

Charles Rutter

From the Bank

From the bank, I watch my father's boat drift  
on the lake, tethered lightly to the anchor  
below. Fat and heavy, the anchor sits in  
the muddy lake bed, passively fighting  
movement, like a puppy on a new leash.  
The rope drifts past a sunken tree, waving  
goodbye in a slow, graceful arc, then hello  
as it drifts back again: the dead hand of a  
metronome whose tempo barely exists.  
From the bank, I watch my father alone,  
his back to our campsite, choosing to  
fish without me for one frustrated  
reason or another, one I can't seem  
to even remember. An invisible line  
curls from his hand, snaking a switchback  
route before the reel wrenches it straight in a  
spray of bright water. The blue barbed  
decoy hurries to return, only to be cast  
away from the boat again.  
I watch my father from the bank,  
tethered so lightly to the anchor below.  
And had I known how lightly he was  
tethered to the world at that  
moment, I would have done more  
than stand on the shoreline,  
watching.