

One A.M. at the Beau Rivage

by Elizabeth Hegwood

New Year's Eve, my mother and father and I stand at the entrance of the newest casino in our hometown. We've just seen a standup show. We held our noisemakers at midnight but didn't use them. Instead we watched my two sisters trot down the aisles, trying to get an autograph from the comedian, who is famous.

My sisters wore black satin. After the show they talked at the famous comedian, reaching the way they do, with their arms. Their arms are curved a good way, a better way than the older white planes of my own. Still, we're all a little glam. Two or three of us together are charming.

We've been waiting for the valet for twenty minutes. I watch the casino's mesmerizing, flashy sign, bright as a movie screen. The glowing fountain behind my sisters halos their hundred-dollar hair.

"From this doorway," my mother says, rubbing my arm to warm me, "you could be anywhere."

I'm sort of crazy about my parents. It has occurred to me before that I'm divorced because of it. I don't love anyone else that much.

"There's nothing to let you know where you are," says my father, "from this angle." He nods at the air.

His hair is still dark and his ruby-toned sweater has shape. My mother, too, seems young, except for one eye, which is shrinking. The white is marbled red, and the rest, say the doctors, is turning to lattice. When I stand to her right and say something, she jumps.

Someone once told me about love: It's knowing something other than yourself is real.

I squint where they're looking, and across the street I see a Shell sign, a green traffic light, and a building, a motel maybe, dim in the night fog, that I can't place.

I begin to wonder if it's intentional, this view from this doorway, if it's all carefully planned out to make us feel that we're very far away from our lives.

