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TO A MOTHER AFTER HER SON'S DEATH

SHELBY STORMER

Karen, I meant to stay in touch,
but life took root. I think of him often.
I even see him sometimes—a glimpse of red hair rounding a corner,
a tall figure on the sidewalk ahead.
I lock eyes on the apparition and bodies filter by,
but when the crowd dissipates
I see brown eyes, not blue.

It's been over three years since the accident,
but I'm sure I don't have to tell you that.
I'm twenty-two now—twenty-three in March.
It's been six years since I last saw him leaning on my locker,
arms crossed over his red letterman jacket.
That's the Karston who lives in my mind.

I like to imagine where he'd be now—
like to picture what his life would be like.
I see black slacks and white button down shirts on cedar hangers,
tall pillars, and wide windows set in a grand house.

He saved me the other night in my dreams.
I was walking through a dense crowd of people;
they got taller and taller, towering over me.
Then there he was, big as life, gathering me in freckled arms.
When I looked up it was no longer him,
but I was safe.

I like to think he's here sometimes
keeping an eye on me now like he did then—
when I'm walking home at night, when I'm alone.

But I always wonder why I don't feel him, his presence.
After all I've seen and all I've heard I have to believe he's with you,
sitting across your desk at Red Fox Real Estate.
Keeping you safe, Shelby