

Tying A Knot

by Amye Archer

The months leading up to that night were unbearable. It was as if a debt loomed over us begging to be paid. We both knew I would find you dangling at the end of a rope, it was only a matter of when. There were nights like last Wednesday when the August air was thick with car radios and bug spray, you sat on the couch, knee-deep in your depression, wearing the look of nothingness on your face. I was walking out the door to the grocery store, when I had to double back for my forgotten keys. In that moment, I saw the ghost of you, a faded, motley reminder of your once wild smile, and I thought in that moment, that you might already be dead, that I had missed it somehow: the discovery I was born to make.

Suicide was a hive around which I swarmed. My uncle, my best friend from college, Janice, my obese coworker from the library whose hanging was more a feat in knot tying than anything else, and now you. I had dreamed of the details: where you would find a rope, how you would fasten it, how I would sound as a blood-curdling scream leaked from my belly like my guts pouring onto the floor. I tried to prepare myself, crept cautiously around corners in the middle of the night if your side of the bed was empty, opened the door with a panic under my breath every night after work. Your death was a rodent living in the shadows. I knew it was near, I could smell it, it rotted between us.

My best friend, Tara, was a jewelry maker. She traveled all over the state of New Jersey looking for iron, plastic, or copper beads, and then she would fasten them onto a rope, a twisted wire that looped around itself for strength. She had practice tying knots. She liked short skirts and a man's eyes on the tops of her breasts. She was a Gemini and figured out the circumference of things with ease. She called her cat "Pussy", and didn't bat an eye when addressing her in public. She wore seven earrings, and only three were in her earlobes. She only drank diet soda and ate just three bites of anything.

She hanged herself on a Tuesday night after Yoga. We had just graduated and she moved back home to Jersey with her parents. I got the call on my Razor cell phone. It was many years ago. I never thought about the palpable feeling of doom surrounding us in the final weeks at school. I thought the years would stretch out in front of us like branches, our time together as children and young adults would be the trunk. I would become a writer. She would find a rich husband. I never saw the break coming. The knot, they said, was perfect.

I cried and imploded. I looked at neatly tied shoelaces and burst into tears. I dialed her number just to listen to her voice on the machine. I hollowed out seventeen tissue boxes. I quit my job. Then, one day, my life went on and I met you. You were the antivenom. You were a Libra. You drank too much and cursed in front of small children, but you were alive and you made me feel that way too. The sun stayed up for us. The sun warmed us. The sun fused us together like lightning bugs.

When the darkness came I was already in love with you. I thought you were strong, you thought I could sing well. We were both wrong. Then, one night, you tied a knot and I listened as the space between us collapsed. It was the end we both knew from the start.

