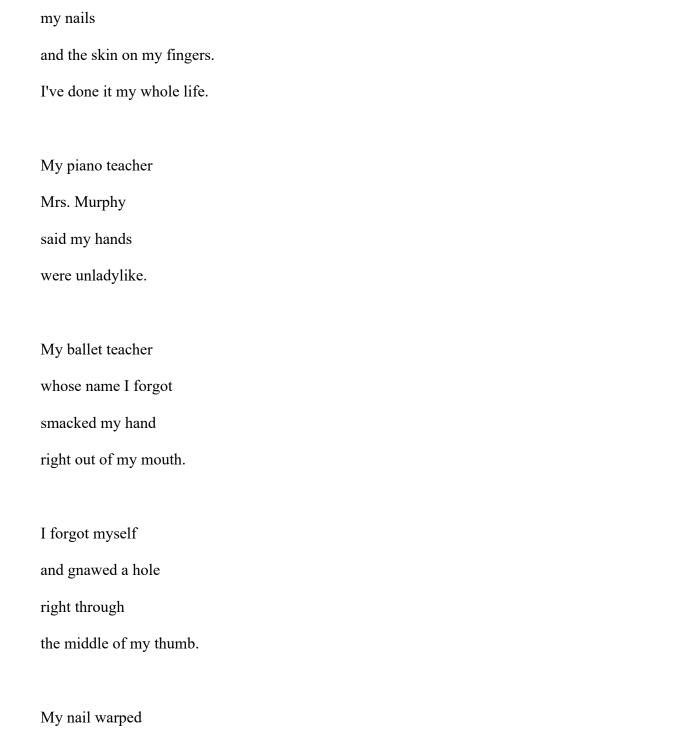
## Broken:

A Collection of Poems

## Fingers

I pick and chew



and developed
deep rounded grooves
like waves on a lake.
The bug-eyed blonde
gas station clerk
stared
when I paid cash for my Camels.
He asked what the hell
happened to my hand.
He smelled like warm bologna.
Or maybe that was the whole place.
I said I slammed
my finger
in a car door
because that would be accidental.
My mom
tried bitter apple polish.
I developed a taste
for sour candy.

"Sit on your hands!"
"You'll get an infection!"
"You'll catch a disease!"
"That looks terrible!"
Picking and chewing
is my safety.
This is my comfortable bubble.
My fingers are my soft secret.
My hands go everywhere
with me.
I'm already equipped
to handle anything.
I have ten fingers
and ten nails
with miles of skin
and it always grows back.
I have an unending supply
of solace
built into

my body.
I have my hands.
in a crowded bar
or bustling shopping center
or a meeting of great importance.
It's loud and uncomfortable.
Everyone rushes around.
But I am safe.
I have an escape.
I reconnect
to my body
no matter how far
I am pulled away.
When I saw
blood on my thumb
dried and dark
I was shocked.
I don't mean to

I require it
like an addict needs dope.

I am flawed.
I am not perfect.
I am not beautiful.
My hands are a mess.

I have daddy issues
and anxiety
and depression
and my fingers.

do this to myself.

## Pink Soap

In the tiny tile shower
my skin is attacked
by an unforgettable
scalding spray.
I fixate on the plastic tub
filled with pink liquid soap.
It is bolted to the wall
like a motel TV.
I am an
unreliable guest
in this world.
I cannot be trusted.
On suicide watch
I am only allowed
viscous substances
dispensed in measured doses.
I might hurt myself

with a bar of soap.
That's ridiculous.
Those are the rules.
The color looks fragrant
like a field of flowers.
But it smells like sterile
hospital cleaning chemicals.
I am messy.
I am dirty.
I am untrustworthy.
I broke the rules.
The soap is the color
of the pink carnations
that symbolize a mother's
undying love.
My mother loves me.
My mother didn't want me to die.
I betrayed her
the same way my father did.

My father was here

fifteen years ago

for swallowing

too many pills.

The mermaid called.

We both followed.

But I am standing in water

and he drowned.