

Sarah Armento

The Tether

He fell off my radar when I was thirteen.
This strange, funny, redheaded boy
with charisma as strong as good liquor
and wisdom that baffled the most arrogant teachers
didn't seem the type to vanish.
If it had happened in the third or fourth grade I would have cried—
I was in love with him then—
but by thirteen, I was too absorbed in my own trauma
and too lost in the sea of adolescent apathy
to give more than a snort and an "oh-that's-too-bad."

At fourteen, I heard the story.
The people who had kept in touch,
the few strained tethers that held us distantly together,
relayed the story to me.
The loneliness the agony, the surrender,
the razor, the ER, the blood volume,
the miracle that he must have perceived as a curse.
Then I cried.

At nineteen, I am a different person.
Shorter hair, ripped jeans, black eyeliner
and clearer skin on the outside.
Drier humor, deeper sadness, stronger will
and keener awareness on the inside.
When I catch sight of him across the room,
I can see that he is different as well.
Tattoos cover his left arm,
he has a red goatee to match his hair—
the one thing that remains the same, like mine—
and his eyes seem darker,
as though a flickering light has gone out.
I speak his name as he walks past,
his midnight eyes locked to the floor,
but my voice is lost
under the crushing weight of the music.
The first time in six years
that I can muster the courage to say one word to him,
and he can't even hear it.

The tether has been broken.



With my hunger mounting / I ate nonstop for a week / Alas, I started counting / Which one shouldn't do with sheep