

## Lost Reminders

Her name was Sara. She never looked at herself in the mirror for more than thirty seconds, rarely paid any attention to her appearance. When she walked down the street, she kept her arms folded across her chest, and pepper spray in her navy blue purse. Her mother taught her how to protect herself from danger when she turned thirteen, constantly reminded her that “It could be you.” She read books about girls being captured, watched movies in which reckless behavior led to dire situations, and so Sara believed that she was safe as long as she remembered how to be. So, she walked quickly, glancing at the people around her, avoided the streets she knew were trouble and every time the news showed the face of another victim, Sara thought to herself, “It could be me.”

When Sara's friend Jean stopped showing up to work, she didn't think much of it. She remembered Jean talking about a new guy she had met, and assumed that they had eloped far away from the crowded city. Jean was carefree and hung out with the kind of people Sara had been trained to avoid, so Sara does not ask around about Jean. Weeks passed, and someone asks Sara if she had seen Jean lately. Sara shakes her head and changes the subject. She doesn't live near Jean, so she doesn't see missing person posters on Jean's street, the Facebook posts of a frightened mother begging to know the whereabouts of her daughter, and one night she's working late she doesn't catch the news, so Sara never sees the uncovering of a human trafficking ring, and the body of a Jane Doe that the police found in an abandoned building.

One day after working quite late, Sara walks back to her apartment and sees girls on a street corner. They lean into car windows, smoke cigarettes to keep warm because their clothes are too short to cover them up. Sara walks with her eyes trained on the sidewalk, one hand in her navy blue purse for safe measure, and when she glances up and sees a black car parked a couple of blocks down. Sara watches one of the girls look back before getting into a car and nod slightly, as if she knows that there's someone watching her. When Sara returns to the safety of her apartment, she forgets about the silent agreement she witnessed. When she cannot fall asleep she mind wanders to the girls on the street. She think about what their lives were like before the car, whether she would recognize them in daylight. She shudders softly imagining the horrors that those poor girls go through, and thinking she is safe, Sara forgets to remind herself that it could be her.