

RailRoads

by Johnny Dantonio

We all have friends that would drop everything to save us. It's the times we don't need help that they're not nearly as attentive.

Unfortunately, we don't get to say STOP! to people at the time and place we love them most, and more times than none, their continuance eclipses the glimpse of all we ever wanted in said person.

That's the worst thing about college, and it takes time to really get it: no matter how many late night pacts and best friend secrets, the whole thing is forced. The place itself is a vacuum, a bubble, and so we do our bests with what's there, expecting that the proverbial "IT" *is* there.

As we inch closer to leaving Bubbleville empty handed, I'll say it —it's fucking sad. There is a sense of failure and self-deservingness where you think you have the right to walk away from the place with beach vacation best friends and final loves, the pages that confirm an assumed prophecy. But in truth, it was all a bit fabricated from the onset.

So we move on then, slowly and a bit sadder, but hopeful, I assume, ready for real world revelations. Ironically, more mature and insightful, nights alone revisiting first campus encounters warm the bed better than the blankets. Personally, that's when I open a document and begin to write to you, whoever the memory, and keep you in the pocket of my past that I can fictionally address as more grandiose than history would have it:

Remember when we first met and you would call me from your grandmother's house in Texas, and we'd talk about cigarettes? And, yeah, I had to work in the morning, but hearing you exasperate with the subtle lectures on yellower teeth and chimney kisses was worth the oncoming exhaustion. I hugged you like hell when you got back, but it was like I was too old for you after that.

I guess if I were to steal you from the scene of it all again, I'd wanna tell you, in all seriousness, that in our quick interactions, all I

know is that you're a beautiful girl who loves life and loves hard and is introspective and willing to investigate things like sadness, and I appreciate your late night frustrations equally, if not more than, your alcohol-induced, heightened adoration. Beyond those traits being unconventionally attractive to me, they're actually going to make you so much happier and ripe for whoever *is* the right age, whoever recognizes their happiness begins with yours, and when I catch wind of it, that will mean the most to someone who still pretends we could have worked.

Passing a crowded playground, I smile at the boys and girls imitations, chasing one another, rehearsing for later life. Judging from experience, some years future will find plenty of them yet to jump from the drawbridge.

