

To Someone I Once Knew

by Tessa Wheeler

I witnessed your first communion behind a derelict shack, its vinyl siding slipping away from the poorly constructed sides.

Your upper lip was beaded with sweat as you tilted your head towards the sky, electricity from the impending storm filling the air.

I wet my lips, watched in fascination as the sky hummed.

The clouds were crested with bright crimson and I scorned the light, pushed it out of my sight.

There were no gods in the woods then except for us.

Your eyes were closed but I still felt your gaze on me, inescapable.

You smiled and I knew you felt free.

I hold my breath when I drive past graveyards like you used to do, but out of fear that with an inhale I could have the weight of someone else's life on my soul.

You just did it out of habit.

The cemetery seems to stretch on longer every time I encounter it, and I worry that I'll never breathe in again.

The water in the creek near your house is moving again, but the mosquitos born from the stagnancy still bite.

My nails aren't long enough to mark x's on my skin, not yet.

You used to come to school with your legs marred by puffy mosquito bites, scratches on dry skin raising red against pale calves.

The shoulder in the middle of the highway bears flowers now.

I wonder if that's your doing.