

To Z, Six Years After the Arrest

Let me hear your stories, the ones you heard fishing—
bible stories, family stories, shadows on
his forehead. When did he tell you he liked them young?

Did you catch his eye Sunday morning
praying girls, altar girls, shirts rising, powder skin,
hint of lace above blue jeans? Did he pray with hands

past hips *sweet Jesus this can't be wrong* boxers
soaked *it's love it's love* it's the darkest kind of
ecstasy. Tell me stories of soccer fields, granny's

cornbread, foosball, family prayers—the stories of
before. And now, high school boy emptied
stomach choking words like *having sex*

and *with my girlfriend*. Say you know now
that demons aren't encoded, aren't genetic, blood
is not thicker than baptism water and you

are not your father.

Rachel Hoge