

FIFTEEN

After countless nightmares of your martyred
mask, you tell me you are *misunderstood*.

calculated, cunning, strategic set up. Family
of horrors—I forgot the way you strangled

me the night before, the door to your room
as gate—the way you make me believe that

I accuse you & you try to defend your actions
as “love”—laced in hemlock, you hammered

me against your shag rug until you came, cut
my thigh, femur of your fever, you begged me not

to go. I spent all of school worried about
you. You paid my phone bill. You drove me

to the Texan diner. In my nightmares,
you wrapped your fingers wet across

my mouth, and I tell you *no*, as best I can.
Gardening, in smoldering summers,

it all grew dead. Your bent pinky
finger, your separate bedroom, every

closed locked door. Every day in 12th grade
laying on your floor. What is the phrase for this type

of rape? Rage wells where my tears should be. I tear
myself where my youth should be, I like to burn.

I like to bleed. I like to imagine what my life would be
—before you groomed a tragedy of me

when I was only fifteen.