

# When We Knew

*by* Timothy Merath

That son of a bitch meant every word. Every filthy mouthful of insults that hit me was intentional and focused.

I sat there and let it pile on top of me, without the slightest response. Soiled in anger and disgust, I let him finish before I broke eye contact and let my head droop, eyes searching around my feet for something to grab onto. Something to steady my reality before I could reply. Before I could defend myself, I needed an actual defense to what he'd said. A reason to fight against it.

I don't remember how long I sat there. Heavy and lost. The recently fallen leaves under my boots refusing to show any empathy. Offering only mockery when I needed support.

I looked up. He was still there. Less angry but with expectation worn like a banner across his face. The demands were high and I was late. His attack was never intended to be one-sided. He waited.

My anger was building as his solidified and cooled.

I spoke quietly so no one else would hear. This was for only for him. Drowned in disgust and embarrassment my words fell at his feet. They piled up quickly. Then they hit him. Hard.

He cried. Loudly. Then he ran. So did I, the opposite direction.

We were no longer friends. No longer enemies.

Third grade was going to suck.

