

# Letter to Myself: A Haibun

Steven Carter

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summer sky

touch of autumn—

someone's lost kite

Listening to the oddly comforting distant hum of a gardener's lawnmower, I discover how disconcerting it is to meet one's own ghost. There you are, my twelve-year-old self, bouncing up and down on the diving board before executing a passable jackknife. Supple as a seal, you climb out of the pool and return to the diving board; this time a double somersault isn't as successful. I watch you from my deck chair, Sierra Nevada pale Ale in hand, the southern California sun burning my eyelids. . . .

That was the summer of my first kiss, chaste of course, from a girl I still remember fifty seasons on. Six years later we arranged to meet in San Diego. And we had nothing to say to each other! Up until then, this was the great love of my life, rarely leaving my thoughts through middle- and high school, on to my freshman year at Cal. A strange new hurt, not rare, I suppose in the annals of love.

I—or rather you—dive again. Then our eyes meet. I can read your thoughts: *Who is this strange guy, balding, beer in hand, gazing at me?* And my thoughts: How many world-lines, how many futures, have led to this moment, this wink of eternity under the California sun?

And yours, one last time: *Does he mean me harm?*