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## use your WorDs

Megan Spring

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### About the Contributor (Optional)

Megan Spring grew up in Miami, Florida. She hopes to get out of the south and travel somewhere where no one knows her name.

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## *Megan Spring*

### use your WorDs

I grew up in the Dirty South, not to be confused with debutantes and sweet tea. The waffle house across the street was shot up, and the victims stuffed in the freezer. In the fourth grade the girls in my class were forced to undergo an etiquette lesson. Mrs. Kaetterhenry thought we needed a bit of help in becoming ladies, so we had hot Lipton tea and crumpets- otherwise known as slightly blackened Pillsbury biscuits, but Miss Perez tried. Paper napkins delicately folded at the corner. “Ladies use their words not their fists.”

The humidity formed droplets that ran into my eyes. My little sister was shoved, smacked, slandered, and sexualized by a girl. I used my words. I told her exactly what to do with the stick in her hand.

Dad always said every man should get punched in the face at least once in his life. “Builds character, teaches him to keep taking hits.” Unfortunately for Dad he had two daughters, getting punched in the face isn’t exactly a milestone in a little girl’s life, rather its another reason she won’t find a husband. That stupid crooked nose.

Something I will never understand is how Black girls always know how to fight? The stick she was holding was slicing through the air at my face. I was more concerned about splinters than anything else. I swung my fists.

A few minutes later I smoldered in Principal Lovell’s office. Blood, hot and sticky, ran from my nose and into my mouth. It tasted like quarters. Heat seemed to generate from my face as it pounded at an offbeat rhythm to my heart. He yelled and scolded. It’s difficult to pay attention when a drumming noise resounds in your ears. Anyway I was more concerned about my parent’s tone than Mr. Lovell’s. As he finished addressing me he said, “It’s not lady like to fight. Use your words.” Embers glowed brighter but I was dismissed.

Dad got home from work too quick for me to figure out my story. His mechanic uniform was splattered with oil and grease. There was a murmuring and I heard his footsteps thudding towards my room. They carried a weight to them that even then I understood would always out-weigh me. So I sat, cris-cross-applesauce, on my bed keeping eye contact only with the Disney princesses on my sheets. He touched my chin to pick my face up to meet his. His hands were rough.

“Can’t imagine how the other girl must look.”

I couldn't really tell. The bruises must have blended in with her skin.

“Well, every good man needs to get hit in the face once in his life.”

He rubbed my head. Some of my hair caught on his blistered skin and he walked away.