

Here and Then

By Hillary Umland

i am the minor key. i am the branches of the willow tree. i am the condensation on this glass of ice tea.
what i really am is full of shit.

what i really am is 15, sitting in my school counselor's office, furiously shaking my right ankle, pressing my wrist covertly on the sharp edge of the chair. what i am is singing songs in the hallways, wearing sweaters and jeans in 80-degree weather. i am the shoes i kick off and throw at the lockers, laughing.
i am also avoiding algebra.

Mrs. White is asking me what i'm thinking but i keep my mouth closed because there's too much to say, and i want to leave. what i want to say is sobbing. what i want to say is broken.
i am full of his hate. i am full of his anger.
i am full from my brain to my toes.

My parents were gone so I had a party. I was fun and incessant chatter and full of Southern Comfort. Our house overflowed with music and people I knew and didn't know. Then I was passed out in the garden by our pool. Then I was torn open by someone I will never forget but can't remember.
he is blurred and the night sky.

i hear Mrs. White distantly through my mother's rose bushes and white gardenias. i hear her voice where i am floating on my back on the blue and marble green of the pool in our backyard. i hear her saying she can't help me if I don't let her in. i am

eyes that will not see beyond blinding dark. i am ears hearing the shuffling of leaves, the sweet kisses of water carrying me further away. i am there and here, almost.

I am the bracelets on my wrist to cover violet bruises.

I am being told to go to class, to come back when I want to talk.

I am fine. I am a lie. I am the things that happen.

BIO: Hillary Umland lives and writes in Nebraska. She has been published in *Unbroken Journal* and *Sick Lit Magazine*.