

The Sugar-Free Scent of Today

by T. M. Upchurch

Once upon a time there was a speck on the horizon. A blur, a smudged full stop chasing me from childhood, catching up.

Once, we pushed lollipops past our sun-dried lips, our salt-rimmed, sugar-dipped edges of mouths. Stubby fingers worked, *poke, poke, in*, our tongues curling around in circuits, snagged by a rough edge — brittle sugar cracks scraping our taste buds sore, around, around... years we did. Should have washed our hands, we thought after, licking sugar-spit and dirt, fingers too gummy even for our jeans. Sticky palms, sticky legs, sticky heads. Smiles.

Once-

You moved, I moved. To now, to open boxes containing pictures of us, shiny, smooth, smelling of paper dust, the sugar-free scent of today. Lollipop colours; I shut my eyes to hear your voice, see flickers of hair, eyes, fingers, to try to taste but...

Now you are my friend from. My friend who. You who live, over there, away over the curve — further than the blur, the smudge, the dot that is coming. The full stop.

