The Secret Life

by Elizabeth Kate Switaj

When we were very young, we didn't tell because we didn't know any better.

Now we are six, and we don't tell because no one has believed us since we told the story about the vampire upstairs.

Now we're twelve, and we don't tell because our family's weird enough, living in an apartment instead of a house.

Now we're sixteen, and we don't tell because if it happens at home, why wouldn't it happen in our boyfriend's car?

Now we're twenty, and we don't tell because we've held too many friends' hands in the ER. We know how the cops treat rape.

Now we're thirty, and we don't tell because it's easier to write.

Now we're forty, and we don't tell because no one wants to hear about it anymore.

Now we're fifty, and we don't tell because we'd rather climb to the top of Mt. St. Helens, or what remains of it.

Now we're sixty, and the sunset is neither russet nor gold, but the shadows of dead trees are lovely tonight.

Now we're seventy, waiting for the stars to appear.

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